

## Walking the Walk - centenary walk of witness



Richmond castle was chosen for its historic significance in relation to First World War conscientious objectors. A number of COs were imprisoned at the castle, and the story of the 'Richmond Sixteen' is a vivid reminder of the harsh conditions and real difficulties faced by such men who simply refused to serve in the army after the introduction of conscription in 1916.

**T**his edition of our newsletter focusses mostly on some of our activities relating to our centenary, which is taking place this year. Northern Friends Peace Board was set up after a decision at a conference in January 1913 and has continued its peace work with and for Friends in the North of Britain ever since.

Reflecting the early history and more current concerns, a walk of witness took place over the summer between Richmond Castle and Menwith Hill in Yorkshire. A core group of 16 Friends walked the full distance of the walk, being joined by other Friends (and interested Methodists) along the route.

Accounts of the sixteen that have been written elsewhere highlight the variety of religious and political factors that motivated these men. These become very clear when one sees the extensive graffiti left on the walls of the cells – written statements of political and religious conviction, humour, images of loved ones and more, some showing impressive drawing skills and all revealing something of the writers and artists as people. The government of the day was so exasperated by the firm refusal of the sixteen, that they were transported to France and threatened with execution if they still refused. Fortunately, historic circumstances meant that

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### Statement by NFPB walkers, read at Menwith Hill on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

*We are a group of Quakers from the Northern Friends Peace Board, an organisation dedicated to the 'active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.' This year we are celebrating our centenary.*

*Over the past five days we have walked the 35 miles from Richmond Castle to Menwith Hill, linking two significant sites of peace witness which span our hundred years.*

*At Richmond Castle, sixteen Conscientious Objectors were imprisoned during the first World War, for refusing to be conscripted.*

*Here in Menwith, the personnel in the base dedicate their working lives and their skills to the costly illusion that peace can be kept by force.*

*As we have walked over the high moorland and through the wooded valleys of the Dales landscape, we have relished the beauty of the countryside and the wonderful variety of its trees and flowers, birds and animals.*

*We have been strengthened in our belief that the world is not ours to despoil and exploit in the pursuit of war and the perpetuation of injustice.*

*In the course of this week we have affirmed the strength of people working together in mutual respect, shared values and shared responsibility – power with, not power over.*

***As we start on our second hundred years we continue to be inspired by those who have gone before us. We anticipate that we will face new and unforeseen challenges to our commitment to peace. What we can be sure of is that all of us in this great movement really are 'in it together'.***

this did not go ahead. But the men had to continue to serve hard labour and suffered social ostracisation long after the war.

A number of descendants and relatives of Norman Gaudie, one of the Richmond 16, joined us at the start of our walk, for a Meeting for worship in the grounds of the castle. Around 70 Friends in all reflected in silence on the challenges and commitment of Friends then and now.

The walk continued over five days, culminating at Menwith Hill where the annual *'Independence from Ameri-*

*ca'* demonstration was taking place. The base is operated by the United States' National Security Agency, and has a key communications role in America's military infrastructure, information-gathering and global 'power-projection'. Friends and others have had to deal with imprisonment and other penalties for their determined efforts in holding the activities of the base up to public scrutiny. (see over for statement from Walkers read at Menwith Hill)

**Links:**

**BBC item on the Richmond Sixteen:** <http://bbc.in/1aL7MFk>  
**Information about Menwith Hill:** <http://bit.ly/18XxiD0>

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## Marking the past by looking to the future - NFPB Centenary Conference, June 2013

**'In marking the centenary of the Northern Friends Peace Board we wanted to use the inspiration of the past to take us on into the future of peace-making.'** With these words Jenny Hartland wel-

comed the 85 Friends who had

gathered for the day in York Friargate Meeting House to mark the founding of the Board in 1913.

She explained that the lives of past members of the Board and the organisation's extensive archive have inspired the production of a variety of materials illustrating its history: an exhibition (available in various formats), booklet, research papers, a calendar, postcards, tea-towels and candles. A thought-provoking pack of material which includes a specially-written play is also available and will be sent to every local Meeting in the Board's area. Details of these and other centenary-related activities can be found on NFPB's website <http://nfpb.org.uk/>

Keynote speakers for the day were Paul Rogers (Professor of Peace Studies, Bradford University) and Hannah Brock (of War Resisters International). **Paul Rogers** gave a wide-ranging and deeply thoughtful analysis of the chances for peace in our troubled world. He pinpointed the likely drivers of conflict in the next 30 years: economic injustice, climate disruption, the mounting frustration of the marginalised, and our continued reliance on the blunt instrument of militarism to put the lid temporarily on these complex problems.

Though the difficulties are serious, we have not yet run out of time, he said. Our role is to take stock of the threats we face and then to become 'prophets of the possible' in advocating peaceful change. Huge transitions like the



agricultural and industrial revolutions have been made in the past, and we now face a similar challenge: how to build a just world in which we can live sustainably.

Prophetic witness was a theme in **Hannah Brock's** address too. When Conscientious Objectors refuse to participate in military service, she said, they don't just refuse to kill. By their stance they actively affirm life and prophesy the possibility of a peaceful future.

Hannah Brock outlined how the hardships faced by COs in the First World War are mirrored in the treatment meted out today to COs from Turkey to Colombia, and from Finland to Eritrea. WRI supports them, as well as those serving soldiers in the UK who develop CO attitudes after signing-up. In addition WRI challenges the whole concept of militarism and the way in which it builds a culture favourable to recruitment. The increased presence of the military in civilian life powerfully contributes to the normalising of war through cadet forces, computer games, fashion, parades and memorials. Charities like 'Help for Heroes' do not encourage us to question why lives were lost or injuries sustained in the first place.

The afternoon was taken up by workshops on a wide variety of themes: Syria; skills for peace work; oil, peace and conflict; Scottish independence and nuclear weapons; the culture of militarism; marking the centenary of the outbreak of WW1. Enough to keep the Northern Friends Peace Board fully occupied for the next hundred years!

# Cake, memories, friendships and looking forward

In February, Northern Friends Peace Board marked the centenary of its formation with a party at the newly refurbished Manchester Meeting House. Set up after a peace conference of Quakers in the North in January 1913, the Board has undertaken a variety of work with and for Northern Friends, supported by funding and representatives from throughout the North of Britain.



The gathering in Manchester was reminded of the early challenges of the first world war and of supporting conscientious objectors through to the cold war

and more recent conflict. The 70 Friends present also heard how the Board's work had encompassed broader aspects of peace, recognising the roots of conflict in injustice, for example. Past staff and members joined with those involved now and invited guests. The first Secretary of NFPB, Robert Long (serving from 1913 to 1942) was represented by three of his grandchildren.



NFPB members present at the gathering spoke of their appreciation for all the service that Friends have given to the Board over the years, of getting a better sense of the significance of its work and an eagerness to engage with Friends in discerning priorities for future work and witness.

*Photograph of Jo Alberti, NFPB member from North and West Cumbria and Howard Long, grandson of NFPB's first Secretary, Robert J Long. Jo Alberti has written a short play, "A burning, living faith" that is available online and from our office and included in the resource pack described below.*

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## Centenary Resources

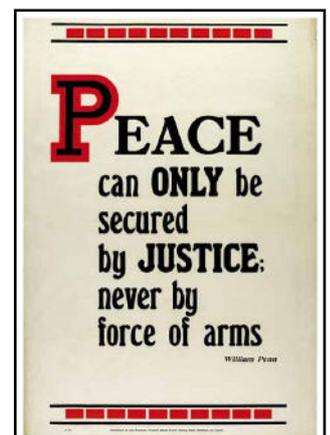
In parallel to the events outlined in this report, we have been busy producing a range of resources and materials to mark our centenary. We hope that they will encourage Friends and others to learn about the history of our particular strand of Quaker peace work – and from that, be inspired to reflect and act on current concerns.

- A short, **illustrated historical booklet**, reflecting the spread of NFPB work over the century. We have plenty of additional copies available.
- A companion 10-panel **display**, available to borrow in A1 size and to buy or to borrow in A3 format.
- **A resource-pack of discussion and workshop materials.**  
A copy of this has been sent to each Local Meeting in the North, and each NFPB Area Meeting representative has a copy.
- **Items for sale**, including postcards, tea-towels and candles



We are also giving talks and workshop to a variety of groups, Quaker and non-Quaker. In September, we shall present a paper at the Peace History Conference in Manchester (see over), and in October, giving a talk to an ecumenical day in south Cumbria.

**Visit our website or contact us for further information about any of these. See overleaf for our contact details.**



## Peace History Conference, 20-21 September 2013 *The Peace & Anti-War Movement on the eve of the First World War - lessons for today.*

Recognising the impact that the national commemoration of the First World War will have, the Peace History Conference looks at the peace and anti war movements and individual campaigners who attempted to change public perceptions and government policy, before and during WW1 and the following century. The conference includes a showing of the new film, '*Benjamin Britten - Peace and Conflict*', and features talks on Isabella Ford, the Northern Friends Peace Board Centenary, The View of Two Communities on the Eve of the First World War in Germany and England, and a panel Q&A discussion. Plus

stalls, refreshments, creche and Manchester Peace & Justice Trail guided walk.

The Conference is organised by peace activists and historians involved with Greater Manchester & District CND, the Movement for the Abolition of War, the Working Class Movement Library, the International Peace Bureau, Northern Friends Peace Board and Bradford Peace Museum

### Further details:

[gmdcnd@gn.apc.org](mailto:gmdcnd@gn.apc.org) or  
0161 273 8283.

Flyer (inc. booking form):

[http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/userfiles/file/EventFlyers/Conference\\_Flyer\\_2013.pdf](http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/userfiles/file/EventFlyers/Conference_Flyer_2013.pdf)

***NB last year's event sold out so early booking advised.***

## Building Peace in Diverse Britain

Our continuing work on this area of concern is being planned by a small project group of NFPB members and others. The group has run conferences and workshops and is looking towards running an event early next year that will focus on how young people engage with diversity and conflict. We will be exploring a series of questions. Here are some of these:

- *What have been your experiences of conflict and diversity?*
- *What has been your experience of situations where people are able to be together peacefully and in harmony?*
- *What do you think helped or might have helped?*

If you are involved in activities with young people (Quakers and non-Quakers) and might be able to gather some responses to these questions, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

## Sustainable Security

What are the underlying issues behind the way we live as society and in our own lives that contribute to a world driven towards by competition and towards conflict? How can we live better together?

- These are some of the questions we want to explore with Meetings, and are planning a workshop that will give space for **discussion** of the economic, environmental and moral shifts that need to be made for a more peaceful world.
- We are also in discussion with *Turning the Tide* at QPSW about the possibility of collaborative workshops to help Friends and others develop **strategies** for influencing change on these concerns.

**Contact us if you are interested in hosting either of these workshops.**

## Militarism and schools

NFPB members and other Friends have growing concerns about the implications of the government's policy of promoting a military ethos in schools. Speakers at our Board meetings and a joint meeting with the Peace Education programme manager from **Quaker Peace and Social Witness** have helped build our understanding both of the difficulties and the possibilities for making an alternative, pro-peace input into schools. We have not had the capacity to be actively involved with the **Peace Education Network**, but are

delighted that our concern was an impetus to their work to put together new resources, to be available from this autumn. We are also supporting the work of **Forces Watch** in arranging an initial consultative conference, bringing together people from different fields to look at militarism in society. Please get in touch with us with information or reflections that might help us discern the best way of taking forward this area of concern.

## Contact information

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