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## YORK FRIENDS 1939-1945\*

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### ABSTRACT

This article deals with the experiences of York Quakers during the Second World War (1939-1945). It points out that in York as elsewhere Quakers had to make difficult choices during these years and tries to explain the reasons for these choices, particularly whether to support the war and, in many cases, whether to serve in the armed forces. The choices made by individuals and the consequences are elaborated. The article sets developments in York against the national background and points out that the national Quaker yearly meeting was held in York in 1941 and 1942.

### KEYWORDS

Quaker, Friend, York, pacifist, conscription, war

War, though wholly unexpected by most British people in 1914, had long been anticipated and dreaded in 1939. When it finally began in early September Friends in New Earswick, then as now one of three Quaker meetings within York, minuted their 'sense of deep grief' and determination to work for the restoration of peace. 'We wish again to affirm our conviction that all war is wrong', the minute continued, '& only by living in that Spirit which takes away the occasion of all wars can the Kingdom of God be brought amongst us'.<sup>1</sup> The minute was endorsed and adopted by York Monthly Meeting, but though most Quakers agreed with its sentiment in the abstract, we shall see that it was another matter for individuals, especially the young who were liable to conscription, to decide what action to take in the crisis of total war.

\* This article is a rewritten version of ch. 4 of my *Faithful to Ourselves and the Outside World: York Quakers during the Twentieth Century* (York: William Sessions, 2001).

1. Minutes of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 10 September 1939.

The dilemmas faced by York Friends were faced by Quakers all over the country, though there were two distinctive features in York not faced in most other places. First, Friends were unusually numerous; in 1939 there were 451 members of the Religious Society of Friends in York, 2.3 per cent of a national total of 19,673.<sup>2</sup> The second difference was that Quakers were an important and influential group in York,<sup>3</sup> though their influence like their membership (536 in 1914) had declined since the outbreak of the Great War.

It was as well that pro-war passions were weaker than in 1914 and that most Quakers had learned to disagree without rancour, as they had not done in the first year of the earlier war.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, *The Friend*, the weekly periodical in which, then as now, British Friends discussed and often disagreed on controversial issues, was limited as a vehicle of discord in 1939-45. The lack of heat in debate in 1939-45 was the result both of the national paper shortage and of the evident determination of its editor, Hubert Peet, not to allow the society to tear itself to pieces in the pages of his journal, as had nearly happened in 1914-15, in letters, articles and reports of London Yearly Meeting 1915.<sup>5</sup> In June 1940, at a critical phase of the war, Peet noted editorially that a number of letters had been received dealing with war and peace. A few of them, he observed, 'hardly show that tolerance of spirit to those with different convictions which would make discussion profitable', and he tried to ensure that controversy was carried on more decorously.<sup>6</sup>

In the second half of 1940, the period in which Britain was in greatest danger of invasion and subjugation, a considerable number of the correspondents to *The Friend* were unable to accept Quaker pacifism without qualification or even to seek an imminent end to the war. Arthur Rowntree, formerly headmaster of Bootham, one of the two York-based Quaker schools, wrote, 'I

2. York itself had an estimated population in 1941 of just over 100,000, or 0.022 per cent of a British (that is, not including independent Ireland) population of over 46,000,000. York Monthly Meeting, tabular statement 1940; Religious Society of Friends (London), *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, 1940; B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress* (London: Longmans, Green, 1941), p. 7; John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 143-44; Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation* (London: Routledge, 2nd edn, 1983), p. 415.

3. A.J. Peacock, *York 1900 to 1914* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1992), p. 5.

4. The letters pages of *The Friend* for 1914-15 make this rancour clear.

5. Maude Robinson, 'Lest We Forget', a *Memory of the Society of Friends in the War Years, 1914-1918* (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1932), pp. 7-8; reprinted from the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 66 (1932), pp. 97-9; David Rubinstein, 'Quaker Opinion and the Great War, 1914-18', *Quaker Monthly* 79 (2000), pp. 39-41.

6. *The Friend*, 7 June 1940, p. 359.

cannot believe with some Friends in the possibility of peace now—that is, a peace worth having—and I hold that the present time is inopportune from every point of view'. Duncan Fairn, the deputy governor of Wakefield Prison who had until recently been a prominent York Friend, wrote carefully but clearly, 'I do not want to weaken our Quaker testimony against all war, but I hope we shall not uncritically accept the C.O. [conscientious objection] position as a test of orthodoxy'.<sup>7</sup> Will Blanshard of New Earswick was one York Friend who took the traditional Quaker pacifist line, arguing that 'all war is utterly incompatible with the plain precepts of our Divine Lord'.<sup>8</sup> Despite Peet's efforts to ensure that his correspondents wrote with 'tolerance of spirit', controversy over war and peace continued in the pages of *The Friend* until at least 1944.

Conscription was applied more humanely in the Second World War than in the First, and Friends were treated gingerly by the tribunals before which Conscientious Objectors appeared.<sup>9</sup> As in the earlier war Quakers were often given special treatment and far fewer Quakers found themselves in prison than in 1916–18, though the number was still significant.<sup>10</sup> Michael Graveson, the son of a prominent York Friend, appeared before a tribunal in Leeds early in 1940 and was allowed to continue his work as a railway clerk provided that he also undertook ambulance work. The tribunal told him that because a person said he was a Quaker (Graveson had not attended meeting for worship regularly for the past two years, although he made clear that his convictions were unchanged) did not mean that he would necessarily be excused military service: 'We are not going to put a rubber stamp on Quaker applicants'.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, it would appear that a rubber stamp was frequently just what was applied, since in the country as a whole nearly half of Quaker men of military age (over 1,300 of those for whom returns were provided) were 'deferred, unfit or otherwise undisturbed'.<sup>12</sup> Tribunals were by no means a

7. *The Friend*, 27 September, 20 December 1940, pp. 555, 701.

8. *The Friend*, 27 September 1940, p. 555.

9. See Charles Carter in *The Friend*, 31 May 1940, p. 324 and below notes 10 and 12.

10. It was calculated that the prosecution of about 100 Quaker men and 10 women led to 115 terms of imprisonment in 1939–45, 39 of them for more than three, but not exceeding twelve months (Quaker Conscription Enquiry, 1944–45, file 1, Friends House Library). In 1916–18, at least 279 Quaker objectors had been imprisoned (*The Friend*, 9 January 1920, p. 15), many for longer periods.

11. *The Friend*, 23 February 1940, p. 118.

12. Quaker Conscription Enquiry, 1944–45, file 1; *The Friend*, 18 May 1945, pp. 309–11. Forty-seven per cent of Quaker men who appeared before tribunals were placed in the categories 'deferred, unfit or otherwise undisturbed'.

soft touch for many Quakers. Kenneth Blanshard, a youthful New Earswick Friend and the son of the Will Blanshard mentioned earlier, was a sales representative for Rowntree's when he came before the Leeds tribunal in October 1939. He refused to undertake uniformed medical work, because in his view this would mean supporting the war effort: 'In a uniform I am gathering soldiers up to go back to the front.—Are you prepared to defend your mother and father?—Not by fighting'. Blanchard was given a conditional discharge, but Kenneth Brownless of Acomb (another York meeting), who told the same tribunal on the same day that he was prepared to go into the Friends Ambulance Unit, found himself praised by the chair of the tribunal as 'perfectly genuine and honest'.<sup>13</sup>

If Quakers were treated gently by the tribunals, part of the reason was that they normally played by the rules of the game. Where they did not do so, that is, refused to register or recognize the tribunal, they were treated quite differently. Arthur Rosewarne was apparently one of only two York Quakers in this category. Arthur was the son of Percy Rosewarne, who had been imprisoned as a Conscientious Objector in the first war before joining the Society of Friends. The younger Rosewarne, a grocer's assistant, was imprisoned four times in the years 1941–44 for refusing to recognize the tribunal or present himself for medical examination. On the fourth occasion, when he was not yet aged 23, he appeared before York magistrates and grappled verbally with its chair. The local newspaper reported the following dialogue:

- I refuse [to pay the fine] on conscientious grounds. I object to war and all preparations for war...
- Would you rather go hungry and starve?
- I am against industrial conscription and military conscription, and have already done one month, six months, and three months...
- Failure to pay means prison again. It looks as if you are going to spend the rest of your life in prison.
- I am sorry, but I cannot pay the fine.<sup>14</sup>

Although Arthur Rosewarne was treated more gently than the objectors of 1916–18, the suggestion that he would spend the rest of his life in prison was either ignorant or insensitive, for he had nearly died of hypothermia in Armley Prison, Leeds during the second of his terms of imprisonment.<sup>15</sup>

13. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 23 October 1939.

14. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 26 May 1944.

15. Arthur Rosewarne interviewed by Olivia O'Toole, 12 February 1999; by David Rubinstein, 11 November 2001. He made the conditions of prison life, specially overcrowding and the stench of bodies, vividly clear in the 1999 interview.

Other York Friends also suffered, if not so dramatically as Arthur Rosewarne. Arthur's father Percy lost his position as an engine driver of main line trains for the London and North-Eastern Railway.<sup>16</sup> Employees of York City Council who registered as Conscientious Objectors lost their employment on a majority vote (28 to 20) of the council, despite the strong protests of York Friends. One such, Geoffrey Sowerbutts, moved to Liverpool in consequence and with his wife emigrated to Australia after the war.<sup>17</sup>

For Quakers the most important tenet of their faith was (and is) not pacifism, but acting in accordance with the 'inward light' of conscience through which the will of God was expressed.<sup>18</sup> The inward light had traditionally led Quakers to pacifism, but by no means always, for individuals had the responsibility for discerning and following it.<sup>19</sup> Freedom of conscience was bound to lead to different opinions over issues of the day, especially with respect to the supremely important issue of war and peace. Richard Whiting of Leeds (later of York) attended Bootham School in York and was expected by his family to be a Conscientious Objector as his father had been in the first war. But after agonising over his decision, he finally decided in September 1940 to join the army: 'I think that [my decision] was based on the realisation that the Nazi regime was a tyranny of a truly terrible kind... I felt that such a monster as Hitler would only be stopped by force'.<sup>20</sup> Whiting spent the whole of the war years driving lorries within fifty miles of Birmingham, but remained convinced then and subsequently that he had made the right choice in 1940.<sup>21</sup>

Harry Prince of York fell into the same category as Richard Whiting, except that his home was and remained in York where he was a lifelong attender at Quaker meetings without ever joining the society. Nearly ten years older than Whiting, he also attended Bootham and joined the Navy after war broke out. His view in old age had not changed and was expressed thus: 'If Hitler hadn't been resisted, he would have occupied this country. Everything we held dear

16. Arthur Rosewarne interviewed by David Rubinstein, 9 February 2000.

17. Minutes of Clifford Street Preparative Meeting, 30 June, 7 July, 8 September 1940, 11 April 1946; Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 9 October 1940; *The Friend*, 19 July, 30 August 1940, pp. 433, 509. Other councils also dismissed Conscientious Objectors from their employ (Alastair Heron, *Only One Life* [Kelso: Curlew Productions, 1998], pp. 42-43).

18. The book of Christian discipline, *Quaker Faith & Practice* (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1994 edition) has many references, especially chs. 19. 25-32, and 26.67-8. See also John Rae, *Conscience and Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 73.

19. Harold Capper Hunt in *Yorkshire Herald*, 18 January 1915; Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 73.

20. Richard Whiting, 'Remembrances', typescript (York, n.d.), p. 2.

21. Whiting, 'Remembrances', pp. 2-4.

would have succumbed to a tyranny greater than anything ever heard of.' Like Whiting he recalled no ostracism or even criticism when he met fellow Quakers or attended their meeting for worship, even in uniform. On one occasion when he visited Bootham during the war he was given what he described as 'a wonderful welcome by the school'.<sup>22</sup>

Not all Friends who joined the armed forces found such sympathy from their co-religionists or emerged unscathed from war service. At least four Quaker former scholars of Bootham died in action. One of them was Peter Joseph Hume, who, aged 28, applied for membership in 1942, convinced that he was in essence already a Quaker. His home was in York, but he was now a leading official in the Friends Ambulance Unit and the decision was taken to admit him to membership without an interview, since he was about to leave the country on an FAU tour of inspection. In December 1942, the month that he was admitted, he died when his ship was torpedoed en route to South Africa. His intention had been, he wrote, to teach in a Quaker school after the war.<sup>23</sup>

The Religious Society of Friends tried to keep a tally of the decisions of its members liable for conscription in both wars, but the figures gathered were disappointing, even more so in 1939-45 than in the earlier war. No details were kept of individuals as they had been in 1914-18 and the figures are difficult to interpret. Also, as figures were gathered locally and then forwarded to the national society, there were many opportunities for error and, particularly, omission. Thus Sidney K. Brown, the Bootham master who was clerk of York Monthly Meeting, wrote to London Yearly Meeting that the York figures were 'admittedly incomplete'.<sup>24</sup>

According to the London records, statistics were gathered for 2,847 men, 63 per cent of the 4,500 liable for military service and 2,523 women, 53 per cent of the 4,750 who could be called up to the armed forces or to other work of national importance. As already mentioned, nearly half the men for whom returns were made were deferred or otherwise left undisturbed, and 93 per cent of women fell into the same category. Over a third of the men but only 1.5 per cent of the women appeared as Conscientious Objectors before tribunals.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps one in six men, probably no more than half the percentage of 1914-

22. Harry Prince interviewed by David Rubinstein, 5 October 2000.

23. Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 5 December 1942, 9 October 1943; *Bootham*, April 1943, p. 678; *Bootham School Register*, 1971 edn, pp. 194-95; J.O. Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters*, vol. 1 (York: William Sessions, 1975), p. 283.

24. Quaker Conscription Enquiry, 1944-45, file 2.

25. Quaker Conscription Enquiry, 1944-45, file 2; *The Friend*, 18 May 1945, pp. 309-11.

18, joined the armed forces, including the Home Guard and the Royal Army Medical Corps.<sup>26</sup> Proportionately more active members of the society refused to go to war than 'nominal members' or attenders, according to the young Charles Carter, later vice-chancellor of the University of Lancaster but at the time the analyst of the responses which came in from all but one of the monthly meetings in the country. Hence his figures are the most authoritative available. Carter found that 315 men for whom returns had been made had joined the armed forces or Home Guard, but he estimated that over 700 Quakers had actually done so.<sup>27</sup> Some observers felt that more boys from Quaker homes may have joined the armed forces if they had attended a Quaker school, and one headmaster of a Quaker school wrote to *The Friend* that 25 per cent of boys from Quaker homes who had left his school in the years 1931–41 and whose wartime occupation was known were serving in the forces. As for Quaker women, only 1.5 per cent joined the armed forces or the Home Guard in 1939–45.<sup>28</sup>

In York the two preparative meetings plus the allowed meeting at Acomb had perhaps 110 men of military age. Returns, not always easy to interpret, were supplied on 73 of them, from which it appears that about thirty registered as Conscientious Objectors and thirteen went into the armed forces or civilian war work. Only four received unconditional registration as Conscientious Objectors, and a number of others joined civilian or sub-military organisations such as the Friends Ambulance Unit or Air Raid Precautions. Finally, the remainder followed their normal occupations or were deferred for medical reasons. Almost all the women continued their normal work, though one served in the Home Guard and another in the FAU.<sup>29</sup> The figures in the minutes of Clifford Street, which was much the largest York meeting and included the small Acomb meeting in its membership list, vary somewhat from those supplied to Charles Carter in London, for 38 men who refused to fight were reported in the minutes to be employed as directed by tribunals.<sup>30</sup> This

26. *The Friend*, 18 May 1945, pp. 309–11. A survey carried out in 1917 concluded that 33.6 per cent of respondents had joined the armed forces in and after 1914 (*The Friend*, 10 November 1922), p. 782.

27. Quaker Conscriptio Enquiry, 1944–45, file 1; *The Friend*, 11 May 1945, pp. 297–98.

28. *The Friend*, 26 November, 17, 31 December 1943, pp. 794, 854, 886; 11, 18 May 1945, pp. 297–98, pp. 309–11.

29. Quaker Conscriptio Enquiry, 1944–45, files 1–3.

30. Minutes of Clifford Street overseers, 23 February, 29 June 1945; of Clifford Street Preparative Meeting, 10 March 1946. The figures include members who were instructed to remain in their existing employment.

figure may be assumed to be the maximum number of Conscientious Objectors at Clifford Street, apart from Arthur Rosewarne and another member who refused to recognise the tribunal.

York was much more dominated by industry in the 1940s than it is today and it could not be expected that it would emerge unscathed from German bombing. Its losses, however, were relatively light. There were eleven air raids on the city, only one of which resulted in the loss of more than two lives. The raid of 29 April 1942, the so-called 'Baedeker' retaliation for the devastation of historic Lübeck, led to the deaths of 79 people, injuries to over 200 (of whom 84 were seriously injured) and extensive damage which included the destruction of the city's historic guildhall.<sup>31</sup> There had been a widespread belief that York Minster was too valuable a navigational beacon to the Luftwaffe to be bombed, but there was nonetheless jubilation that the minster was undamaged.<sup>32</sup> Both Bootham School and York's main railway station, however, suffered damage, Bootham and The Mount, its sister Quaker school, had been evacuated to the North Yorkshire countryside in 1939, but were back in good time for the bombing in April 1942, which the buildings of The Mount were fortunate enough to escape.<sup>33</sup>

At least three of the dead were connected with Clifford Street meeting. Frances Annie Cherry and Emily Cherry, probably elderly sisters, were attenders who worshipped with Friends without being members. Sylvan Farrington was a woman of 50 and a member. The New Earswick clerk wrote to Emily Stabler, a neighbour of the Cherry family, to express sympathy with the destruction caused by the raid, and was told that although the damage had been severe, Emily and her brother were 'safe and unhurt. We have indeed much to be thankful for'.<sup>34</sup> New Earswick minuted its sorrow at the damage caused by the raid and the sympathy of the meeting 'with all our brothers & sisters in this & other lands, irrespective of race or creed, who have borne similar sufferings & loss'.<sup>35</sup>

Potential differences of opinion were not confined to those who had to decide whether or not to fight, for the war affected everyone, politicians more

31. North Yorkshire County Library, *York in the Second World War* (1992), document 11.

32. Sophie Johnson interviewed by Olivia O'Toole, 8 February 1999.

33. Stephen Allott, *Friends in York* (York: William Sessions, 1978), pp. 109–10.

34. Minutes of Clifford Street Preparative Meeting, 3 May 1942; of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 3 May 1942, of York Monthly Meeting, 9 May 1942. Charles Halliday, an attender, was among the seriously injured and he may have died of his wounds, because he was dead when the 1944 York membership list was published.

35. Minutes of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 31 May 1942.

than most. York Friends had long been involved with the local government of their city and had also furnished occasional members of parliament.<sup>36</sup> The year 1942, however, was exceptional in that not only was a Quaker Lord Mayor of York, but that the Quaker in question was York's first woman Lord Mayor, the independent member Edna Annie Crichton. At the time of her investiture in 1941 the press did not mention her religion (as it did when she died nearly thirty years later aged 93)<sup>37</sup> and she made a point in her speech of stressing her belief in 'the certainty of victory'. She was to win much praise for her courage and calmness during the air raid and in her tours of the bombed areas.<sup>38</sup>

It might be thought that membership of the Religious Society of Friends would have been sharply affected by its opposition to the war, even though that opposition was somewhat muted. However, in general, for every person who was attracted to a pacifist church, there was a member who resigned in regret, anger or disgust. This was notably the case in York. 'I feel that I shall never again agree with Friends on the question of Peace and War', wrote Ethel Potter-Kirby.<sup>39</sup> She was echoing Barbara Chaplin, who resigned soon after the outbreak of war, saying 'I am not a Pacifist, & I feel it was the only honest course open to me'.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand Harold, Rita and Mollie Wray, applying to join York Monthly Meeting at the end of 1943, expressed their concern about what they felt was the lukewarm attitude of the Society of Friends to war and peace. The visitors who interviewed them explained that 'toleration must take a primary place in God's service, that pacifism is not the whole of Quakerism but only [sic] a result of the distinctive Quaker interpretation of Christianity and that although there may be a considerable variation of opinion amongst our members, yet as a Society we stand solidly for Peace...' This cloudy, though accurate statement appears to have satisfied the Wrays, who joined the society.<sup>41</sup> Resignations and admissions of new members took place with little or no animosity between Friends.

These differing attitudes are probably partly responsible for the fact that membership both of York Monthly Meeting and of what was then London Yearly Meeting changed little in the war years. Between 1939 and 1945 mem-

36. See A.J. Peacock, *York 1900 to 1914* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1992) and *York in the Great War 1914-1918* (York: York Settlement Trust, 1993).

37. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 3 March 1970.

38. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 10 November 1941, 30 April, 5 May 1942. It was not unusual for political principles to take precedence over religious ones.

39. Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 10 January 1942.

40. Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 8 November 1939.

41. Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 9 February 1944.

bership of London Yearly Meeting rose from 19,673 to 20,534. New Earswick, a lively group in these years, rose from 66 to 79, and Clifford Street (including Acomb) fell almost imperceptibly from 385 to 382. Thanks partly to the increase in New Earswick, membership of York Monthly Meeting rose from 572 to 593.<sup>42</sup> If the war years presented an unprecedented opportunity to the Religious Society of Friends to recruit new members, the opportunity was not adequately taken. But given the turmoil and dislocation of these years and the patriotic pressures which affected the young in particular, the increases which took place in the national and York Monthly memberships were a not inconsiderable achievement.

Total war affected virtually every facet of Quaker theory and practice. Private acts of startling generosity by individual Quaker families were undertaken which in most cases received only belated publicity, such as the hospitality offered to two Jewish refugees for a total of eight years by Walter and Jessie Robson of New Earswick.<sup>43</sup> Two more Jewish refugees, children when they arrived in York, stayed with the Hughes family in Holgate from 1938 until 1945; their story seems not to have made public before the year 2001.<sup>44</sup> It is highly likely that there were more such cases, but there are no records of them in the Quaker archives.

Although Clifford Street meeting house was not requisitioned for war purposes as it had been as a hospital in 1914-18, the YWCA and the refugee committee met there and there was talk at the start of the war of using the basement as an air raid shelter.<sup>45</sup> There was a great deal of discussion of post-war reconstruction, and Friends like others moved towards the political left in these years. Clifford Street Friends, with their large numbers and full agendas, concentrated their political interventions on questions of war and peace. Concern was expressed about bombing civilians and the policy of unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, and the government was urged to adopt a generous policy towards the admission to Britain of refugees.<sup>46</sup> Addresses were given to York Monthly Meeting at which unemployment and poverty were

42. York Monthly Meeting, tabular statements; *Yearly Meeting Proceedings*, tabular statements.

43. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 7 July 1972.

44. *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 4 September 2001.

45. Minutes of Clifford Street Preparative Meeting, 10 September 1939, of York Monthly Meeting, 8 February 1941. In addition, a building of Bootham School was requisitioned by the military.

46. Minutes of Clifford Street Preparative Meeting, 7 March, 4 July 1943, 8 October 1944; *Yorkshire Evening Press*, 12 July 1943.

stressed as features of society which must be combated. It was clear, however, that there were limits beyond which Friends did not wish to be pushed. After one talk about bringing personal lives into conformity with a fairer society, monthly meeting was reminded that it was a religious society. 'Our approach to all social problems', the meeting minuted, 'must be from a Christian angle and not from a political or economic one.'<sup>47</sup>

New Earswick meeting with its smaller and more settled membership, may have been the most politically active York meeting during the war years. It gave a warm welcome to the new Education Bill of 1943, with its promise of universal secondary education.<sup>48</sup> On one occasion it played host to three Italian prisoners of war who were working on a member's farm. The meeting was pleased to record a minute on the visit in English and Italian, and one of the prisoners later sent Christmas greetings, a gesture which was partly responsible for a long-term friendship between host and guest. Another visitor was the cricketer Learie Constantine, who spoke to the meeting's study circle about the West Indies and their problems. The meeting proudly kept a photograph of Constantine in its minute book and recorded its consciousness of the wrongs done to 'people of colour' and the need of equal treatment of people of all races.<sup>49</sup>

Two other events in the wartime history of York Friends should be noted. The first was that because of the heavy bombing of London, yearly meeting was held in York in both 1941 and 1942 although the 1942 meeting took place only a few months after the bombing raid on York outlined above. The existence of a very large meeting room on the Clifford Street premises must have been part of the explanation for the choice of York. Holding such a large gathering in wartime conditions presented serious problems, for it was necessary to provide accommodation for over 350 visitors to the city, no easy matter even with Bootham and The Mount on holiday. *The Friend* criticized the organisation of the programme (rather than the domestic arrangements) in 1941<sup>50</sup>, but holding yearly meeting in York boosted morale in at least some parts of the north of England. New Earswick Friends minuted their gratitude that the 1941 meeting had been held in York. They found it inspiring and were glad to have the opportunity to meet Friends from other parts of the

47. Minutes of York Monthly Meeting, 7 November 1942.

48. Minutes of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 2 January 1944, 28 January 1945.

49. Minutes of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 3 September, 8 October 1944, 7 January 1945; private information.

50. *The Friend*, 8 August 1941, pp. 376, 383-84.

country.<sup>51</sup> Yearly meeting would not again be held in York after 1942 for over thirty years, by which time conditions were wholly different.

The other episode which took place in wartime was the establishment of a Young People's Fellowship at Clifford Street. The creation of the fellowship in 1941-42 was the result not only of the willingness of York young Friends to be involved in its administration, but of a general feeling among members that their large, centrally-located meeting house was ideally placed to assist young people with nowhere to go on wartime evenings. By the end of the war the club had a membership of about 230; 80 or more of whom, from a mixture of social classes, regularly attended meetings. Michael Graveson, whom we have met as a Conscientious Objector to military service, served for many years as club leader. The Young People's Fellowship survived a major change of venue in 1968 and is still in existence, also in much changed circumstances.<sup>52</sup>

The war in Europe finally ended in May 1945, in Asia three months later. It had been a severe, for some an excruciating tribulation for Friends in York as elsewhere, but the fact that passions within and outside the society were generally lower in the second war than in the first and the desire among Quakers not to damage the national society or local meetings ensured that there was little public bitterness. Given the conditions of total war, the society had done well to remain as united as it did, and York was an excellent example of this unity. In general terms the years 1939-45 were a period when the Religious Society of Friends marked time, before the postwar challenges which lay ahead. A peace of sorts, for which Friends and millions of others could be thankful, had been achieved. Friends could also be proud of Quaker wartime fidelity to the inward light in conditions of extreme difficulty. Although few if any believed that the postwar years would be easy ones, it was perhaps not realized in 1945 that questions of war and the threat of war would remain prominent for decades to come.

#### AUTHOR DETAILS

David Rubinstein taught economic and social history at the University of Hull for many years. He is now an honorary fellow of the history department of the University of York and a member of York Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

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51. Minutes of New Earswick Preparative Meeting, 7 September 1941.

52. The minutes of Clifford Street (later Friargate) Preparative Meeting contain regular reports of the activities of the Young People's Fellowship.