

# Brummana High School

## Its British and Quaker roots

At the request of parents, as well as teachers and students, the Quaker International Educational Trust (QUIET) has decided to compile a short history of



Brummana High School and its British Quaker roots. We hope you will find it interesting.

There are further books on Quakers and the history of BHS in the school library and in the Quaker Mission Library, also at the school. You will find there, too, regular publications about the work and ideas of today's Friends.

### Who are the Quakers?

In Britain, after the political religious upheaval of the mid-17th century, a young man by the name of George Fox searched for a personal meaningful way of worship. He came to believe that men and women can have direct access to God and the Holy Spirit without the intervention of the established church, and without set doctrines and priests. He travelled throughout Britain gaining followers, some known as Seekers, who were disillusioned with the church practices of the time.

Calling themselves Friends of Truth, they finally became known as the Religious Society of Friends. The name Quakers was adopted after a magistrate called them "Quakers" as a derogatory term, when he "bade them tremble at the word of the Lord". Today members of the Religious Society of Friends are known worldwide as either Friends or Quakers.

The so-called Nonconformists, including Quakers, suffered years of persecution and imprisonment for non-payment of tithes (taxes) and for refusing to attend the Anglican Church. They were only permitted to worship in their own ways after the British Government passed the Act of Toleration in 1689. However, they were still expected to pay tithes and to swear on the bible, and Quakers continued to be punished for refusing these impositions.

### Principles of Quaker beliefs

Quaker beliefs are based on early Friends' commitment to return to an understanding of Christ's teaching. From this they developed testimonies to truth, peace, equality and simplicity. These beliefs were the foundation for work over the centuries in education, abolition of slavery, prison reform, peace and relief work. Today Quakers campaign worldwide and through the permanent offices in the United Nations, in New York and Switzerland, for acceptance of conscientious objectors, the abolition of child soldiers, disarmament, the plight of refugees, the environment and other issues of economic justice and human rights.



Quakers work in co-operation with other religious and voluntary groups to uphold these principles. In particular, working for peace has always been a Quaker passion and has become known as the Quaker peace testimony, and for which the Friends Service Council was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947.



### Quaker meeting for worship

Quakers met with others to worship God in simple meeting places. This holds true today though meeting houses have developed to accommodate greater



numbers of worshipers. They are plain without outward symbols or ornaments, which are regarded as unnecessary.

The basis of Quaker worship is the silent waiting upon God. Each person present, men or women, if they feel deeply moved, are regarded as capable of standing up and sharing their brief message. Such meeting for worship is called "unprogrammed" as it does not seek any direction other than how God moves them individually. In fact, most of the hour together is often spent gathered in silence.

Historically, Quakers became trusted for their honesty in business and in their dealings with others, which led to the founding of banks and businesses such as Barclays, Lloyds and Cadbury among others, many of which are still famous today.

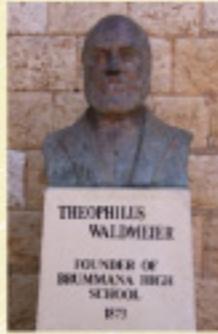
### History of Quakers in Lebanon

From the 1840s Quakers became involved in the formation of the Society of Education for Syrians, through their connection with a Syrian community leader, Assad Khayat. Among young Syrians supported by the Society were Elias Salibi and Tanious Ameuney, who studied in England through the Khayat scheme. Elias Salibi, with a Quaker wife, returned to Lebanon and started the Lebanon Schools with his brother Suliaman Salibi, and John Lowthian, a Quaker from Carlisle.



By 1867, there were 21 village schools across the mountains. In 1874, all the schools and teachers were handed over to Theophilus Waldmeier, who, supported by Quakers abroad, laid the foundation of Brummana High School and the Quaker Monthly Meeting. Since then, the school has been supported by British Quakers through ownership and cooperative teaching from local and British teachers.

On the land first purchased by Theophilus Waldmeier was a spring, which he named Ain el Salam – the fountain of peace.



In early 1876, a silk factory was donated by Youssef Abdel Nur Fakr, and became a training home for boys, who learnt carpentry, wood-turning and other trades. This building later became a hospital led by Dr Beshara Manassah, with British and local nurses. In 1900, Tanius Manassah took over responsibility for the hospital, and after his death in 1929 the hospital was moved to the building now



known as Rizkallah. Having been taken over by the French army, the hospital was closed during the Second World War; there was also improved access to the medical provision available in Beirut.

Under the auspices of the Quaker Mission, and with the help of Tanius and Mariam Cortas and Emily Oliver, the orphanage at

Ras el Metn was run by Daniel Oliver until his death. Unfortunately the orphanage was abandoned following an earthquake in 1956.

Theophilus Waldmeier's concern for the mentally ill led him to open a hospital in Asfurieh – "the place for birds" – sponsored by British Quakers and modelled on the Retreat Mental Hospital in York, still a Quaker concern to this day. Asfurieh became the most modern mental hospital in the Middle East. In the 1970s it was temporarily closed, and then sold to finance the building of a new hospital south of Beirut. This new hospital was destroyed in the 1982 war.

### **Friends School Brummana Known as Brummana High School**

Friends School in Brummana survived two world wars, the civil war, the Israeli invasions and other disruptions in the Middle East.

The influence of British Quakers waned during the Lebanese civil war. A local board, known as the BHS Cultural Society, kept the school open until a British trustee body, the Quaker International Education Trust (QuiET), was formed and became responsible for the school, and for safeguarding its traditions and ownership. In the late 1990s, QuiET appointed a local governing body to manage the school.



### **Quaker education**

Education has always been of the greatest importance to Quakers and today there remain Quaker schools run by Friends in Britain, America and around the world, which are attended by many people sympathetic to the beliefs of the Society of Friends. There are schools as far apart as Ireland and Japan run by governors and teachers in accordance with Quaker principles. Many are very actively supported by Friends in America and, as in the case of BHS, by Friends in Britain.

### **Quaker educational aims**

- 1** Excellence in education and the call for high academic standards and openness to new methodologies and curricula.
- 2** Quaker education is committed to helping each member of the school community realise his or her physical, mental, spiritual, creative and social potential. It recognises that every child is unique, all with varying abilities, which must be developed to the fullest possible extent.
- 3** Quaker education is committed to helping each person recognise his or her responsibility as a caring member of the school, community, nation and global family. Quaker education seeks to nurture character traits such as integrity, simplicity, honesty, co-operation

and compassion. Quakers encourage and believe in freedom of thought and expression. They expect, however, that this freedom should be enjoyed with a full sense of responsibility. Quaker education advocates non-violence as the means for resolving conflict in every aspect of life.

**4** Quaker education promotes the belief that all people are equal before God regardless of gender, religion, culture, colour or social status. Quaker education is built on the belief that there is "that of God" within each person.

Within the Brummana High School community, the school motto, "I serve", reflects the universal values embodied in the Quaker testimonies of truth, equality, simplicity and peace. Quakers put their faith in the testimonies to outweigh and outlast economic and political pressures, and create the way forward for young people of Lebanon and the region.



### **Brummana Monthly Meeting**

At Brummana there is a small group of Lebanese Quakers, who are part of the worldwide movement of the Religious Society of Friends. They maintain a keen interest in the development of the school, and several Lebanese Quakers serve as BHS governors or as QuiET trustees.



The peaceful Quaker burial ground beneath the pine trees in Brummana contains the graves of many who worked for and dedicated their lives to the Quaker principles and to the school.

Quaker meeting for worship takes place on Sunday at 10am on the school premises and everyone is welcomed. The meeting is conducted in the manner of British Quakers.