

YEALAND MANOR SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

In 1939 a small group of Manchester Friends set up a school for Quaker children evacuated from the northern cities for the duration of the war. It was open from September 1939 to July 1944 and during this time 183 children, aged between three and twelve years, passed through the school. In addition a number of refugees, mainly Jewish children, came to the school. The maximum number at the school at any one time was 76. It was staffed almost entirely by volunteers.

In this article I focus on several of the more unusual aspects of this school. These include the way it was set up and the reasons for its foundation; the way it was financed; the staffing and the use of volunteers and conscientious objectors to military service; the curriculum; and the pupils at the school—where they came from and their educational achievements.

KEYWORDS

Yealand, evacuation, overseers, refugees, education, Elfrida Vipont Foulds

In the Spring of 1938 there were shadows over Europe—war was believed to be imminent and air attacks on major UK cities were predicted. The Government decided to implement an evacuation scheme and about 4000 children (mainly from London) were sent out into the country.¹ Insufficient preparations had been made, either for accommodation or for schooling, and the result was chaotic. Fortunately Chamberlain's Munich Agreement² meant that the likelihood of war receded for the time being and those children returned home. However, most people thought that war, alas, was inevitable, and three Manchester Friends, Elfrida Vipont Foulds, Margery Wilson and Christine Sutherland, wanted to be prepared and to set up an evacuation scheme that would be better organised and more suitable for the children in their Meeting. The Munich Agreement gave both the Government and these Friends time to plan for evacuation.

Their first priority was to find some suitable place in the country not too far from Manchester where an evacuation school could be established. Some of the group had stayed in a Quaker Guest House (Yealand Manor) in North Lancashire in the village

of Yealand Conyers—between Camforth and Kendal. The house, formerly the home of the Ford family,³ had been left to Friends and they had decided to convert it into a guest house. It was managed by a company called Yealand Manor Ltd and Marion Jones was the then current warden. The group therefore spoke first with the company who, thinking, no doubt (as proved to be the case), that their ordinary guests would immediately leave if war broke out, agreed that if such an emergency arose, Friends could have the guest house for the duration of the war—provided they restored it to its original condition at the end of the occupation. Following this agreement, in the autumn of 1938, the group consulted with families in the Manchester area to see if there was any demand for an evacuation school.⁴ Having received an encouraging response, they then took their ideas to Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting (MM) Overseers who approved the scheme in May 1939.⁵

Although the impetus for founding the school came because of the need to evacuate Quaker children from the cities, it is clear that Friends also had other motives. For at least some, it was a golden opportunity to try out some new educational theories. At a special meeting of Overseers on 14 February 1940 it was minuted:

It was pointed out that the scheme was never meant as an emergency measure—but as an educational and social experiment where children could have a home away from warmindedness and the adults share in the refreshment and interest of the work. It had been intended that this should last as long as the demand for it and the need should remain.

Elfrida regarded it as an ‘Experiment in Evacuation’⁶ and believed that ‘our schools may well prove to be the testing houses for new ideas capable of revolutionising and revitalising our national and international life’.⁷ For others it was important to ‘liberate parents for whatever service may be required of them’⁸ in time of war.

It is surprising to me that this major concern was not taken to Monthly Meeting but was authorised and in fact almost wholly dealt with by Overseers during the whole time the school was in existence. The first time there is any reference to it in MM minutes is in June 1940—when MM endorsed the actions of Overseers.⁹ It is most unusual for Overseers to take on such a major responsibility, particularly as the concern had not been taken to the Monthly Meeting. Overseers do, of course, have responsibility for the pastoral care of children in the Meeting and their parents, but this usually only means visits, financial support or counselling.

In July 1939 application forms were sent out to parents who had said they would be interested; supplies were ordered by Marion Jones—payment having been authorised by Overseers;¹⁰ Yealand Friends were consulted; and there was an appeal for beds and bedding and so on. There was correspondence with the Manchester Education Offices, the Regional Transport Commissioner, the Evacuation Office, the Chief Constable and the Town Clerk.¹¹ They hoped that help with transporting the children would be available, but the scheme was viewed by the authorities as a private evacuation arrangement so this assistance was not forthcoming. Thus, they had to rely on private cars.

In the last week of August the news was grim and it seemed that war was inevitable. The Manor guests all left and the trek to Yealand began. War was declared on 3 September. Several of the children remember the journey as difficult and traumatic:

Standing outside the gates was a large black car. There was a tall woman in dark clothing standing next to it. My mum told me I was to go with this lady. I was being evacuated to a nice place up north. Why? Why must I go now? Because War is coming, and I'll be safe up there in the countryside. This made no sense to me and was as bad as no explanation at all. I was too frightened to cry. I felt wooden and stiff with shock... As an only child my parents were my only close family, and my mum had stuffed me into a car with a complete stranger who was taking me God knows where. This is one of the scariest and most unpleasant things that had ever happened to me.

Peter Roberts

Fortunately life did get better for that frightened little boy and he also has some good memories of Yealand. Those who came to the school with one of their parents felt quite differently. Jim Putz comments that 'it must have been easier for me than for others because my mother was helping to run it', and Anthony Wilson remembers his time at Yealand as 'a time of total security'. Even some who came without parents managed to cope. Peter Moore wrote home on 3 September 1939, 'I am having a nice time here. All is OK and I am not wanting anything. I am the eldest boy, being the only boy over 10'.

It is clear that the first few weeks were chaotic. Luckily the weather was good and the children were able to play outside. However, a guest house is not necessarily the most suitable place to house forty to fifty small children. Carpets were quickly removed. After one child fell out of a window¹²—fortunately not sustaining serious injuries—blocks were fitted to the windows to prevent them opening too far and the lower halves were covered with wire netting. There was a dearth of suitably sized furniture and to begin with the children sat cross legged on the floor and washstands were used as desks. Luckily an auction in Arnside (of equipment from a closed school) yielded Kindergarten sized chairs and tables, folding desks, forms and garden benches. A good library was formed from gifts of books from Friends all over the country. A lot of the hard labour necessary to adapt the guest house and grounds was done by volunteers—for example, by work parties from Ackworth and The Mount (both Quaker secondary schools), by Boy Scouts from Manchester and by work-camps organised by Jack Hoyland.

At the end of September Overseers formally set up the Yealand Manor Executive Committee.¹³ Elfrida was to act as clerk and the committee was given full responsibility for the running of the school but had to report monthly to Overseers.

From the beginning the committee were determined that the school would be open to everyone, not only to those who could afford to pay high fees—and who could therefore afford boarding school fees. However, it was soon found that some parents could not afford even the minimal fees charged. Appeals for funds were sent out—including to American Quakers (on 21 December 1940)¹⁴—and various charities were successfully approached for funds, including the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Witting Trust, the Frith Charity and the Jewish Aid Committee. Eventually a bursary fund was set up.¹⁵

Most of the staff, who offered their services voluntarily, were parents of children at the school. Elfrida was Headmistress and, like many of her staff, she had children at the school. Fortunately sufficient parents had relevant qualifications and/or

experience—either in teaching, arts and crafts, music, housekeeping, cooking or nursing.¹⁶ There were also a number of conscientious objectors to military service (COs) on the staff and these were paid pocket money. Many of the 18 COs who worked at the school during its existence came for only a very short time—some just for a few months while waiting for their Tribunal Hearing. Several came back from their hearing saying that they could not continue to work at the school but would have to work on the land. Some were sentenced to prison. Ann (Gerrard) Burton¹⁷ remembers ‘cheering George when he returned from prison as a CO’.¹⁸ One CO who taught at the school for much longer—four years—was James Goynes. He had previously taught Geography for three years but was dismissed from his Darlington school because he was a CO. Fortunately his Tribunal gave him exemption conditional on teaching so he came to Yealand Manor School (YMS). Another was Frank Burgess, crafts master, who was there for a similar length of time and who had been given absolute exemption by his Tribunal. So unlike many schools during wartime whose younger staff had been conscripted into the forces, YMS always had a number of young men on its staff. It was unusual at that time to have male teachers for primary school age children. It was also unusual to have married women teachers. Most women at that time were expected to give up work when they had a family and many education authorities would not employ married women teachers.

It cannot have been easy to weld this interesting collection of staff together so that the children could get a good education, and there are indications that there were sometimes tensions between those staff who had teaching qualifications and those who had none. However, the standard of education, although unorthodox, was certainly high. Over the course of the school’s existence 27 scholarships were obtained—mainly to Friends’ Schools—and the school passed inspections by HMIs (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate) and others with flying colours. In April 1944 the HMI’s report said:

The school work is planned on sound lines, approximating very closely to, and indeed in some ways going a little further than, the work done by children of these ages in a public elementary school... There is a family spirit in the school. The various forms are small in number and thus every opportunity is afforded for close attention to individual needs and the children make progress at their own pace. It can confidently be said at the outset that the children are receiving sound instruction and that, in general, their attainments are very creditable... They have acquired a good command of language and are able to talk about their work with ease.¹⁹

Interestingly very few of my correspondents mention anything about their academic lessons though they have plenty to say about music, art and other extra curricular activities. However, the HMI’s report and the number of scholarships gained make it clear that the children had a good all round education.

Today many schools have a School Council and the schools listen to their pupils’ opinions. Sixty-five years ago this was certainly not normal practice. The Yealand School Council was established from the beginning and everyone aged nine and over was entitled to go to the weekly meetings. The Council elected prefects and also the headboy and headgirl. It discussed a wide range of subjects such as food, chores, walks, clubs and so on. Although Elfrida chaired the Council, she allowed the young

subcommittees independence and encouraged the children to write reports on the staff. Some of them clearly had fun with old Quaker terminology. One letter to Elfrida, written after a meeting on 27 February 1940, reads:

At our meeting held 4th 3rd day of 2nd month, we have suggested that each person after grace, should pick up his or her plate, knife, spoon and mug, and at a signal from a member of the staff, lead out in their table order.

We also think that as some of the older boys will not do as the prefects tell them, prefects should have the power of saying that the offender should not be allowed tuck.

Yours very sincerely
 RP Moore
 CC Foulds

Of course, there were some rules, but these were kept to a minimum. A minute of the Staff Meeting on 26 November 1941 reads

We reaffirm our original policy with regard to corporal punishment which we regard as incompatible with the spirit of Quakerism which underlies our ideal of family life. Equally we regard the punishment of deprivation of essential food as one which in these days cannot rightly be administered. 'No seconds' and 'no jam' for tea are allowed.

This policy was clearly different from what had been experienced by some before coming to Yealand, and Peter Roberts writes:

The Yealand experience was imbued with Quaker values, and these did not include violence to children, and discouraged fighting amongst ourselves. Somehow this seemed to work. If we fought it was a rare occurrence and required heavy provocation.

Time and again former pupils comment on what they gained from the non-academic subjects. Margery Wilson taught nature study and art as well as French. For many city children the nature study lessons were a revelation and opened their eyes to another world. Margery wrote:

It wasn't until our first spring at Yealand that I began to realise the complete ignorance of most of our town children about the wild life of the countryside. Few of them had ever seen a bird's egg in a nest, few could recognise even the commonest birds or wild flowers or trees.²⁰

She taught them to identify plants, trees, birds and animals and as a result, many kept an interest in nature study all their lives. One writes:

At Yealand I learned to walk about with my eyes and ears open to my surroundings, something which has never left me. Now, in retirement, one of my pleasures is to be able to walk round the golf course twice a week, watching the seasons unfold. *Michael Ellis*

And others:

I there acquired the beginning of an interest in wild flowers that has lasted all my life. *Peter Moore*

I became very keen on birds. I now write a regular bird column in the local newsletter and am known in the village as the Bird Man! *Jaspar Kay*

Many remember the red squirrels that came to the windowsills to be fed, the expeditions after dark to see foxes and badgers, watching the herons building their nests, and stalking the deer in Dalham Park. Jill (Tallant) Sykes still remembers ‘finding a young kestrel in a rock crevice on Farleton Fell’. Sheila (Lord) Johnson enjoyed ‘the hours spent sitting outside with Margery Wilson, drawing and painting the countryside, with Ingleborough usually in the background’. Margery submitted one of Sheila’s paintings to an exhibition of paintings by refugee/evacuee children held in New York—reviewed by the New York Herald Tribune on 25 February 1942.

The dramatic performances, produced by Glyn Richards, are also fondly remembered:

Perhaps my most abiding memory of the Yealand community is of the performances each summer of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Everyone it seemed came together to work on lines, music, movement and costumes. *Sheila (Lord) Johnson*

That performance was the main subject of Tricia Hamilton’s letter home in which she wrote: ‘In *Midsummer Night’s Dream* I am going to be a fairy and Kate Ward is Moth and Margaret Birkett is going to be Cobweb. And Marianna is Peaseblossom’. Jasper Kay ‘was Philostrate, master of the revels and I can still remember some of the lines’. Jill (Tallant) Sykes played Puck and treasures a sketch of her made by Elizabeth Brockbank which was reproduced in a review of the play by the Lancaster Guardian.²¹ Elizabeth Brockbank lived in the village and, like most of the Yealand Meeting Friends, she helped out when needed by the school. Barbara (Lyon) Clarkson recalls that ‘when beds became short, with the influx of more children coming, another girl and I slept at the house of Elizabeth Brockbank’.

The children didn’t only perform plays by well-known authors; Elfrida herself wrote many of the plays and pageants produced at the school, and they were often based on the history of Yealand and its Quaker connections. ‘None Shall Make Them Afraid’ was one such pageant.

Arthur and Winnie Percival came to the school in 1940 to take care of the music—and managed to achieve miracles. Arthur continued to play first violin in the Hallé Orchestra though he was based at Yealand—he was later to become deputy leader. Winnie was a concert pianist. They worked on the principle that every child could be taught some instrument—even if they never progressed beyond banging an improvised drum. Jim Putz remembers that ‘When Arthur and Winnie arrived I started to learn the violin. Playing in Arthur’s orchestra was a great joy’, Michael Ellis that he ‘even got to play the triangle in the orchestra’, and Jane (Kemp) Denney that she enjoyed, ‘playing a tambourine with coloured ribbons attached’. For many, such as Richard Jennings, this was the beginning of an interest in music that lasted all their lives.²²

Gifts of instruments were received—including a violin and a recorder from the Hallé²³—and bamboo pipes were made in craft lessons. Arthur’s amusing stories about the Hallé and its conductors are remembered by many and whenever the orchestra played in Morecambe a party of Yealand children were taken to the concert. The YMS orchestra gave several concerts including some to local schools²⁴

and one in Manchester (Mount Street Friends Meeting House) on 27 March 1942 during a lull in the bombing, in aid of war victims.

Arthur was not only an excellent musician, he was also an entertainer, and many, like Jill (Tallant) Sykes, remember his ventriloquist's doll, Freddie, who had us all 'in stitches'. Winnie Percival wrote:

He used to sit on Arthur's knee and say the most preposterous things about everyone—from Elfrida to the tiniest tot in the gathering. Children shrieked and squealed and rolled over with delight.²⁵

Another entertainer was Percy Foulds (Elfrida's husband) who managed to get hold of old films to show on Saturday evenings—Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and others. He would also show recent films he had taken of the school. He continued to work in Manchester but came back to Yealand every weekend.

Soon after the school was opened, Jim Goynes established a workshop in the cellar so that woodwork and craft lessons could be taught, and he was soon joined by Frank Burgess. At first there was a lack of suitable tools but then Jack Tims offered to lend his own collection for the duration of the life of the school. His wife Dorothy Tims was a staff member, helping with laundry and bedroom duties, and both their girls (Barbara and Joan) were at the school. Peter Roberts recalls

Mr. Goynes taught us elementary carpentry and my class made small model steam ships—a simple hull shape with a pointed bow, a superstructure with bridge, a funnel and a mast. I think I still have it somewhere.

It became a custom to hold an Arts and Crafts Exhibition at the school just before the end of each term to which members of Yealand Meeting and other visitors came.

At the end of term there was a change in the population of the school. Some parents were able to come and take their children on holiday somewhere away from their city homes. Others were unable to do this and the children stayed at Yealand for the holidays—sometimes their parents came to stay at the school to give the staff a holiday. In addition the older 'boarding school' children came to Yealand for the holidays—joining their younger brothers and sisters. These older children were expected to help with general chores, with putting the younger children to bed and reading to them. Robin (Foulds) Greaves remembers

One memorable holiday I spent a lot of time supervising the youngest children who had whooping cough. I was instructed to put newspaper on the floor so that it was easy to clear up after any child was sick. The best job I had to do once a year was to test the attic fire escape; this involved climbing out of the window with a rope round my middle, scrambling down the roof and lowering myself down to the ground.

In addition to the city children, there were also a number of refugees from war-torn Europe—fifteen refugees from six countries. Some came with their mothers (Ariel Pfitzinger, Lorelinde Einstein, Marianne Lask, Joachim Litteck) and their mothers were incorporated into the staff. Others had arrived in the UK on Kindertransport on their own, or had been interned before coming to Yealand. Many had had horrific experiences and took some time to adjust. In one report, Elfrida wrote:

The dark haired little Czech girl who was quite clearly going to be brilliant (she won a scholarship to secondary school when she was only nine) had very loving kindly foster parents who cared for her very tenderly. But in class she needed much reassurance, feeling conscious of the language difficulty, and of the many subtle little ways in which she was different from these English children—she, for example, didn't know their weights and measures, and used a different style of writing. And out on walks she always wanted to hold the grownup's hand.

This little girl (Renata Polger) came to Britain on Kindertransport and had left both her parents behind. Although she was only eight years old she was sensitive enough to write happy letters to her parents when feeling anything but happy. She writes:

Never once did they convey the desperate feelings of homesickness, the yearning for a familiar face or sound, or the longing that my nights, which were accompanied by dreams of home, my parents, and friends (all very realistic and convincing), would never end.²⁶

Fortunately her parents survived and they were reunited, though alas Renata had to learn Czech again. She fulfilled Elfrida's prophecy and went on to become Professor of Paediatrics and Medical Genetics at the University of Wisconsin and writes enthusiastically about the school: 'It was one of the most impressionable and unforgettable years of my childhood. I loved the countryside, the winter, and Elfrida Foulds. It is there I learned to speak English like everyone else!'

Several other refugees also did well, though some, sadly, were never able to come to terms with the horrors they had experienced. Marianne Lask came to Yealand after having spent some time in an internment camp on the Isle of Man. Elfrida said:

She was subject to dramatic outbursts of fury which at first did not fail to attract the attention of which the poor child subconsciously felt that she had been deprived. She was a brilliant, handsome, delicate little girl, with an outstanding dramatic talent which found full vent in her temperamental tantrums, as she raged and screamed and spat.²⁷

Marianne soon settled into the school's secure structure, but some had to move on to more specialised education elsewhere.²⁸

If this life in the country sounds idyllic, indeed it was for most of the children, most of the time, and John Holt writes 'I have always been grateful for being brought up in the country'. However, there were also problems. It was not easy, though fairly straightforward, for Annie Holt, John's mother and the matron, to deal with whooping cough and 'flu epidemics when 75 per cent of the children were ill at the same time. Not surprisingly a number of those who have written to me still remember being ill:

I'll never forget Whooping Cough. I coughed and coughed, deep wracking expulsions that left me starved for air. I coughed until I ached. It went on for two weeks. During that time I couldn't keep any food down. I started out as thin as a rail and must have looked alarming by the time it ran its course. It was a potential killer, and I'm damn sure it nearly got me. *Peter Roberts*

One of my earliest memories must be of your grandfather [a GP] laying me out on the dining table to remove my tonsils! *Michael Ellis*

Many remember Annie Holt with affection as someone to comfort them when homesick or when afraid of what might have happened to their families. Meryl (Lewis) Newbigin remembers the 'homesickness when my parents returned home, but Annie Holt took me to "help bath the babies" and my tears disappeared!'

Jaspar Kay notes that 'it was not for me a happy time. Yealand was a million miles away from home'. Jill (Tallant) Sykes remembers 'seeing the red glow in the southern sky when Liverpool was ablaze after bombing'. Two even tried to run away in the early days but didn't get very far and were picked up by a responsible motorist who took them to the nearest police station. Fortunately they soon came to terms with life at Yealand and as Peter Moore says 'many of the restrictions to which we objected melted away'. Most of those who wrote about problems said that the positive far outweighed the negative memories.

More difficult and stressful were the problems with staff, with control of expenditure and with the 'lease' of the Manor. There were difficulties at first sorting out a working arrangement as to who was in control of expenditure and of the original guest house staff—whether the school had to continue to pay them or whether they could replace them with volunteers. If they stayed on who could tell them what to do and to whom would they go to ask for an increase in salary? There was even some suggestion from Yealand Manor Ltd that they should have control over who was appointed to the teaching staff.²⁹ A letter written in November 1939 by Christine Sutherland (one of the original three Friends who founded the school) made it clear that they would be unable to continue to run the school unless these points were cleared up. Sadly, Christine died in 1941. She was an invaluable link between the school and Manchester Friends in the early days. Some of the volunteer staff found they could not afford to work without payment and they left to get a paid job.

Most of these difficulties were sorted out fairly soon, but it proved next to impossible to draw up a suitable lease of the building. Countless drafts were produced and not agreed by either the Overseers, the School or Yealand Manor Ltd. This went on until November 1941 when at last there was some agreement. This document was forwarded to the legal experts who only then said that Overseers were not the sort of body that could enter into this sort of agreement anyway.³⁰ (Perhaps it might have been better to go to MM after all!) Everyone said they would continue with the working arrangement they had agreed on—perhaps too exhausted to take this any further!

In addition there were minor disagreements as to who would do what proportion of the chores, or take responsibility for this or that unpleasant task. Probably because they were volunteers, a few of the staff thought they could decide what they would or would not do. And this was even more the case with visiting parents who were welcome to come and stay if they helped in the running of the school—giving the staff a much needed rest. The staff committee minutes are full of references querying how to coerce visiting parents into helping with household chores:

²⁹ December 1941: It has been suggested that a notice should be displayed prominently in the staff room, encouraging all visitors to take their share in community service, e.g. washing up, mending, etc.

December 1942: Visitors at Christmas should make their own beds, clean their own rooms, bath their own children and help with washing up.

Some of these problems no doubt surfaced because of the uncertainty under which they were all working. At first they had thought that the war would be over in six months³¹—no doubt they had visualised that camping out in the Manor for that length of time with volunteer staff would be quite easy to manage. And the Manor Committee thought they would soon get their guest house back. It soon became obvious that this was a much longer term project and that a different mode of working had to be sorted out.

None of the above problems were apparent to the children. They were kept busy and happy for most of the time and this included many walks in the beautiful surrounding countryside. Blackberrying was an autumn activity—coming back joyfully with brimming baskets of fruit which were handed in to the kitchen. Peter Gerrard remembers ‘a wood in which grew wild gooseberry bushes and I would in season follow the “gooseberry run” to collect the fruit’. This was fun for the children but was also useful to give variety to a rather plain diet. Although the children never went hungry and the vegetable gardens were a godsend, it cannot always have been easy to feed everyone on the minimal available rations. On 3 March 1943 the Staff Committee Minutes read: ‘We agree to go without sugar in tea and coffee to save sugar for jam making’.

Many remember the winter times; the walks in the snow combined with tracking animals, and sledging down the hill on Big Bertha—a sledge capable of carrying six children at once and which clearly gave many thrilling and memorable rides. Christmas at Yealand was the climax of the winter celebrations when every child received a present given to them off the tree by Father Christmas. His coming was waited for with anticipation and when all were gathered together in the hall a staff member peeping through the window would see him coming up the drive and all would hear his sleigh bells ringing.

I have left till the last to talk about Elfrida and about religious education. She writes (in an unpublished report on the Religious Education at the school):³²

From the very first, religious education was thought to be the centre of life at Yealand. Actually it formed the basis of the concern from which the whole work sprang... Yealand was envisaged as a place where as many children as possible might be gathered together during the war years and trained, however imperfectly, to live in that spirit ‘which takes away the occasion of all wars’. Moreover, it was realised that children who had suffered during their early impressionable years, whether in England or on the continent, might find new life in such an atmosphere and so be set free to give of their best in service to the community.

Each day began with School Assembly which was attended by all the children. Elfrida herself taught Scripture throughout the school—from stories for the very youngest to detailed work on the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer to the oldest children. On Sundays all the children, except the babies, joined Yealand Meeting after Sunday School and, as Elfrida says:

The meeting house door would open and they would pour in, filling up every empty seat and even spilling into the elders' gallery. Always the meeting had a welcome for them: the silence was friendly, the ministry adapted to their needs whilst linked up with what had gone before. At the close of Meeting, some would rush out into the sunshine again whilst others would hurl themselves joyfully upon the presiding Elder, John Robson.³³

[John Robson was well known to the children as he often entertained groups of them at his house in Silverdale.³⁴] Sunday ended with Evening Meeting at the school and there were always hymns, often a reading, a talk or story and sometimes a prayer. Often visiting Friends gave the talk or sometimes this was replaced with some music played by the Percivals or visiting musicians.

There is no doubt that Elfrida was an inspiration to most of those who passed through the school. Peter Moore (now a Church of England Reader) says:

Elfrida Foulds was the life blood of Yealand. We adored her, and she inspired us in every sense of the word... In particular I remain eternally grateful for the spiritual awakening I experienced at her hands... I greatly valued Elfrida's simple exposition of scripture.

Meryl (Lewis) Newbigin writes that 'Yealand was one of the happiest experiences of my life: an experiment in education and an act of faith'. Sandy Parker feels that the school has influenced him 'profoundly—providing a vision of the possibilities of a true community school, nourishing me and sustaining me through my teaching career, and my work with teenage Friends in the UK'.

Sadly Elfrida put so much into the school that her health suffered. The Testimony that was written after her death said:

Elfrida drove her body beyond its capabilities and with the closure of the School in the autumn of 1944 she suffered a severe breakdown. She was occasionally to be seen at that time in the corridors of Friends House, almost haggard in appearance and making her way slowly with a stick.³⁵

Fortunately she soon recovered and in a number of the children's books she wrote subsequently it is possible to see glimpses of her Yealand experiences.

The school closed before the end of the war because at the beginning of 1944 it was clear that a large number of children (mostly from the North of England where bombing was not by that time so frequent) were going to go home at the end of the summer term³⁶ and that six members of staff—some who were parents of those children—were also leaving. It was therefore not economic to keep the school open. Probably also Elfrida's failing health contributed to the early closing.

The closing minute of Yealand Manor School Committee (22 October 1944) notes that 'the study of Quakerism was introduced, not only as a subject in the curriculum, but as an integral part of the everyday life of the school'. It was due not only to Elfrida but also to all the other members of her staff that this was felt to be a reality by the pupils at the school, and is something that many of them remember to this day.

The school was only open for a very short time and it is not possible to evaluate fully its influence. Elfrida herself was clear that 'experiments along these lines can be of great value to the wider educational community however imperfect they may

be'.³⁷ It is certain that the school has had a long-lasting influence on many of those city children who spent some of their early years at that Quaker evacuation school in North Lancashire. Some aspects of the curriculum at Yealand were certainly experimental and since a number of those pupils opted for a teaching career it would not be unreasonable to assume that some at least of Elfrida's hopes were fulfilled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have had access to the records of Yealand Manor School in the Lancashire Records Office at Preston, the relevant Quaker Minute Books held at Mount Street Meeting House, Manchester, and the 25 replies to a questionnaire I sent to the 54 former pupils whose addresses I was able to trace. Quotations in the text with names attached refer to survey responses—participants consented to their names being used. I have also been greatly helped by access to various unpublished writings about the school by Elfrida Vipont Foulds and by conversations with Elfrida's daughters (Robin Greaves and Carol Shaw) and with Margery Wilson. The Overseers' Minute Books referred to are not available for general public access due to the confidential nature of some of their material.

NOTES

1. Brown, M., *Evacuees: Evacuation in Wartime Britain 1939–1945*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000, p. 6.
2. 30 September 1938.
3. The house formerly belonged to J. Rawlinson Ford, owner of a silk mill at Bentham. It opened as a guest house in 1936 and had about 16 bedrooms. Information obtained from Robin Greaves, daughter of Elfrida V. Foulds.
4. Letter sent 28 September 1938 to parents in Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting. Sample letter in Lancashire Records Office at Preston, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
5. Minute 5 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 22 May 1939.
6. Foulds, E.V., *Education for Adventure*, unpublished, p. 7 (copy in author's possession).
7. Foulds, *Education for Adventure*, p. 4.
8. Correspondence held in Lancashire Records Office at Preston, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
9. Minute 20 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting, 13 June 1940. These minutes are held in a safe at Manchester (Mount Street) Meeting House.
10. Minute 4 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 26 July 1939.
11. Correspondence held in Lancashire Records Office at Preston, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
12. Information obtained from conversations with Robin Greaves and Carol Shaw (Elfrida's daughters).
13. Minute 4 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 27 September 1939.
14. Article by Rufus Jones in 'The Intelligencer'.
15. Minute 5 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 26 June 1940.
16. For example, Margery Wilson BA, Oxon; Muriel Putz BA, Teachers Certificate; James Goynes (CO) Certificated Teacher; Ruth Wohlwill, Nursery Trained Teacher; Florence Burn, Fröbel Certificate; Mary and Burrtt Meyer previously wardens of the Penn Club; Annie Holt SRN.
17. Gerrard is Ann Burton's maiden name. All Yealand Manor School married Old Scholars are referred to in this format—as used in other Quaker Schools.
18. Reply to questionnaire.
19. Report in Lancashire Records Office at Preston, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.

20. Wilson, M., report on *Nature Study at Yealand*, Lancashire Records Office at Preston DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
21. Summer 1940.
22. Reply to questionnaire.
23. Given in May 1941.
24. Visit to Skerton School reported, orchestra consisted of 45 children between the ages of 5 and 12.
25. Report in Lancashire Records Office at Preston, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
26. Laxova, R., *Letter to Alexander: A Family's Kindertransport Experience*, Cincinnati, OH: Custom Editorial Productions, 2001, p. 79.
27. Elfrida is quoted in Diamant, K., *Kafka's Last Love: The Mystery of Dora Diamant*, London: Secker & Warburg, 2003, p. 239.
28. Professional psychological advice was available from Miss Celia Cook MA who lived locally.
29. Correspondence in author's possession and in Lancashire Records Office, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
30. Minute 10 of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 26 November 1941.
31. See special meeting of Hardshaw East Overseers on 14 February, 1940.
32. Lancashire Records Office, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
33. Report by Foulds, E.V., *Religious Education at Yealand Manor School*, unpublished, in Lancashire Records Office, DDX 1340 Acc 4499.
34. Personal happy memories.
35. Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Elfrida Vipont Foulds.
36. Minute 2(b) of Hardshaw East Monthly Meeting Overseers, 23 February 1944.
37. Foulds, *Education for Adventure*, p. 4.

AUTHOR DETAILS

Susan Vipont Hartshorne lived in Manchester, and had been a member of Manchester Meeting for the whole of her life, until she retired to York six years ago. She is currently co-clerk of Yorkshire General Meeting, a Trustee of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, an Overseer of New Earswick Preparative Meeting and deputy chair of York Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. She was a pupil at Yealand Manor School and Elfrida Vipont Foulds was her aunt.

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