



1913-2013 - *The first 100 years*

generally in the active promotion of
peace in all its height and breadth.

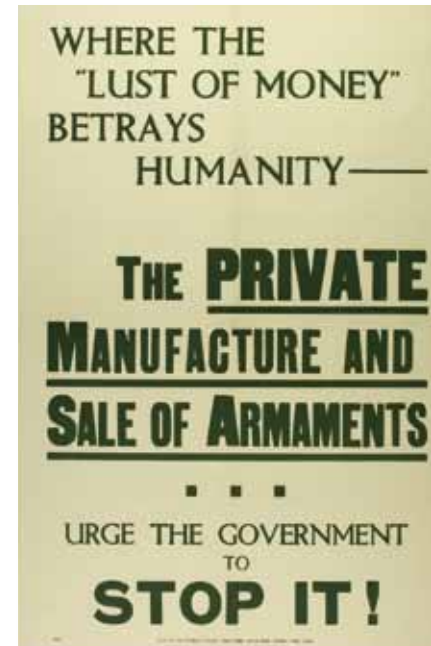
In January 1913, the Quaker Quarterly Meetings of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire, Durham, Cumberland and Westmorland held a peace conference in York that was to lead to the setting up of the Northern Friends Peace Board.

The beginning

The Quakers minuted that the Board's 'special duty would be to advise and encourage Friends in the North, and through them their fellow Christians and citizens generally in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth.' Since then it has had a full time paid worker - originally called Organising Secretary and now Co-ordinator - with funding and appointed representatives coming from Friends Meetings throughout the North of Britain.



Robert Long, NFPB Secretary from 1913-1942
Founding Minute from 1913 Conference
'Where the lust of money' Poster 1930's



"Advise and encourage Friends in the North, and through them their fellow Christians and citizens generally in the active promotion of peace in all its height and breadth"

Motivating factors

The accelerating arms race, deteriorating international situation and a growing sense of society becoming increasingly militarised were strong motivating factors for the Friends who set up the Board. At the end of their first year, they wrote "We are determined to maintain, as an integral part of our religious faith, our abhorrence of war, and not to whittle down in any way our testimony that it is a violation of the divine laws of human fellowship." In that same annual report, the areas of work set out for Robert Long, the first Secretary, included promoting knowledge and enthusiasm for Quaker principles, influencing public opinion, providing speakers, organising lectures and conferences, promoting study activities, distributing literature and even 'Provision and equipment of Peace vans to go on tour'.



The First World War

Within a few months, the first world war had broken out and the following years were a real test of the very new organisation. They rose to the occasion, but as well as the practical difficulties of meeting and of producing literature (due to wartime conditions) members of the Board were conscripted, some undertaking alternative service and at least one spending time in prison. Support for conscientious objectors and for so-called 'enemy aliens' detained in the UK, were other important tasks that the Friends undertook.

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In speaking their truth, they decided to ignore the war-time regulations obliging any published material to be submitted to the Censor. The Board seems to have proved its worth by the end of the war, with Friends nationally recognising the important role it had in communicating a Quaker peace message.

The teaching of the Society of Friends must be made increasingly influential. The Northern Friends' Peace Board has worked, and will continually work to this end. ..."

from 1916 Annual Report

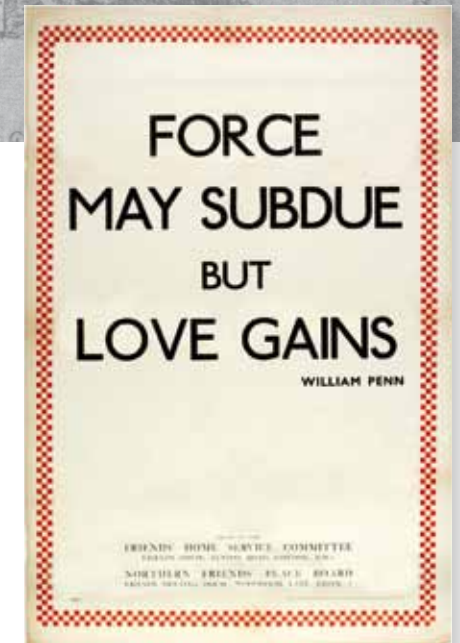
Graffiti on wall of cells at Richmond Castle where conscientious objectors were held.
'Force May Subdue but Love Gains' Poster 1930's
'Tribunal' - Newsletter of the No Conscription Fellowship



Between the wars

The period after the war was not easy for NFPB, with finances being continually under pressure. But the Board took an active and leading role amongst and beyond Quakers, making determined efforts to share its vision with other churches, at demonstrations and large gatherings.

Muriel Shearer, a former Liverpool Friend recollected in the 1990s her experience as a young NFPB member in the 1920s when she organised shuttle-transport for speakers between two city-centre venues, as one was not big enough to hold the audience that wanted to hear them. As part of their continuing witness against militarism, they spoke at open-air meetings and armistice-day events, for example.



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A tangible and lasting record of this scale of activity is the collection of posters that are housed in the NFPB archives, coupled with the facts and figures set out in the Board's annual reports in the 1920s and 1930s. Tens, and sometimes hundreds of thousands of posters and leaflets were distributed in Britain and abroad. The focus of many of these were on issues of disarmament and pacifism and its basis in faith and love.

Educational Activities

As well as campaigning in the public sphere, the Board committed itself to more educational materials and activities. The Board was already viewing peace in a broader sense, giving time to consider, alongside its core concerns, issues such as racial tensions in America and the legacy of slavery and the ethics of investments that were linked with the arms industry. Board members joined others in promoting a critical awareness of and investing hope in the League of Nations.



Photo - Peace speaker 1930's - Courtesy of The Peace Museum
Illustration of Marion Ellis, an influential Board member, drawn by Dai Owen

Your leaflets... have braced me and strengthened me in the stand against militarism. In military clinks and civil gaols... these leaflets buoyed up the spirit"

Letter from New Zealand peace activist, 1920

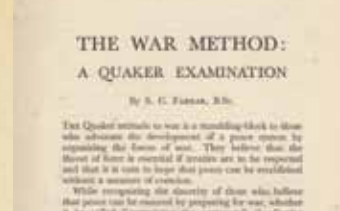
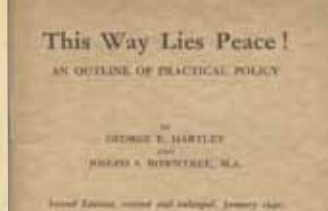


As the international situation deteriorated in the 1930s, some NFPB members developed work to maintain and strengthen relations between young people from Britain, France and Germany.

Their work within Britain continued at an impressive level, with one Friend undertaking 'Motor Tours' of the North, speaking to Quakers and wider audiences – particularly those in nonconformist churches – at stops along the way. Others were keen to develop links with schools and on adult education bodies.



'Disarmament depends on you' Poster from 1930s
'Which road shall we take' Poster 1930's
Motor tours of the North – illustration by Dai Owen



The 2nd World War

With the outbreak of war again in 1939, Friends faced similar challenges to those encountered earlier in the century. This time, they had a track-record and experience of working in war-time conditions to draw on. As before, travel and resource restrictions affected the work. Alongside these, Friends faced social and political pressure and so the posters produced during this time had a change of tone, stating principles from a moral basis.

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Throughout the war, Friends again faced the dilemmas raised by conscription. The Board played a key role in providing information and advice to Friends – and in particular to young men and their families – and undertaking advocacy regarding alternative, non-military service.

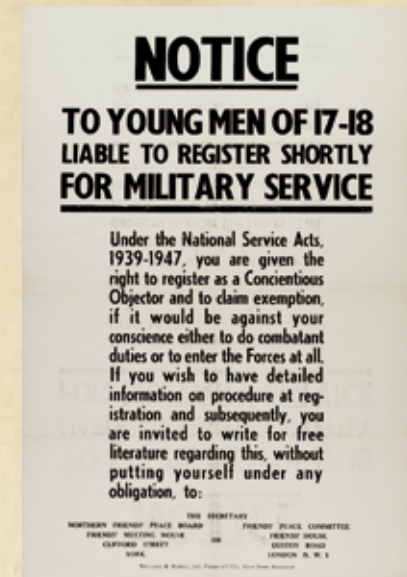
'Peace by Negotiation' was a strong strand of the work towards the end of the war, an issue on which the Board campaigned with a wider network of peace organisations. From early in the war, the Board and its members turned their minds to thinking about what next, after the war. Leaflets, lectures and study notes on this and similar themes were tools used for engaging with Friends and others.



Nuclear Weapons and new world order

The horror of the use of atomic weapons against Japan was very obviously a vast and new moral challenge facing humanity that we have since come to live with as a familiar but terrifying backdrop.

Critical minds in the Board were also able to see that the signing of the United Nations charter was in some ways just entrenching the vested interests and armaments of the Great Powers; again, we have seen this legacy continuing right up to our current times.



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Robert Long, the Board's first Secretary, retired in 1942. Stanley Farrar took on the paid role having already served as an active and influential Board member. The world was changed by the war and the Board's new Secretary brought fresh energy and commitment in helping them face the new challenges with a 'message of hope, without which the ravages of war cannot be healed'.

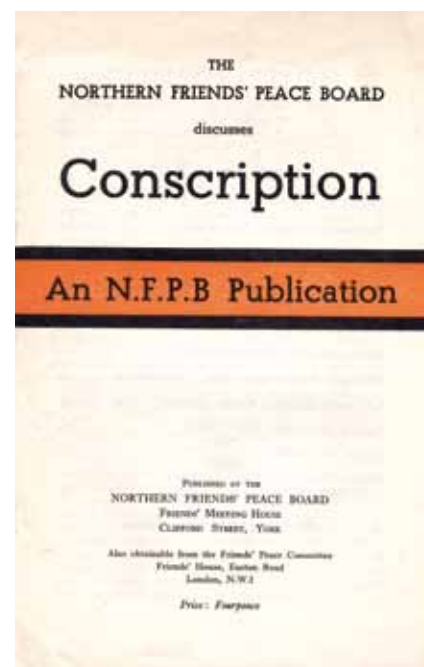
*Photo of WWII Conscientious objector tribunal by permission of Imperial War Museum.
Photo of Friends Ambulance Unit delivering aid to Italy, Friends House Library.
This Way Lies Peace booklet
The War method paper
'A Whole Peace' Poster 1940's
'Notice to young men' Poster from 1940's*



Continuation of conscription

An area of ongoing concern after the war for NFPB was the continuation of conscription for a further 15 years. Throughout that period, this was a major focus for the work and activity of NFPB. Along with other peace organisations, they produced literature, posters, made public statements and wrote to the government on the issue. More particularly, they made an effort to contact and support young male Friends and those attending Quaker schools, making them aware of the options for exemption from military service. This involved writing personal letters to all Friends of the age leading up to recruitment and running a series of conferences over a number of years.

Once conscription had ended, Friends began to address the fact that some of their taxes were still being used for military purposes and at one time in the early 60s promoted the idea that Friends might covenant a proportion of their income towards peaceful purposes.



'Hot War, Cold War' Poster 1950's
Conscription booklet, 1950's
'Disarmament is the only defence' Poster 1930's

"Governments and peoples the world over ... must come into that new relationship which, because it is founded on reconciliation and harmonious co-operation, will bring peace in its train."

from NFPB Annual Report 1958

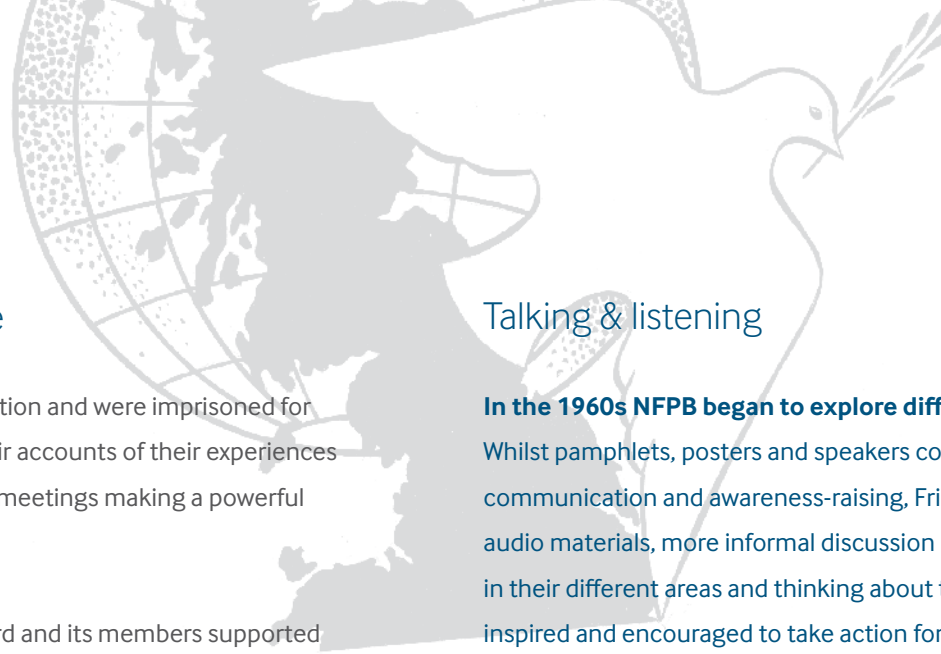
East meet West tensions

Friends were deeply concerned about the continuing and growing mutual suspicion in international affairs that developed after the war. A number of strands of activity arose from this. Whilst working to support Friends and others in Britain in reflecting and acting for peace in this country, NFPB became increasingly involved in international peace networks. Some of its key committee members and its Secretary, Arthur Booth, took an active role in the work of, for example, the International Peace



Bureau. They saw this as an important vehicle for developing an international peace voice.

With growing tensions between the East and West of Europe, this period also saw the first contacts with the official Peace Committee of the Soviet Union. One Board member visited the country in the early 50s and talked with Friends about his experiences afterwards, but it was not until the 1980s that this area of bridge-building work developed as a key part of NFPB's peace witness.



Britain's role in the nuclear arms race

From the end of the war onwards, the development and testing of nuclear weapons became a major concern. During the early 1950s, NFPB produced leaflets and other materials on the issue, drawing attention to the questions regarding the peaceful development of atomic energy. Posters on this were in great demand. As the decade progressed, NFPB sought ways of supporting Friends' involvement in the many burgeoning local disarmament campaigning groups across the region. Some of these Friends were involved in nonviolent

direct action and were imprisoned for that, their accounts of their experiences at NFPB meetings making a powerful impact.

The Board and its members supported a range of other demonstrations and acts of witness, from the Aldermaston marches to a large meeting for worship and public meeting at a base at Brighton in East Yorkshire, where missiles were to be sited. These actions were supplemented by conferences and letters to the press. In the early 1960s the first silent vigils, now such a staple for Quaker peace witness, were being held in town centres.



Talking & listening

In the 1960s NFPB began to explore different ways of working.

Whilst pamphlets, posters and speakers continued to be important tools for communication and awareness-raising, Friends were trying out the use of film and audio materials, more informal discussion meetings to 'take the pulse' of Friends in their different areas and thinking about the psychology of how people can be inspired and encouraged to take action for change, how to make peace witness effective and the introduction of the first NFPB logo (or 'sales symbol', as it was known at the time).

Monthly Meetings became the bodies which appointed Representatives to the Board rather than Quarterly Meetings and consideration was therefore given to strengthening links with Friends in their areas and to whether some work could be devolved to regional NFPB groups.



'Keep the clouds' Poster 1950s
Aldermaston March – illustration by Dai Owen
NFPB Logo – 1960s
Photo of Arthur Booth (Secretary from 1956) with
Leonard Bird and John Kay, Treasurer and Chair, 1973

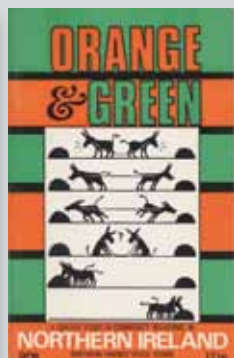
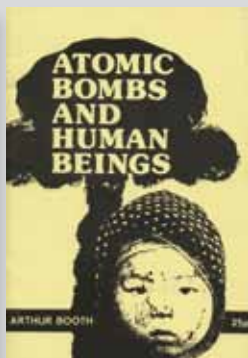


Making wider connections

During the post WW2 period, whilst much of the focus of the Peace Movement was inevitably on the cold war and nuclear weapons, there were also other significant changes in geopolitics. NFPB took a particular interest in post-colonial developments in West Africa for a while, with young diplomats from Nigeria visiting Northern Britain, for example. There were also links of solidarity with Vietnamese peace activists during the Vietnam war, with moral and financial support being given.

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Arthur Booth, NFPB's Secretary from 1956-76 left one particular lasting legacy; the book *'Orange and Green'* which he co-wrote with Northern Irish Quaker Denis Barritt. This book built on links between NFPB and those working for peace in Northern Ireland as *'the troubles'* built up during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It became an important resource for those seeking to understand the background to the conflict, even being issued to British soldiers ahead of their deployment in the province.



Towards a Quaker View of Russia booklet
Atomic Bombs and Human Beings booklet
Orange and Green book

From fear to bridge-building

East-West tensions developed yet further, and a reading of the Annual Reports of the late 70s and early 80s reminds us of how fearful people were of what seemed like the very real prospect of nuclear war.

The Board once again took an active role in supporting the re-emergence of peace groups in response to these growing tensions. It also continued to seek and to promote alternatives to armed conflict and the arms industry. For example, they were keen to spread awareness of the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards' proposals for non-military industrial production. One Friend took a particular interest in Costa Rica, a country without an army, and the Board published a booklet about this.

The area of activity that marked this period most notably (during which Roland Dale served as Secretary)

was inter-visitation between Friends and British peace activists and representatives of peace committees from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries. This was extremely demanding and not without difficulties, with differences in opinion about the right approach both between Friends and amongst the wider peace movement.

The publication *'Towards a Quaker View of Russia'*, brought the experiences and reflections of those Friends involved in this important bridge-building work to a wider audience. *"This booklet is presented to you the reader as one small step along the increasingly populated path of reconciliation – a prerequisite for survival in our nuclear age."* From the introduction of *Towards a Quaker View of Russia*.

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Photo - Demonstration at Menwith Hill, 1980s
Photos of East-West meetings in 1980s



Change and refocus

By the mid 1980s, with other peace organisations having become larger and more numerous, the Board felt the need to step back and to reflect on its role. It became clear that it was important again to develop a distinctive Quaker role and to return to the Board's founding minute. Alongside a commitment to strengthen and nurture the Quaker basis to the work and links with Quaker Meetings in the North, it took a broader approach to peace that encompassed social and environmental concerns.

Workshops were seen as an important vehicle for Friends to work together in learning and reflecting and in developing skills for peace work. NFPB members, supported by Co-ordinator Marion McNaughton and later by her successors, facilitated a range of workshops for Friends and others.

A youth-work project, support for the growth of Alternatives to Violence Project and travelling in listening ministry were other significant new strands. The Board as a community of Friends that supported peace-networking and action was nurtured by residential retreats, walks of witness and more reflective sessions at Board meetings.

"What is asked of each of us it to act where we are, using and developing the skills we have, but in the awareness that our piece of work, like those of others, is connected to the whole."

Annual Report 1988



Peace dividend?

The post cold-war period briefly held the promise of a 'peace dividend'; but global affairs are never that simple. NFPB continued to seek and create opportunities for speaking out and for witness, from the 'Not in my name' message on the badges produced by the Board in the build-up to the 1991 Gulf War to numerous acts of witness and involvement in peace demonstrations since. Electronic communications and the world wide web have played a key role in gathering and disseminating information and ideas and in linking people together.

Longer-term witness, political engagement and protest has focused on a number of key issues, from Trident nuclear weapons in Scotland to the use of bases in Yorkshire for the US Missile Defence system and most recently the use of armed drones. The regular Meetings for Worship at bases

connected with these have provided an important focus for Quaker witness. NFPB members have also supported more challenging direct action, such as blockading at Faslane, alongside letter-writing, organising meetings etc, that have always been key components of work for change.



Photo - Youthwork workshop
Photo - Board meeting in St Andrews
Postcard - Nuclearisation of Scotland
Vigil in Ambleside
Photo - workshop
'Star Wars' booklet
'Not in My Name' badge
'We must relearn' envelope reuse label



Roots of conflict

NFPB continued to look at the roots of conflict and at supporting non-violent means of addressing it.

Internationally, this has included the conflicts in the Balkans and the Middle East. Closer to home, workshops on 'Building a Culture of Peace' and a number of large events focusing on building peace in our own diverse communities have been key parts of our programme. We have begun work on the concern of 'Sustainable Security', working with others in promoting understanding and action on the economic and environmental conditions that need to be addressed as the conditions of peace, alongside disarmament and nonviolence.

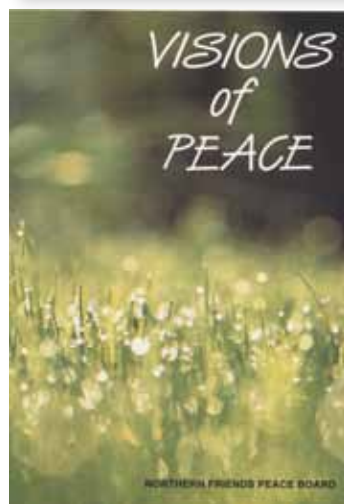
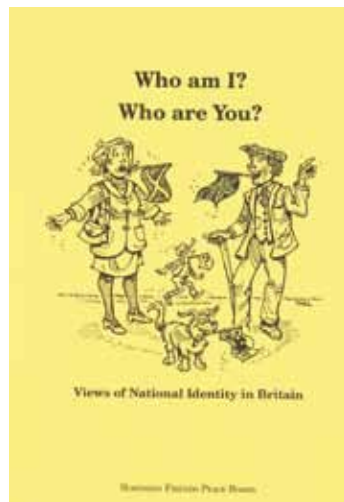


Photo - NFPB at anti-war demonstration in London, February 2003
Photo - Dialogue at NFPB conference
Photo - Young Friends at Faslane, 2007
Who am I? Who are you? booklet
1994 video cover - Visions of Peace

Looking forward

As we enter our centenary year, we see many strands of concern and action that have been part of NFPB's work and life over the years. In recent decades, this spectrum and variety has been affirmed in resources such as the 1994 video 'Visions of Peace' and in 'The Peace Papers' published in 2000. NFPB members meet throughout each year in worship and with an eagerness to support the continued expression of *'peace in all its height and breadth'*.

In preparing for the centenary we have been inspired to read and to learn about our predecessors, and we hope that this short account of just some of their activities will similarly inspire you. This year is a chance to express our profound gratitude for the Friends who first established the Board and for all those whose faithfulness and dedication have contributed to its life, witness and work in so many ways.

New challenges arise, our membership changes and new leadings emerge. The world and the Society of Friends both differ dramatically from how they were in 1913, but the same spirit and vision have driven the work over the 100 years since. We look forward to continuing the journey, wherever it might take us, facing these new challenges and finding new ways of giving life to the belief that another way is both possible and vital, and that we all have a role to play in putting this faith into action.

*"Northern Friends Peace
Board marks 100 years of
promoting peace in all it's
height and breadth"*



NFPB members and others, Liverpool 2012



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