

Quaker News



An update on Quaker work in the care of Britain Yearly Meeting



Shedding new light on militarism

No. 101 – Autumn 2018

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Cover image: Detail from #EverydayMilitarism poster by Abbey Thornton (see page 10)

Editorial

“You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove.”

James 2:18,
The Message translation

For me, one of the joys of being a Quaker is the way the inner transformation we experience in a gathered meeting for worship leads us to an outward commitment to a just, peaceful and sustainable world. In small ways and large, Friends over the centuries have sought, through personal witness rooted in our faith, to realise the Kingdom of Heaven, not as something promised for the future, but in the here and now of our everyday lives. The stories in this issue of Quaker News show what faith, and hope, can achieve.

Quaker changemakers like the group of Friends who cycled from Swarthmoor Hall, the one-time headquarters of the early Quaker movement, to 10 Downing Street (page 3); the Quaker chaplain whose ministry touches the lives of men in a Welsh prison (page 6);

the Penrith Friends welcoming refugees to their town; the Quakers challenging militarism in Scotland's schools (page 11) – all seek a better world, and commit their time, energy and personal witness to bringing that about.

Our witness is strongest when it is rooted in a thriving and vibrant Quaker community. It's right that we look after ourselves, too. Our buildings (page 14), our meetings, our children and young people (page 6) and our Quaker discipline (pages 4 and 5) all need to be maintained. Just as we look after our bodies by feeding and exercising them well, we nurture our faith by worshipping and witnessing together.

If faith and works truly go hand in glove, then we should not hesitate to spend time, energy and money supporting both. Our worshipping life, and our continuing witness, depend on it.

Paul Parker
Recording Clerk

Quaker News

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Britain Yearly Meeting works on behalf of Quakers in Britain, supporting the Quaker faith and putting Quaker values to work in the world. It is a registered charity, number 1127633.

Quakers try to live simply and sustainably, promoting peace, equality and truth. Putting faith into action is central to their way of life and they gather weekly for quiet worship, usually on a Sunday, in around 480 locations across Britain.

You are welcome to any Quaker meeting for worship. Find your local meeting, and more information about us, at www.quaker.org.uk.

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Riding for the common good

Meetings across Britain supported a group of Quakers as they cycled from Cumbria to London to deliver a declaration to the government.

Sally Ingham, Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting

It took 360 miles, 13 days, several punctures and at least one much appreciated fried breakfast – but we made it. On Friday 3 August Quakers from Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting cycling under the banner ‘Ride for Equality and the Common Good’ arrived in Westminster to present our declaration to 10 Downing Street.

It asked the government to: end the dismantling of the welfare state and the suffering of those who are harmed by the cuts; renew the welfare state to ensure a safety net for us all; commit to act for equality and the common good.

Quakers have long worked for equality and social justice. Our ride from Swarthmoor Hall also had a long history [see timeline], and has had support from various staff at Britain Yearly Meeting, arranged through the Economics, Sustainability & Peace Network Coordinator.

During the journey we visited over 20 Quaker meetings, sleeping in Friends’ homes and on meeting house floors and holding meeting for worship each day. We received

remarkable hospitality.

The meetings were enthused to be part of this wider movement and we learnt so much from them about changes in legislation that were affecting their communities.

Along the way we gave out leaflets and spoke to passers-by. The ride seemed to strike a chord with many, and we took part in several local radio interviews.

We are a group of varying ages and cycling abilities and were pleased to have several energetic teenagers with us. It was a big moment for us all to finally hand in the declaration. It was supported by a lot of research and evidence, so we hope it is taken seriously.

We’re now collecting postcards documenting people’s struggles due to welfare cuts, which we hope to present to MPs. Email us at quakers4thecommongood@gmail.com if you would like some for people or organisations to fill in.

Need support to take action on an economics or sustainability issue? Contact Ben Foley at benf@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1056.

Timeline of a concern

2014: A group at Southern Marches Area Meeting camp draw up a declaration titled *Not in Our Name*, describing the increasing erosion of the welfare state. It is later shown to Quakers from Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting (K&S AM), who are inspired to form a group to act upon it.

2015: K&S AM supports this group to bring in facilitators from Britain Yearly Meeting’s *Turning the Tide* programme to help test the concern and consider how it could be turned into action. An idea is hit upon to do a four-day pilgrimage, stopping at meeting houses along the way.

April 2017: The group walks from Sedbergh to Barrow in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

2017–2018: The group rebrands as *Ride for Equality and the Common Good*. They decide to try to make their cause a national Quaker concern and draw up a new declaration inspired by early Quaker Margaret Fell, who in 1660 rode to London from Cumbria to deliver a petition to Charles II asking that he end the persecution of Quakers.

3 August 2018: The declaration is delivered to 10 Downing Street by the group who, following in Fell’s footsteps, rode 360 miles to get there.



After 13 days of riding Quakers from Kendal & Sedbergh Area Meeting arrive at Downing Street. Photo: Isaac Peat/Ride for Equality and the Common Good

Creating a new book of discipline: who, what, where, when and why...

4

The central text for Quakers in Britain is being rewritten to reflect Quakerism today and for the future. Four staff members explain what this means and what happens next.

Once in a generation, Quakers decide to take a long, hard look at our faith, what it means to us, and what we can say about it. The bold decision taken at Yearly Meeting 2018 to revise *Quaker faith & practice* means it's time for us to do that again. It's tremendously exciting. There's a real chance to rearticulate who we are as a faith community today and what we'd like to be in the future – redefining Quakerism in Britain with a text that simplifies, clarifies and rejuvenates.

We want to hear the insights of younger and more diverse people and set out how we are a faith fit for the 21st century. Whatever happens, and however long it takes, if you are a Quaker you will be touched by the revision process – and it's important that you are. While we will be guided in this work by a newly formed committee, there will be ways for everyone to get involved in the process.

– Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

The revision decision: a guide for the perplexed

So what exactly are we changing?

Quakers in Britain have chosen to completely revise their friendly red book *Quaker faith & practice*, the current book of discipline for Britain Yearly Meeting. Other yearly meetings around the world have their own books of discipline.

Book of discipline? That sounds a bit strict...

It may seem an old-fashioned and harsh term, but I don't see it that way. I think of it as how we can show discipleship. Its purpose is to guide us into being a religious, spiritual community. Other churches have creeds so that their members know what they are meant to believe – we don't have that. Our book is “not a rule or form to walk by”, but a way of living up to the Light of God that we have within us, helping us to be examples to others.

Remind me what's in it at the moment?

Quaker faith & practice has a number of functions – it acts a bit like a cross between a guidebook for tourists and a council directory of services for residents. It describes our current national committee structure and how Quakers are organised throughout Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) – these are the nuts and bolts.

It also contains inspirational writing about how our Quaker faith impacts on the way we live. Some of this writing is historic and traces the history of Quakerism, other parts were chosen to illustrate how different Friends have approached our testimonies and lived out being a Quaker. This then gives us useful

Building a committee

Central Nominations Committee has worked hard to reach as many Friends as possible to encourage them to nominate themselves or others to be part of the new committee that will guide the book of discipline revision.

We had over 300 names by our deadline at the start of September, and now the true work begins. We will approach each nominee and establish their gifts, allowing the light to lead us to the right Quakers for a committee that will help guide a new book fit for the next 50 years. We ask Friends to hold us in the light during this task.

– Zoe Prosser, Secretary to Central Nominations Committee



Quakers of all ages took part in the decision to revise *Quaker faith & practice* at Yearly Meeting 2018. Image: Mike Pinches for BYM

pointers when facing something new or seeking advice or solace.

Yes, it does. So why do we need a new book?

Every so often a new book is needed to reflect changes in language and in what has happened to the world and our organisation. So much has changed since the mid-1990s, when the current book was adopted, even more since 1986 when work started on it. There are new conflicts and power struggles across the world. Climate change is higher on the agenda – what does our commitment to sustainability mean for us as a group and as individuals? Socially, patterns and expectations of family life have changed. It was a decade ago when we acknowledged that our understanding of marriage had developed so that we now see it as a relationship between two people and God, not a man, a woman and God. Our understanding of the diversity of gender is just starting. It will be an exciting journey, and one that won't end with this revision.

That sounds exciting. But will the new book make things more complicated?

As the makeup of Quaker meetings changes, we need to explore how our structures can be supported without expecting so much time to be given to them that there is no time or energy left for witness. I expect that some of the work of the new Simpler Meetings Project will be reflected in the new text, as will the vision of BYM Trustees for us to be “a simple church supported by a simple charity to reinvigorate Quakerism”. If Quakerism is a faith and way of life for today, then our book of discipline also needs to be accessible for people today.

So it will reflect all ages?

Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee was very careful to make sure that many age groups had an opportunity at Yearly Meeting to think about the current *Quaker faith & practice* and offer their thoughts on whether now was the time to revise it. The clear response from each age group was “yes!”. The



Books of discipline from around the world. Photo: Tabitha Driver for BYM

terms of reference for the new revision committee will ensure that younger people will be included in its processes – and the people in the committee will no doubt reflect the diversity of Quakers in Britain – but how this happens will be for the new committee to work out.

Will the book look the same?

This time we are being asked to divide the new book into two. The core will contain the principles of how to be a Quaker and why be a Quaker. Supplementary material will explain more about the “how” – particularly how we organise ourselves as an organisation.

For example, currently a lot of detail on membership application procedures is included in the book. In the future, the text may say that we welcome newcomers to be part of our Quaker meetings, but the supplementary material would give the detailed explanation of membership processes.

What happens next?

Once it has been formed [see box, left], the Book of Discipline Revision Committee will be able to start its work, probably in early 2019. Its terms of reference say it will “consult widely with individuals, post-holders, groups and bodies within the yearly meeting for relevant advice and counsel”. The process will be a long one, most likely years in the undertaking.

– Interview with Michael Booth,
Church Government Adviser

Books around the world

The Library at Friends House in London has updated its collection of over 50 books of discipline from across the globe to help Quakers as they work towards the revision of *Quaker faith & practice*. The library, and the library at Woodbrooke, now carry the full range of books in use by yearly meetings or national organisations of Quakers around the world, from Denmark to Guatemala.

Generally published either as a single authorised document or two separate parts, their contents reflect the range of beliefs and practices of Quakers in different traditions: liberal, conservative and evangelical. During the revision process it may be useful for Friends to examine how the books have been compiled as well as the diversity of beliefs and language they contain.

We hope that thanks to this, and our collection more widely, the Library at Friends House will once again play a major role in the revision process as Friends strive to seek out that apposite quotation to respond to the Revision Committee's needs. See the full list of books of discipline we have available at <https://bit.ly/2lapoRF>.

– David Irwin, Librarian (Printed Collections)

Three days of living adventurously

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The suggestion to “live adventurously” is a cherished Quaker quote. Taken from *Quaker faith & practice*, the advice alludes to making brave choices in life and seeking to live adventurously not just as individuals but as a wider faith community.

Flying at high speed across the Essex countryside on a zip wire may not be everyone’s first choice of how to do this. But for the children who took part in our Live Adventurously event in July, this was just one of many exciting experiences on offer – and one many couldn’t get enough of.

Nearly 30 children between the ages of 7 and 11 travelled to Gilwell Park located deep in Epping Forest to spend three days at the event. They came for a variety of reasons ranging from “because it sounded cool” to “wanting to know more Quaker children”.

Our aim in the Children & Young People’s team was for them to experience being part of a safe and supportive Quaker community away from home while also engaging with Quakerism in a different and adventurous setting away from the meeting house.

Each day was jam-packed with activities, including the zip wire, swings and climbing. After returning to the lodge to eat, rest and recharge, children took part in games and sessions where they could think about what living adventurously means to them, and how this relates to Quakerism.

For each child their time and experiences were as different as their reasons for coming, but at the end of the event there were happy faces, new friends made and memories that will hopefully last a lifetime.

As one participant put it: “I enjoyed finding out how life is living as a Quaker. And also that sharing a bedroom and laughing and giggling through the night can be fun.”



Young people get stuck in with adventurous activities over the three-day event. Images: Mel Cook for BYM

Could you be a prison chaplain?

Quaker prison chaplains provide spiritual support and friendship to prisoners and staff – and we need more of them in British prisons.

Marleen Schepers, Chaplains Support Officer

In the early days of the Quaker faith many Quakers were imprisoned for their beliefs. Ever since, there has been a continuing Quaker concern for prisoners, those who work in prisons and prison conditions.

Quaker prison chaplains (QPCs) and visitors are one aspect of this. Chaplains work within multifaith prison chaplaincy teams to offer spiritual support and friendship to prisoners and staff of all faiths and none, reaching out to some of the most vulnerable people in our society when they are very often alone and unsupported within the prison environment.

In addition to their other tasks, many Quaker chaplains have started regular 'quiet times' for silence and reflection, usually supported by fellow Friends. One example of this comes from QPC Judy. She has been running weekly Silence Inside sessions – "a half hour of quiet time followed by fellowship and refreshments" – for three years. They have grown a dedicated, and diverse, following.

"Our meeting has been multifaith from the outset, following a pattern of Quaker-led groups in other prisons," says Judy. "Our group is more socially, culturally and age diverse than any I have worshiped with outside prison."

Silence Inside marked its three-year anniversary by commissioning an oak table [pictured above] from a Buddhist member of the group that was crafted and polished by him in the prison's woodwork shop.

But while they may be well received in many prisons, numbers of QPCs are dropping. Over the last two years we've gone from 77 to 67, who are active in 84 out of around 110 prisons in Britain. We



A table made by a Buddhist prisoner for the Quaker-led quiet session at their prison. Image: BYM

need to grow these numbers to meet demand, and that's why we're looking for more people who would be willing to take on the role.

If it might be for you, or someone you know, then consider our next training taking place 31 May to 2 June 2019 at Woodbrooke in Birmingham. It will cover the practicalities of working in a prison and the spiritual aspects of being a Quaker chaplain, as well as the importance of developing a support network. Or, to find out more about prison chaplaincy, have a look at these three films (<http://bit.ly/wd3vids>) from the Welcome Directory, an organisation working to help faith communities welcome and support people leaving prison.

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A chaplain's story: Ruth

"I have listened, laughed, cried, sympathised and empathised with the men and staff in prison, but it was only in April – a year since I began the role – that I really found out why I wanted to do this.

A young man had died in the prison. He had been coming to the quiet group I and some Friends hold every week. Some of his friends still attend. I was asked to do a memorial service for him, only because I asked Chaplaincy if we were having one, so I had inadvertently volunteered myself.

I knew him quite well, us two Welsh people in a Welsh prison. I once sang the national anthem to him through his locked door when he was self-isolating and in a deep depression. He said it made him smile.

The memorial service had, at its heart, a short Quaker silence. This silence was intense and full of deep meaning. It was held by the 50 or so men and staff present; a precious and sacred moment for us all truly gathered there.

At the next quiet group session, one of the older men said that the very fact that a man was remembered this way made him feel that he, himself mattered and that he hadn't felt that he had mattered to anyone for the 28 years he had been in prison. That gathered silence for the young man and that ministry given by the older man are the reasons I am a chaplain. People matter."

Supporting the next generation of peaceworkers

8

How one-year Quaker-funded placements are changing lives and revitalising the British peace movement.

Sam Walton, Peace & Disarmament Programme Manager

Some people have a calling to work for peace. They are going to dedicate their lives to working for peace no matter what. It could be through campaigning, community peacebuilding, peace education or research and policy work.

As Quakers we care about peace and we want to make sure these people are as effective in their peace work as possible. If someone is going to be working for peace for the rest of their life, what could be a more strategic investment than to train them up?

That's what our peaceworker scheme does. We place dedicated people in radical peace organisations for a year, so they can learn the skills they need to be effective. In the past year we've had two very different people following their calling through the scheme.

Wayne joined the army at 16. After being injured in a bomb attack in Afghanistan he left the military and found his way to Veterans for Peace UK. Wayne has a natural gift for communication, and is finally using this talent to support campaigning work. Abigail is very different. Raised a Quaker, she has a strong concern for the criminal justice system. At Quaker-founded Leap Confronting Conflict (CEO Thomas Lawson was one of our first peaceworkers) she has helped pioneer new ways to work in prisons. We have faith they both now have the experience they need to keep doing this professionally.

Wayne and Abigail were always going to work for peace. The peaceworker scheme helped give them the skills and experience to do fantastic work, professionally or voluntarily, for as long as they are called to.

Now I hate to sound like someone from a shopping channel, but wait, there's more! I think we get double the value – because we also want to support organisations in the peace movement. By strategically placing peaceworkers we can significantly increase the capacity of organisations that are working

The peace movement is relatively small, and consequently this scheme has a massive impact on it.

in exciting new ways or are leading on a concern vital to Quakers. The peace movement is relatively small, even when compared to the climate movement, and consequently this scheme has a massive impact on it.

During the past few years the organisations in which we've placed our peaceworkers have benefited in a variety of ways. For example, Conscience: Taxes for Peace emerged from a financial crisis with a powerful new campaign. ForcesWatch has been

able to grow to tackle militarisation in schools. Medact has become a dynamic, growing campaigning body. Campaign Against Arms Trade, over the course of several peaceworker placements, has been able to dramatically increase its action and impact.

We usually have two peaceworkers each year, starting in September. This year we had an outstanding group of candidates and asked Quakers for help funding a third. We had an amazing response, which meant not only did we recruit a third peaceworker but we have some funding for the scheme next year too. The team are very grateful to those individuals and meetings who supported the work in this way.

You can find out more from Wayne and Abigail, and about our three new peaceworkers, overleaf. We hope they all continue to develop their skills and help the peace movement to thrive.

Find out more: www.quaker.org.uk/peaceworkers



Outgoing peaceworkers Abigail and Wayne. Photo: Michael Preston for BYM



New peaceworkers Zain, Charlotte and Joseph. Image: Michael Preston for BYM

In their own words: peaceworkers Wayne and Abigail

Wayne Sharrocks

“My first placement as a peaceworker was with the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), working on their white poppy campaign and to combat militarism in universities. I feel proud of my work, and that I managed to achieve a lot. But as an ex-soldier, dealing with military reminders every day proved to be harder than I had anticipated.

I was working full time on militarism. Editing videos filled with military reminders. Reliving experiences by giving talks in schools, Quaker meetings and even a parliamentary meeting. All great for the campaigns, but also food for unresolved issues from my army life circling in my subconscious. Things started to get very dark.

With advice from the team and doctors, I made the tough decision to leave. At first I saw this as a massive failure, but it had a positive result. I learned that working on military-related campaigns full time isn't for me, at least for now. And I was given a unique opportunity to grow: to branch out and explore brand new campaigning issues, working with Global Justice Now in the communications team.

I used to think that my personal testimony of military experience was all I had to offer to the world of peace campaigning. I was wrong, and the last six months have proved that I don't need to constantly relive the past to move forward.”

Abigail Darton

“My peaceworker placement was with Leap Confronting Conflict, a youth charity specialising in conflict management that delivers training to young people to support nonviolent, transformative responses to conflict.

I got to explore many areas of work, from supporting the management of the peaceful prisons project to exploring the effects of extremism on young people's sense of belonging. One highlight was attending Leap's annual awards ceremony, which recognises the work of those who support young people to manage conflict. The ceremony was completely led by young people, and was a showcase of their commitment to managing conflict in their lives and communities. It felt important and motivating.

During my placement I've become incredibly aware of how powerful a force for change conflict can be if positively managed. The skills I've learnt from attending training in this area have changed how I approach conflict in my own life, both professionally and personally. I really believe that these skills should be taught universally.

I continue to be very grateful to Quakers in Britain for the opportunity to work in a field that I feel so passionate about and I'm excited to see what my future in this area brings.”

Meet the new peaceworkers starting September 2018

Zain Hussain

Zain is currently finishing his masters in International Politics at SOAS while also teaching Hebrew at a synagogue. He has a record of innovation for social change, whether that has been starting a group at his university to feed the homeless or starting interfaith exchange programmes between Muslims and Jews.

It's fair to say that Zain has a passion and a flair for building bridges and dialogue. He will be able to use, grow and professionalise these skills at the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), where he will be working towards a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone.

Charlotte Cooper Beglin

Charlotte has a history of radical LGBT liberation and feminist work. Professionally she has done administration, press and librarian roles for public, charity and campaign groups. She will be placed at Child Soldiers International, where she will work on research and advocacy to stop the recruitment of under-18s by the military.

Joseph Jukes

Quakerism has provided a spiritual underpinning for Joseph's witness around nuclear disarmament and LGBT and gender issues since they started attending meetings before going to university. Since then they have lived out their commitments through activism at Cambridge and Sussex universities. Joseph is going to be working on making new peace education resources (possibly on gender and nuclear weapons) for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's peace education programme.

Painting a picture of militarism in Britain

10

How a new poster is provoking discussions about “everyday militarism” both in and out of the classroom.

Ellis Brooks, Peace Education Coordinator

June 2018 marked the ninth annual Armed Forces Day. Across the country people took part in parades, watched marching bands, and snapped selfies of themselves saluting to post on social media. Soldiers demonstrated weaponry and vehicles to children and teenagers, and fighter jets zoomed overhead to the delight of assembled crowds.

However, not everyone was caught up in the spirit of the day. Quakers were among many questioning the motives and merits of a nationwide celebration of Britain’s war apparatus. Inspired by the Quaker peace testimony, which regards all life as precious, they joined with groups like the Peace Pledge Union and ForcesWatch to present an alternative message: that war is failure and we should always seek other ways to resolve disputes. Some unfurled “war is not family entertainment” banners, others gave out leaflets. In Bury St Edmunds, around 40 Quakers and

others held a silent vigil and some spoke on local radio. These were brave acts, met with both positivity and also, sadly, much hostility.

Armed Forces Day is one of the more obvious examples of militarism in our society. There are many others: adverts for arms companies, camouflage clothing, or military-themed computer games. These are what we call “everyday militarism” – omnipresent but often unnoticed and unchallenged.

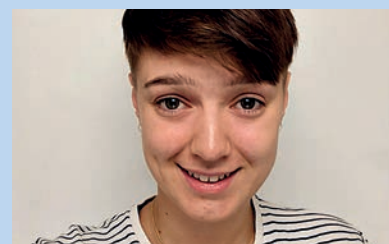
In the Peace Education team we are opposed to militarism and its increasing influence on young people’s lives. But we want to raise this with young people in a way that allows them to come to their own conclusion about its effects – to ‘show not tell’. We recently asked Abbey Thornton, a young Quaker artist, to help us do just that.

You can see part of the image she created on the cover of this magazine, and in full on our website where you can try an interactive version or order a paper poster (<http://bit.ly/EvMilitarism>) in English or Welsh. There is also an accompanying set of exercises that can be used to start discussions about it in a Quaker meeting.

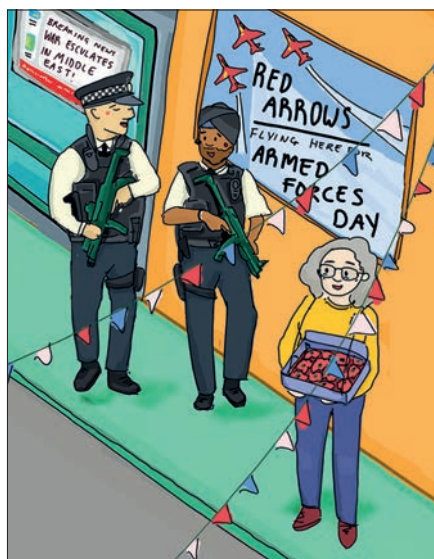
Everything you might spot in the image is an aspect of militarism that you could see on the streets of Britain: children are recruited to the Army at 16, there are thousands of homeless veterans, and refugees from war do seek sanctuary here. What the image doesn’t tell you is what to think about those things.

In the classroom, students can use the resource to discuss why things are happening, what the effects might be and what connections they might make. In a school recently, some students

Meet the artist: Abbey Thornton



“I used to be a member of the army cadets. After working with the Peace Education team at Friends House I began to see the increasing militarisation of British society – something I now see as a potential danger. This project was a real privilege to complete, though practically quite difficult and time-consuming. We wanted to ensure that as many elements as possible were covered, positive and negative. But it was also important to me not to dehumanise anyone. I hope my cartoon style achieves that, and that the poster will be used to begin conversations. Militarism is like an optical illusion: initially it’s invisible, but once you see it, you can’t unsee it.”



Detail from the #EverydayMilitarism poster. Image: Abbey Thornton

found the armed police reassuring, while many of their peers found them scary. Some were really horrified by the soldiers showing a rifle to a small girl.

We hope lots of constructive conversations will flow from it, making “everyday militarism” a common phrase – and, like “everyday sexism”, something that is more and more unacceptable to British society.

Challenging armed forces visits to schools

Thanks to more than three years of campaigning work, visits from the armed forces to schools in Scotland are coming under greater scrutiny.

Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer

On 4 July I was awoken by my alarm at 4:45am so I could check the Scottish Parliament website. While I have a keen interest in politics, I also enjoy having a regular sleep pattern. I try to reserve this kind of sleep disruption only for elections or referendums.

On this occasion, however, I wanted to see something different: a new 33-page report focusing on armed forces recruitment in Scottish state schools. It had been commissioned thanks to a joint petition from Quakers in Scotland and ForcesWatch and was the culmination of over three and a half years of work.

The petition called on the Scottish government to ensure that armed forces visits to schools were met with “greater scrutiny” as well as “consultation with parents and guardians”. With no clear guidance around these visits there is a risk that the education system can be used to market an

armed forces career without fully informing young people of the risks involved – something that Quakers in Scotland, concerned about the increasing militarisation of society and our education system, are opposed to.

The Scottish Public Petitions Committee is always incredibly busy as it is one of the primary ways people here can engage with the political system, so for the best chance of success it was vital the petition was well argued and had plenty of supporting evidence. Prior to its submission in 2016 we spent a year researching, discovering that over four-fifths of state secondary schools in Scotland were visited by the armed forces in a two-year period. Afterwards, we took part in follow-up hearings and associated media coverage.

During this process it was good to learn how many people and organisations are supportive of this kind of work. It can often feel

like Quakers are a small group of people trying to make a very large point. I found out that there were many small groups trying to make this same point, and our combined voices became much stronger.

Support came from a number of different areas: from health professionals (Medact) and scientists (Scientists for Global Responsibility) to children’s charities (Together Scotland) as well as the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People and the youth wing of the Scottish National Party.

When I finally saw the committee’s report I felt pleased and relieved. During the process it didn’t always look as though we would make it to this stage, and every step we take forward in this discussion I consider a win. The report made a number of recommendations, including conducting a child rights and wellbeing assessment on whether the content of visits is appropriate and balanced, and that data about the visits be made publicly available by the Ministry of Defence.

While this marks a real milestone, it is not the end of the story. In August the Scottish government issued an underwhelming statement on the report, promising only a “consideration” of the recommendations. However, the Petitions Committee is still able to ask for clarification, or a timetable of actions. I’ll be awaiting their response – but hopefully not as early in the morning this time.

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Are visits from the armed forces to schools offering a realistic portrayal of life in the military? Photo: kenny1 / Shutterstock.com

Faith in activism

The annual Quaker Activist Gathering is happening on 3 November in Lancaster. This free, multi-age event is aimed at Quakers who identify as activists and will explore the connections between faith and activism. Book online at <http://bit.ly/QuakerActivistGathering>.

Reaching new audiences at the summer festivals

Quakers in Britain were active at two big festivals this summer. Britain Yearly Meeting staff and volunteers ran a stall at Hay Festival, the celebration of literature and thinking, for 12 days and gave away over 2,000 gift bags to curious attendees. “The stall became a rest space for people where they could take a break from the festival and find some time to reflect,” said Gill Sewell, Ministry & Outreach Officer. Elsewhere at the festival a talk by astrophysicist and Quaker Jocelyn Bell Burnell about her life as a scientist and faith drew a crowd of 300 people.

In August there was also a Quaker presence at Greenbelt, the festival where art, faith and justice collide. Staff and volunteers ran a number of sessions from the Quaker ‘ResisTENT’ including talks and workshops as well as a silent disco, meeting for worship and even a ‘Spot the Quaker’ stand-up comedy set.



Playtime at Hay Festival's Quaker stall.
Photo: Anne van Staveren for BYM

New grant scheme for meeting house development

Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) has launched a new fund for local and area meetings that are considering developing their meeting houses. The Sawell Family Fund, generously gifted by Quaker Elsie Sawell in memory of her loved ones, will provide grants to help meetings pay for specialist advice on and support for their properties. It can be used towards:

- architects' designs, planning advice and other specialists when considering options for changing or extending a meeting house
- support with finding a new meeting house
- help with finding new ways of using a meeting house for the benefit of the community
- advice on ways to reduce the amount of time and effort that Friends spend managing their buildings.

The fund will not make payments for physical works as the BYM Meeting Houses Fund grants and loans scheme already does this. Lisa Kiew, Head of Finance and Resources, explained that the Sawell Family Fund will support Quakers in making big decisions about the future of their buildings: “It’s important to have good advice when making decisions. Sometimes the lack of that advice can lead to meetings getting stuck with wondering what they should do. These grants will allow meetings to get the information they need to allow their discernment to proceed on the basis of well-thought-out information.”

For more information go to the BYM website's property or grants pages or contact Malgosia Barczyk in the BYM finance team: malgosb@quaker.org.uk.



Resource for school visits

A core aspect of most Religious Education curriculums involves finding out about faith communities and religious buildings. As a result, local schools often want to visit Quaker meeting houses to find out about our worship, our history and our way of life, as well as explore our place of worship. This can be an ideal opportunity for outreach and to make connections with the local community.

To help this happen, Quaker Life has produced *Engaging with schools*, a new resource to support Friends and Quaker meetings who want to work with schools or other groups of children visiting the meeting house. It is designed to be adaptable and can be used in lots of ways – in the meeting house, in school, using just one of the sessions, or all of them for a whole morning or afternoon. It can also be used if Quakers are visiting schools to lead assemblies or lessons.

The resource is available to download from www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children or contact cypadmin@quaker.org.uk.

Militarism screenings

Would you like to host a screening of *War School*, a documentary film about the battle for the hearts and minds of Britain's children in an increasingly militarised society? We will be supporting Quakers to organise community screenings of the film from January 2019. Contact sahdyad@quaker.org.uk for more and in the meantime see <http://war.school> and its associated Facebook page for details of screenings happening this year.

Consultation on voting rights for Scottish prisoners

Following a joint submission from Quakers in Scotland and Britain Yearly Meeting, the Scottish government has announced that it will be consulting on prisoner voting rights. The submission was one of many from varied organisations who are keen for prisoners to retain their right to vote as part of a rehabilitation process. “Quakers have historically been campaigners for penal reform, as well as strong defenders of human rights,” said Mairi Campbell-Jack, Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer. “Our overall vision for a criminal justice system is one that is compassionate, forgiving and healing; a system that is restorative, not retributive.”

The Scottish government said it will consult on the issue this year, and with the recent announcement of electoral reform and franchise bills, Quakers will have the chance to make their views heard.

A taste of sustainability

In 2019 Friends House Restaurant in London will switch to an entirely vegetarian and vegan menu. The decision was finalised following a survey this spring where the majority of people were in favour of making the restaurant a meat-free establishment, and subsequently approved by Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.

Already a member of the Vegetarian Society and a CreatureKind Institution, Friends House serves a minimum of one vegetarian and vegan option every day, and doesn't have meat on the menu twice a week.



Conference for Quaker youth workers

The annual Quaker Youth Work Conference is happening on Saturday 10 November in Birmingham and this year has the theme of gender diversity.

Previous conferences have focused on social witness, well-being and being a teenage Quaker. This year's focus was chosen in response to requests from Quaker youth workers, who have experienced an increase in gender diversity at Quaker youth events. These events seek to accept everybody irrespective of how they choose to identify and present themselves, and the conference will provide practical guidance in this area, as well as space to explore how our events can support all young people.

The event will take place at Woodbrooke in Birmingham and is aimed at anyone involved in running events with young Quakers aged over 11. The conference is free, including lunch, but advance booking is necessary. Book at <http://bit.ly/qywc18> or contact cypadmin@quaker.org.uk by 28 October.

Vibrancy in meetings: beyond the pilot project

The Vibrancy in Meetings project is an experiment to see if regionally based local development workers can support meetings to thrive and become stronger, more connected, confident and engaged.

Vibrancy works in four pilot areas across Britain. With the project in its second year it's time to take stock of the challenges, look at what's worked and explore what happens after it formally ends in December 2019.

This work is being undertaken by the Beyond the Pilot Project, a small team of staff resourced by both BYM and Woodbrooke. These staff are informing and consulting with a wide range of Quaker committees over the course of the next months, with final recommendations for the development of the Vibrancy project being considered by BYM and Woodbrooke Trustees in Summer 2019.



Find out more about Quaker events and activism on the blog. Photo: BYM

On the blog...

The Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) blog is a place for insight, analysis and action. On it staff explain more about their current work, explore how it relates to current events, and take a look at Quakerism more widely. Here are just a few of the blogs from recent weeks:

- Michael Booth, who has been to many a Quaker wedding, outlines what makes them so special.
- Olivia Hanks meets a Quaker entrepreneur whose new mustard business is inspired by Quaker ethics and the new economy project.
- Paul Parker discusses how we make the most of our Quaker meeting houses. They have long played a key role as places of community and worship, but how are they influencing how Quakerism is growing and evolving?
- Quakers in Britain have a longstanding commitment to sustainability. Emily Dervisevic hears about three exciting projects that are connecting with people from other faiths who share a spiritual concern for the Earth.

Read the blogs online at www.quaker.org.uk/blog. To receive a monthly update of published blogs, plus other news, events and related content, sign up to BYM's monthly newsletter *Quake!* at www.quaker.org.uk/quake – you can unsubscribe at any time.

Dealing with property properly: Q&A with Huw Davies

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There are around 350 Quaker meeting houses in Britain today. They range from a Grade I listed 17th-century structure in Ifield to a city centre building in Liverpool built in 2006. While the legal responsibility of making sure they are well used and maintained rests with area meeting trustees, their day-to-day running falls to willing local Quakers and anyone they employ to help them.

Huw Davies is the Project Manager for the Britain Yearly Meeting Property Support Pilot Project, which runs until 2020. He is working with a small number of area meetings to see what kind of support will make life easier for those involved with Quaker property across the country. We spoke to him to find out more.

Q: Why should we look after Quaker meeting houses?

A: For some Friends the space they worship in is not significant, for others it has a profound effect on their experience. Either way, our buildings represent a very visible aspect of Quakerism, and of our history and heritage. If meetings want to continue using these spaces, they should ensure they are fit for current use, and that they are suitably looked after for the

future. Not bothering with property maintenance won't bite you straight away. But continuing to ignore your building will slowly catch up with you and cost both time and money – and even harm to someone if faults are not dealt with like loose floor tiles, unserviced boilers or wobbly handrails...

Q: What have you learnt so far?

A: Meetings really vary in their experience and confidence, and the amount of time they dedicate to property matters. There's definitely a need for standard checklists and simple training for Quakers involved in looking after buildings. Meetings should know the practicalities of what they have now and how it all works, be doing regular checks and documenting any work done.

Also, deciding what to do with a building that is really underused can be difficult for local Friends.

Q: Any examples of best practice?

A: Any meeting that is carrying out annual checks! Also, in an interesting development Norfolk & Waveney Area Meeting (not part of the pilot project) is trialling a property inspection, advice and repair management service provided by the Churches Conservation Trust. If successful



Huw Davies. Photo: BYM

it could offer other area meetings a new and hopefully easier way of looking after their buildings.

Q: What is your favourite Quaker meeting house you've visited?

A: Bakewell, an old listed building that is fit for today. It is well looked after, easy to get to, and has had all sorts of sustainability measures installed. The meeting has reorganised the space inside for today's needs, which means it is well attended on Sunday and used by many different community groups.

Q: What resources are there for Quakers involved in property?

A: On our website (www.quaker.org.uk/property) there are over 20 property advice sheets produced by Quaker Stewardship Committee. There is some very good advice here, particularly number five, a maintenance and safety checklist that I recommend all meetings use.

There's also a link to our online property advice group, which is open to anyone to join. You can post requests for information or offer advice. Usually someone somewhere has previously faced the same challenge in a similar setting. My hope is to create a virtual community of property people – it's really easy to sign up.

See page 12 for details of a new grant scheme that will help support meetings to develop their meeting houses.



Allendale Friends Meeting House, owned by Northumbria Area Meeting, which is part of the BYM property pilot project. Photo: Huw Davies

The Quaker grant that's helping create a warm welcome for refugees



Language lessons are just one form of practical support to help refugees settle in a new area. Photo: #PenrithWelcomesRefugees

How many refugees live in Penrith? According to Penrith Quakers, if a town of its size had its fair share of the UK's refugee population there would be 29. Having already become a Sanctuary Meeting, a group within the meeting was awarded a Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) Relief Grant earlier this year to make this ambition a reality, with funding for a pilot project to test the feasibility of getting refugees to consider Penrith as a place to settle.

The town has a history of welcoming refugees. In 1992 it opened its doors to people fleeing Bosnia, and in this current project Penrith Quakers have joined forces with the Penrith and Eden Refugee Network to support up to six single adult refugees who have been granted leave to remain in the UK to move to Penrith this year. Using volunteers, they will help them access the relevant local agencies to find housing and work, and will introduce them to community life – the very opposite of the UK government's 'hostile environment'. The project specifically targets single people, because unlike families, they are not eligible for social housing in the area in which they are living in Home Office asylum accommodation.

Local Friends have already organised fundraising activities to support refugees, ranging from holding a cake sale to canoeing the nine-mile length of Ullswater in a force five gale in January. If this phase of the project is successful and refugees begin to settle in Penrith, seeing it as a town committed to inclusion and equality, the next stage will involve setting up a social housing trust to support more vulnerable refugees who would not be able to consider moving to the town without initial access to social housing.

That is still some way down the line, but through the QPSW Relief Grant we are helping to support these Friends' vision of Penrith as a refugee-friendly town where those who arrive receive a warm welcome and practical support to integrate.

QPSW Relief Grants are given to projects for the alleviation of suffering as a result of war, conflict, natural disasters and climate change, but not for immediate crisis relief. Up to £4,000 can be applied for by individual Quakers with the backing of at least one Quaker meeting. Each year application packs are available between October and January at www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw-grants.

Contribute to Quaker work

Serve on a Quaker committee: phone 020 7663 1121, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givetime.

Make a donation or leave a gift in your will: contact Vicky Torrance on 020 7663 1117 or victoriat@quaker.org.uk, or visit www.quaker.org.uk/givemoney.

Get more Quaker news

Sign up to *Quake!* our monthly email newsletter for news and views for all Quakers in Britain: www.quaker.org.uk/quake.

Access digital back issues of Quaker News at www.quaker.org.uk/qn. To make changes to your subscription or request paper back issues contact Bex Gerrard on 020 7663 1157 or at qn@quaker.org.uk.

Connect with Quakers in Britain

Phone us on 020 7663 1000, email enquiries@quaker.org.uk or write to Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Enter your postcode at www.quaker.org.uk/meetings to search for a Quaker meeting near you.

Find us on Facebook and Twitter: click the icons at www.quaker.org.uk or search for 'Quakers in Britain'.



Quakers: committed to caring for peace and planet

Quakers share a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Their unity is based on shared understanding and a shared practice of silent worship, where they seek a communal stillness.

Quakers seek to experience God directly, within themselves and in their relationships with others and the world around them. They meet together for worship in local meetings, which are open to all who wish to attend.

Quakers try to live with honesty and integrity. This means speaking truth to all, including people in positions of power.

The Quaker commitment to peace arises from the conviction that love is at the heart of existence and that all human beings are unique and equal.

This leads Quakers to put their faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violence.

Quakers try to live simply. They are concerned about the excesses and unfairness of our consumer society and the unsustainable use of natural resources.

To find out more about the Quaker way visit www.quaker.org.uk or request a free information pack using the form below.



Request a free information pack:

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

Please send completed form to:
Quaker Outreach (QN)
FREEPOST QUAKERS

FREEPHONE: 0808 109 1651

E: outreach@quaker.org.uk

Meet Arjun Nanning Ramamurthy



Arjun Nanning Ramamurthy is an attender of North London Area Meeting. He recently served as co-clerk of Junior Yearly Meeting 2018.

I was born into a Quaker family and grew up attending meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting's children's programme, where I found community and friendship. However, it was when I began more widely attending events specifically for young Quakers (when I was around 11 years old) that I felt I truly began to connect with Quakerism for myself.

I now had the opportunity to explore contemporary issues, Quakerism, and spirituality with other young Quakers. I find that young Quakers seem to be more open to talking about issues such as diversity within Quakerism, encouraging me to think a lot about the world and myself. My experiences at young Quaker events have had a significant impact on my life.

This year I was co-clerk for Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), the event for Quakers aged 15–18 that runs as part of Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering of Quakers in Britain. Having been nominated for the role at JYM 2017, I decided to take it on because I'd experienced how amazing, helpful, and enjoyable the event had been and wanted to be a part of creating something similar. My sister Anya has also served

on arrangements committees previously and shared her positive experiences of them.

Initially, I found the added responsibility of co-clerking JYM challenging. While the quantity of work required wasn't huge, it was enough to make me realise that I needed to plan my time better so that I could fit it all in around school and seeing my friends. Despite the challenge, it was great fun, and wonderful to see JYM 2018 slowly taking shape and people enjoying themselves during the event.

Serving as co-clerk boosted my confidence and organisational skills and gave me a deeper understanding of Quaker methods. I loved having a greater involvement with Quakerism and the opportunity to have a specific role. It has inspired me to volunteer on the Quaker pilgrimage for 12- to 15-year-olds taking place later this year.

Find out more about opportunities for young Quakers at www.quaker.org.uk/young-people. If you are interested in serving on a national Quaker committee, please phone 020 7663 1121, email nominations@quaker.org.uk or visit www.quaker.org.uk/service.