



# Disarm



## ...For Peace

Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Peace & Disarmament Programme

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## Peace: 350 years on

*Sam Walton describes the Peace & Disarmament Programme's work around an important anniversary for Quakers.*

January 2011 marked the 350th anniversary of the first written declaration of a Quaker commitment to peace, a declaration by early Quakers in January 1661 to Charles II.

The peace testimony has always been more than just words. It is an active expression of our understanding of the nature of how we should live in this world: an understanding that comes from our experiences of meeting together in worship – periods of collective quiet prayer and reflection. It is an evolving expression of an insight at the heart of our approach to faith, challenging us in every generation.

All the same, we want to take this opportunity to celebrate our Quaker commitment to peace, to tell others of our peace work and to think about the tough demands that the peace testimony places on us as Friends. To this end we have launched a series of resources to enable Friends to do this.

A new leaflet – *The Quaker peace testimony* – has been produced, containing a timeline of Quaker work for peace, some information on the background to the declaration to Charles II, a section on individual Quakers' witness to peace, an essay on the spiritual basis of our peace testimony, and an overview of Quaker peace organisations in Britain.

At Britain Yearly Meeting 2010, we launched a workshop entitled '350 years on – what does the peace testimony mean today?'. The pack is

designed so a Friend, in membership or an attender, can use it to run the workshop. No expert knowledge about Quaker history, passion about the peace testimony or expertise in running workshops is required. The workshop is also designed to be open to anyone who is interested, and should take about two hours.

These workshops are being run in many meetings right across the country, and as part of it Friends are being asked "What could a 21st-century declaration of our peace testimony look like?" The responses will be collected and used to make a contemporary declaration, or something else if that is where the spirit leads Friends.

This will be presented to Yearly Meeting Gathering 2011, and we are also calling out to Friends to bring their peace banners to Yearly Meeting Gathering in Canterbury, where we hope to put on a lively display, make new banners with all ages, and hopefully run other sessions around the theme of peace.

Quaker Week 2011 will also have a peace focus, which will be a great opportunity to use some of the peace resources made this year.

All of these resources can be found on [www.quaker.org.uk/350](http://www.quaker.org.uk/350), or you can use the contact details at the end of this newsletter to request hard copies. You can also feed in your answer to "What could a 21st-century declaration of our peace testimony look like?" at [www.quaker.org.uk/350](http://www.quaker.org.uk/350).

# Report from QPSW placement with Campaign Against Arms Trade

I'll start with a bold statement. I think I have the best job in the world – here's why... I recently became a Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) peaceworker, and without any exaggeration whatsoever it has been the best thing I've done with my career. The role I've been given fits like a glove, or at least an extremely comfortable pair of hush puppies!

I firmly believe that using violence to obtain human rights and democracy is a contradiction in terms and that human ends can never justify inhuman means. I have the pleasure of working for an organisation whose *raison d'être* is to work towards the ending of the international arms trade, to develop a base of support to promote progressive demilitarisation, highlight arms trade issues in the media and in Parliament and end government political and financial support for arms exports. How lucky am I?!

My placement is with Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), where I co-ordinate the Universities Network. I'm blessed to get to work with some of the most passionate and dedicated people who inspire me into action on a daily basis. I've launched a campaign to kick arms companies off campus (focusing on the world's largest weapons producer, BAE Systems), organised actions, I've even had the opportunity to create CAAT's alternative careers event, which focuses on informing students about ethical career options and ethical employers so they have the option to choose a socially productive career. It has been a whirlwind of an adventure where the environment is fun, and the work is effective. This fills me with renewed vigour to put my faith

into action, which I feel is the purpose of the peaceworker placement.

The QPSW peaceworker scheme really is invaluable in creating opportunities for people with limited experience in the third sector, and I feel deeply privileged to be a part of it.



Abi (above the B of BAE) and Friends at a careers fair.

QPSW has taken an extreme amount of care to get to has taken care to get to know peaceworkers' skills and working styles in order to place them somewhere they will excel and enjoy. The placements available are not limited to the UK, there are also placement opportunities in the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and in Burundi. The options are vast, challenging and rewarding and I would highly recommend this to anyone who wants their career to be part of creating a more peaceful and fair society.

CAAT website: [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)

CAAT Universities Network microsite:  
<http://universities.caat.org.uk>

Abi Haque, Thaxted AM

# Building sustainability, building peace

*What does it mean to have a commitment to peace in a world faced with climate change, environmental degradation and resource depletion?*

Our current economic system is violent to the planet. It calls for continuing economic growth, on the presumption that this will bring increased happiness and well-being. The erosion of the environment – caused by overconsumption – means that people, particularly those who consume very little, are already finding it increasingly difficult to live off the land. This is unfair and unjust and is contrary to our testimony to equality.

Moreover, it is these same people who are the most likely to find themselves involved in the increased violent conflict and instability arising from unsustainable consumption patterns.

We cannot be at peace when our behaviour leads to injustice and suffering because we are using more than our fair share of resources. We violate (cause violence to) both people and planet when we do so.

Do Quakers have an alternative vision for the world, where people live on the planet in a way that maintains the earth in its beauty and diversity and enables all things to flourish, in justice and in peace?

What would a nonviolent economy look like? One that is not dependent on infinite growth or on social injustice and inequality, that recognises the finite nature of many of the planet's resources, and harnesses and respects the power of those that can be renewed? These are among the many questions that many people (including Quakers) are asking. This is at the heart of our peace testimony today.

In committing to peace Friends commit to affirming and upholding those things that enable all life to flourish. This can be done without violence and injustice but it requires commitment and imagination. Strategies are needed to resist and challenge that which contradicts this. Therefore, when we live sustainably and we seek ways to build an alternative economy, we work for peace. In witnessing to peace we must search for sustainable ways of living in the world.



**The new briefing *Building sustainability, building peace***

Further resources:

This article is based on a thinkpiece written by Sunniva Taylor, called *Building sustainability, building peace*. It is available to download at [www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sustainability) or from Sunniva ([sunnivat@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sunnivat@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1047).

QPSW, Northern Friends Peace Board and Oxford Research Group have also been collaborating to produce a briefing for Friends on sustainable security. It will be available at [www.quaker.org.uk](http://www.quaker.org.uk) in the spring.

## Festival time

In August 2010 QPSW played a central role in co-ordinating the Peace Zone at the Greenbelt Christian Arts Festival. The Peace Zone is a unique area of the festival which offers visitors the opportunity to engage with peace issues through a variety of fun, interactive and educational resources and activities. The focus of the Peace Zone was “What is active nonviolence?”, and there was a range of activities to encourage people to find out about it.

A project of the Network of Christian Peace Organisations (of which QPSW is a member), the Peace Zone aims to promote Christian peacemaking and nonviolence to festival-goers of all ages. If you are interested in a weekend of great music, stimulating discussion and fun activities for everyone, visit [www.greenbelt.org.uk](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk) or call 020 7374 2760 to book your ticket.

## After the Bomb Dropped: How Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered

In August 2010 Friends House co-hosted with Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) an exhibition from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. An exciting programme of events was put on, including a discussion between chair of CND Kate Hudson and Quaker Caroline Westgate on the impact Hiroshima and Nagasaki had on CND, Quakers and the peace movement over 65 years, film screenings, and events for young people.

However, the highlight of the exhibition was Mr. Shoso Kawamoto, an A-bomb survivor, talking in Friends House and around London about his experiences of surviving the atomic destruction of August 1945, and the effect that this has had on his life. Whilst the artefacts have been returned to Japan, the exhibition panels have been passed on to Coventry Cathedral, so there may be another chance to see the exhibition in the future.

## About the QPSW Peace & Disarmament Programme

*Disarm ... For Peace* is edited by Sam Walton, the manager of the Peace & Disarmament Programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW).

The programme is one of a number in QPSW working to further peace, social justice and other areas of Quaker interest and concern.

We:

- work with Quakers and others to develop a deeper and wider understanding of the Quaker peace testimony
- campaign for sustainable global security through disarmament, and against militarism
- support the peace movement
- lead the Quaker response in Britain to international military crises.

Current priority areas include celebrating the 350th anniversary of the declaration to Charles II (the first written record of a Quaker commitment to peace), publicising peace issues amongst Friends and others, and working with other groups in the peace movement to help forge and maintain a peacebuilding community.

## Resources

For the latest events, resources and action opportunities, visit

[www.peaceexchange.org.uk](http://www.peaceexchange.org.uk).

To subscribe to this newsletter or to update your contact details, please contact us at [disarm@quaker.org.uk](mailto:disarm@quaker.org.uk) or on 020 7663 1067.

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Visit us on the web at [www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw](http://www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw)

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Articles in *Disarm ... For Peace* not written by QPSW staff may not reflect the views of Britain Yearly Meeting or QPSW.