

The Northern Quaker

Spring / Summer 2016

North Scotland Area Meeting

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Area Meetings for 2016 & 2017

- 26- 28th August Residential at Pluscarden Abbey
- 5th November Aberdeen
- February 2017 Inverness

General Meetings for Scotland in 2016

- 10th September Aberdeen
- 12/13th Nov Perth (residential)

Online newsletters *Tayside Quaker*, *West of Scotland Quaker News*, *Northern Quaker*, *Scottish Friend* available on the GM website:
<http://www.quakerscotland.org>

Courses and conferences; *Remember North of Scotland Quaker Trust has funds for attendance at these events!* Check the Woodbrooke catalogue at
www.woodbrooke.org.uk or tel. 0121 472 5171

Welcome to the latest edition of the Northern Quaker.

As well as reports from Area Meetings, Sufferings, Northern Friends' Peace Board, and information on the forthcoming Pluscarden residential Area Meeting, we also have several articles related to the First World War.

The name we give to this conflict, *the Great War*, derives from the inscription on the victory medals awarded to soldiers who fought in it—*the Great War for Civilisation (see front cover)*. This is how it was portrayed as part of the justification for waging it, and in Robert Fisk's book of the same name (Harper Perennial 2005—highly recommended reading) the newspaper correspondent draws comparisons between the situation in 1914-18 and the current conflict between the West and Islam. The main basis for this comparison is the mutual lack of understanding (or even willingness to understand) leading to distrust and conflict, which existed between Britain and Germany in the first half of the 20th century, and the similar attitudes displayed towards Islam which is now embodied in the so-called "war on terror".

If you are receiving this in the printed edition, please consider if you might wish to switch to the email version which contains coloured photographs as well as a "clickable" contents list for easy navigation and hyperlinks in the various articles. If you wish for your name to be transferred from the print to the email list, please send the address to harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

As usual, please send contributions for future editions in any form to myself: Harry Horsley, 11 Cottown of Balgownie, Aberdeen AB23 8JQ, harrydhorsley@gmail.com.

Meeting for Sufferings

Meeting for Sufferings April 2nd 2016 [^contents](#)

Much of the meeting was devoted to considering our current calling and priorities - 'Living out our Faith', the focus being the 'Call to Equality' discerned in Yearly Meeting's minute 36 last year. This minute tasked

Meeting for Sufferings with 'taking the work on social and economic injustice forward, co-ordinating the work of local and area meetings who might wish to become more deeply involved, and encouraging the deep spiritual and intellectual searching that could underpin a 'true social order' for our age'. We were asked to consider what this means from the perspective of Friends in our area and local meetings, what would help co-ordinate our work with others, and what would help our searching. We were also asked in what ways AMs support individuals and LMs to test concerns and how Friends can help each other to articulate the faith basis of a concern (which needs to be made explicit when AMs send minutes of concern to Sufferings). In response, Sufferings does not see its role as co-ordination, but rather as leading, encouraging and providing networking. We recognised that Quakers are not alone in our concerns and this co-ordination or networking must include other organisations.

Friends in general struggled to fill in the recent online questionnaire about examples of working under concern (I couldn't do it, and I don't think I was alone in our AM in this!). Several people mentioned that, although there was a lot of work being done by individuals and small groups, they could cite far fewer examples of the whole meeting testing and acting under concerns. It was suggested that a website showing all the work done with links to the relevant organisations would be useful. In fact, QPSW has a site listing 'Our Stories' at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories> - the Women in Black of Inverness are featured.

This concern about concerns has been articulated in the last two or three sessions of MfS. It seems that there is now less experience among Friends of being in a meeting where a concern is tested and many do not fully understand what it involves, even though a lot of good work is being done without corporate testing. Is learning more about this something we need to look at in North Scotland as part of our AM review? Those who have brought a concern to Sufferings sometimes find the experience 'bruising' and it can be a lengthy and discouraging process. It can also be frightening and overwhelming; one Friend described how he was impelled to do no other. It was pointed out that concerns start through listening to the Spirit in Meeting for Worship, and they are realised by acting out of love. Another Friend related a powerful tale of an activist who, during her membership visit, said she would not have done anything differently had she been a Quaker at the time, but would have acted out of love rather than anger.

The questionnaire about what Quakers in Britain are doing now suggested the following clusters of issues: Economic injustice, inequality, welfare benefits, housing and homelessness, refugees and asylum seekers, criminal justice, sustainability and peace. The Sufferings paper summarises this and lists some of the ways meetings are taking action; there is also a table outlining the response so far and potential for future work on the Call for Equality which can be downloaded from the website. Our third set of questions for consideration, which we did not have time to address (but will be considered at a future meeting) were about balancing and prioritising the centrally managed work. Where is the Spirit leading us? What should the balance be between long-term work and being responsive, and are we sometimes too reactive?

There were two matters which we were asked to take back to our area meetings:

1) We have been asked to consider Cornwall AM's concern regarding the decriminalisation of the possession and personal use of all drugs. Phyllida has already circulated information about this, and Sufferings will be returning to this later this year.

2) A paper on a 'Vision for the Criminal Justice System' commended by QPSW has also been circulated for our consideration. QPSW would like Friends to test this before it comes back to Sufferings later in the year.

Other items:

We received a minute about sustainability from the FWCC International Representatives Meeting in Peru which asks all YMs to initiate at least two concrete sustainability actions in the next year, as well as supporting work done by Quaker individuals and groups. We are also encouraged to share our experiences of sustainable living on the Quakers in the World website www.quakersintheworld.org. Another key message from the FWCC meeting is that BYM is under using the 'energy, passion and value of our younger adults'.

A report from the Quaker World Relations Committee, which is available online. The report describes how it is working as a 'two-way conduit between BYM and Quakers worldwide' under new terms of reference.

BYM treasurer Peter Ullathorne spoke to the review of financial activities

in 2015. The accounts show a 'stable and reasonable position' and he asked us to pass on thanks to Friends for £2 million in contributions last year. Could we aim for £3 million in 2016? Any extra given by Friends would allow us to increase our regular committed work (legacy income is largely used for shorter-term activities and projects). Per capita, this would mean an increase from £150 per member to between £200 and £250. Don't panic - AM treasurers have been asked to use this figure with discretion. Not everyone can afford this.

The BYM trustees meeting in February was mainly about risk. Firstly, reputational risk and the protection of the Quaker 'brand' and the Q logo, which has now been registered as a trademark (BYM already held the copyright as it commissioned the art work). Secondly, they are considering the risk posed by Crossrail and HS2 activity around Friends House and are working with other organisations (including the Magic Circle - surely they have something up their sleeves?) which might also be affected by dust, noise and other disruption over the next decade or so. However, there might be opportunities as well as risk!

Jane Booth, Banchory and Aberdeen Meetings.

North Scotland Area Meeting held in Inverness February 2016 [^contents](#)

Thirty one of us attended Area Meeting in Inverness on the first Saturday in February. This seemed to me a good attendance but that's not surprising given both a central venue and Inverness Friends well known generous catering. Besides Inverness meetings in Aberdeen, Orkney, Shetland, Skye, Nairn & Forres were all represented. I trust I've not omitted anyone.

The report from our Meeting for Sufferings rep was taken early on which pleases me as that way it is neither cancelled because of lack of time nor am I in state of stupor after lunch. The latter is not something to be proud of but early starts and well fed tummies do that for me and others. Sadly this time our rep was not able to be with us, so it is a case of read this in this issue of The Northern Quaker.

We had a clear exposition from our treasurer of the finance for 2015. These were a little distorted by the presence of two years grants from North Scotland Quaker Trust. We have to make a substantial contribution to GM [General Meeting, Scotland] because we are now employing a parliamentary secretary, Marie Campbell Jack whom we heard at Pluscarden or was it at General Meeting? She is doing a good job of keeping

us informed about matters dear to the hearts of Scottish Quakers. For example Forces watch for which work we have been thanked by some non Quakers. We also need to support financially NFPB [Northern Friends Peace Board] and Shindig [the weeklong summer event for 11-16 year olds], with donations of £500 each. If we have a surplus we donate it to BYM [Britain Yearly Meeting]. We managed to send £1500 in 2015, but have not budgeted for any this year. Some Friends earmark contributions which the treasurer sends on. Others donate direct.

The most interesting part of AM for me was the report from our Child protection team. They reminded us that any of us could become vulnerable. Maybe we will become mentally unwell; one in four of us will in our lifetime. Also sadly our meetings are aging. This is an important reminder to us all that as we age or are widowed we may become vulnerable. We were reminded of the need to look after those who are vulnerable for a variety of reasons, and also that we all need to know to whom turn with any concerns we may have about any of us at meeting. We decided to nominate a number of Friends who will take on the oversight of this for clusters of our smaller meetings.

When it came to nominations we were asked to look out for a Friend willing to assist our treasurer. S/he will not be made to be the treasurer later willy nilly but to be appointed specifically to help Derek McLean, our current treasurer. Please ring Derek direct to discuss this post with him.

Mary Dower, Aberdeen LM

North Scotland Area Meeting held at Breakish on the Isle of Sky on 7th May 2016 [^contents](#)

“Where is the Joy?” asked a Friend. The joy was in driving west through Achnashellach and Achnasheen discussing the Briefing Paper on the Decriminalisation of Possession of All Drugs for Personal Use, as the road wound downhill through trees and the landscape opened out from moor to water and mountains. The joy was in seeing known, and not yet known, faces, in making friends with Friends we had not met before.

The joy was in being silent together supporting the Clerk in her search to put into words, clearly and succinctly, so many rich, deeply considered contributions.

The joy was in understanding what long processes, and what time and effort, had already gone into the Decriminalisation document, the Minute from the Elders and Overseers meeting and all the other contributions we heard and considered, and are asked to consider further in our local meetings or with other interested Friends.

The Decriminalisation Briefing Paper is long, but it is the result of a concern in Cornwall which rose up from an individual concern, through a Local Meeting to Cornwall Area Meeting, who then deemed it worthy of being sent on to Meeting for Sufferings so that the research and discernment it comprises could be distributed nationally. We are asked to take time to consider it, in our Local Meetings or with Friends from other Meetings who have particular interest in the topic. Sila Collins-Walden of Inverness Meeting has such an interest and invites anyone interested to contact her on 07516 400135 or silartist@btinternet.com.

The joy was in taking a break, still maintaining the silence, to go out and breathe the cool air and gaze on the Cuillin hills, before returning refreshed.

The joy was in hearing the challenges of nurturing both the business and spiritual health of the Area Meeting, and of the ongoing search for solutions. We heard of phone-conferences, held to reduce the amount of day-to-day business, so that there can be more time for social and spiritual connection; we explored the possibility of inviting a Friend from outside the Area Meeting to join us at Pluscarden and to give us fresh perspective; we heard a suggestion that social media might be used; and we heard about the recent re-invigoration of Northumbria Area Meeting – you are invited to visit their website, <http://www.northumbriaquakers.org.uk>. (The Northumbria experience forms the basis of a document which can be found at <http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/directory-of-services/trustees-1> - select “Revitalising Area Meetings”. It is an uplifting read.)

The joy was in eating the gorgeous, tasty, nourishing food, having feasted our eyes on the sight first!

The joy was seeing the joy on faces as Friends reported their experiences with Northern Quaker Peace Board – you are particularly encouraged to look at the work of Veterans for Peace, and with a Quaker Life workshop on death and dying. One quote stayed with me – a person visiting someone

bereaved said “I can’t imagine what you are going through, and I don’t know what to say to you, but my feet brought me here”

The joy continued, even though we were homeward-bound before the evening ceilidh, as we talked over all we had heard and seen and learned. We thank Skye Friends wholeheartedly for welcoming us and looking after us so well, and we thank everyone, in Area Meeting and beyond, who does so much to continue the slow, steady but, over time, immensely powerful and valuable work that Quakers do.

Clare Mackay and Lin Carruthers, Nairn LBM

Visit to Glasgow Reform Synagogue, Newton Mearns, from Inverness Meeting 9th April 2016 [^contents](#)

“Shabbat Shalom.” We were greeted at the door of the synagogue with the traditional Jewish welcome, wishing us peace on the Sabbath. Following her talk to Inverness Meeting last autumn, Rabbi Kate Briggs had kindly invited us for a return visit and so four Friends and Attenders from Inverness and Forres Meetings who had been present at her talk went to Newton Mearns where we were warmly welcomed to join in the service. Sadly, the British Jewish communities are on a high security alert and so our names were checked on a list when we arrived, but this was done in a friendly and welcoming manner.

We sat, men and women together, in rows facing the altar, and the deputy leader of the community very helpfully sat with us and guided us through the service, which was spoken and sung liturgy, much of it in Hebrew, although to make it more accessible for us they had increased the proportion that was in English. We were provided with books giving the Hebrew, English translations and phonetic spelling so that everyone could join in. And there were readings from the Torah, from precious handwritten parchment scrolls which were carried round the room prior to being returned to the altar to be read.

It was in the run-up to Passover and there were set readings for that, and Rabbi Kate also included an interfaith reading to mark the presence of our group and visitors from the Episcopal cathedral. In her sermon she spoke with sadness about the recent killing of a Muslim shopkeeper who had been known to some of the congregation.

Rabbi Kate conducted the service with a light, generous touch, encouraging members of the congregation, men and women, to take part in running it and to sing or read sections to us, no matter how inexperienced they may be, and so everyone had the opportunity to learn to take part. Most of the service was very familiar to the congregation as they have been hearing and speaking these same words since childhood, and the readings had a familiarity to us because of shared sacred writings - so much of the Torah is also in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Afterwards we were invited to come and see the Torah scrolls more closely. Rabbi Kate showed us the ones they had used in the service, and then she brought out a small scroll containing just the Book of Esther. She explained that this was beyond price to them, having been rescued from the Nazis and brought into this country. I was moved to tears when she went on to tell us that there were quite a few Holocaust survivors in the community, including a gentleman in his nineties who had done one of the readings.

I left Glasgow with a sense of the privilege of having been invited to the synagogue, and a heightened awareness of the fundamental importance of continuity and roots to the Jewish people. I am deeply grateful to Rabbi Kate and the members of the synagogue for their willingness to share their worship with us. Shabbat Shalom.

Lynden Easterbrook, Forres Meeting

Aberdeen Mosque visit [^contents](#)

On Saturday 13th of February several of us from Banchory Local Meeting visited Aberdeen's Mosque as part of the recent nationwide 'Visit my Mosque' initiative. We were delighted to find that we were in the company of many visitors as a broad and genuine interest was displayed by many local people. We were welcomed with warm and generous hospitality and took advantage many opportunities to discuss and explore Islam in both the cultural and religious aspects. The pattern of prayers through the day was explained and the pre-prayer cleansing ritual was. We were able to observe the men at prayer and later saw a men's study group at work, while an enthusiastic young lady gave us some insight into the women's prayer practices. Copies of the Qur'an and some books which would assist with our understanding of various aspects of Islam were given to us, and we have placed these in our Banchory Meeting library.



The visit was very worthwhile and enlightening, but I was saddened and frustrated to find that it proved too difficult to ask some of the questions and raise some of the matters we would have liked to discuss. However one of us did manage to participate in an 'Ask the Imam' session and asked about the role of women in Islam. He said, "*Women are hugely respected. There have been great female scholars of Islam in the past. There are no female prophets because Allah chooses prophets. It is not up to us to decide who becomes a prophet. Menstruation prevents women from being able to hold positions of authority on a regular basis. It would not be fair to ask them because they would need to be absent for one week a month.*"

Obviously this is a challenging view for Quakers, although, controversially, in some Muslim congregations women are able to lead prayers for women, and even in some cases for both men and women together. According to an article in the *Independent*, it wasn't until 2010 that the first Muslim-born woman led a mixed-gender congregation in Friday prayers in the UK. The congregation of less than 40 was heckled on its way into prayer, largely by women wearing the full veil. Muslim feminists argue that the Qu'ran does not specifically forbid female imams; rather it is based on the *hadith* (the words and sayings of the Prophet Muhammed). It is worth remembering that equality for women can be controversial among Christians too.

Our hosts were so kind and welcoming that it seemed inappropriate to start

what we hope will turn into a friendship with questions about the different treatment of men and women under Islam, not to mention the violence and doctrinal disputes which dominate current affairs. One young man explained to us very clearly that Islam was essentially non-violent and that the current troubles were far from what Islam represented - it was clear that his message was firmly heartfelt and that he wanted very much for us to understand this.

Before leaving, we mentioned that we were from a local group of Quakers, but the people we were speaking with did not seem to know about Quakers. After mentioning some Quaker beliefs and practices, to help our hosts get a practical view of where we stood we mentioned the Ecumenical Accompaniers' work at the-Palestine checkpoints and this seemed to be news to them and did arouse some interest.

The Aberdeen Muslims facebook page reached over 1000 'likes' shortly after the open day. They posted "*We aim to continue encouraging the people of Aberdeen in working as a united community for the good of the region. There are so many things we can achieve together - stay tuned for some exciting projects we have in mind...*"

It seems clear that we should be trying to forge better understanding and friendship between local Muslims and Quakers. It cannot be easy for our Muslim neighbours when so much negativity dominates western perceptions of their beliefs and origins at this time. Quakers were persecuted in the past - let's lend a hand to this persecuted minority in our land now.

Cath Dukes, Fiona Hope and Jane Booth, Banchory LM.

Inverness LM Commemorates Conscientious Objectors Day May 15th

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On Conscientious Objectors Day Friends at Inverness LM remembered those who refused to take up arms during both World Wars. We as Quakers have a Peace Testimony that has led many -although not all - to refuse to bear arms and kill another fellow human. When the Military service Act 1916 was introduced many Quakers and other men and women of faith refused to kill as it was against the teachings of Jesus and as Quakers we believe there is "that of God in everyone", therefore it was wrong to take a life. The Act

included a conscience clause which the government included to provide for those who objected to combat service as a result of Quakers lobbying for it.

“War in our view, involves the surrender of the Christian ideal and the denial of human brotherhood ...we regard the central conception of the Military Service Act as imperilling the liberty of the individual conscience which is the main hope of human progress. (From a minute London YM 1916 QF&P 23.92.)

Our Quaker peace testimony arises out of the conviction that as George Fox said there is a “life and power that took away the occasion of all wars”. He had been offered a commission in the army in 1651 but refused it.

“Conscientious Objector” a very moving poem by Edna St Vincent Millay which was read by Jean begins with the affirmative tone **“I shall die”** **“But that is all I shall do for death”** her philosophy is that all human life is valuable.

Eleanor read a piece by Kathleen Lonsdale who was known for her x-ray crystallography. A Quaker, she had three small children and risked her career by refusing to register for war duties. She stood by her principles and was sent to Holloway prison.

Over 16,000 men in WW1 refused to fight. Some were given exemption and others were sent to prison. Friends told Stories of the CO's who were subjected to very harsh treatments in prison, malnutrition, depression and even suicide were just some of the treatments meted out to these brave people. Many were even sentenced to death by Lord Kitchener, but fortunately were later reprieved by the then WW1 PM Asquith. There was the White Feather Movement, a propaganda campaign where women were instructed to go around and push white feathers into the hands of men not in uniform. Families suffered too if they had a relative not in uniform!

The name Jim Wickens had often come up at meeting. I had never met him as I came to Friends after he had died. He and his wife had travelled in ministry. Mary talked about Jim who in retirement was a member and elder of LM. He was conscripted in 1941 into the Royal Artillery, he refused to wear a uniform and was put to work under military guard in the kitchens of the Officers Mess at Dover Castle. He joined the Friends Relief Service, responding to the effects of bombing raids. After the war he was not

permitted to return to his job in the Civil Service. It would have been a pleasure to have met this brave man.

I told the story of the “Winchester Whisperers”, a newspaper started by pacifists in Winchester Prison in WW1. Full of writings, drawings and cartoons using very primitive tools, toilet paper, ink and sacking, all smuggled from prison workshop (there were other similar kinds of newspapers). There is a copy held at Friends House - as it's rather fragile it is only taken out on special occasions. I spoke of Quakers having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1947, to the Friends Service Council for the work they had undertaken with victims of war during and after both wars.

There are a number of people today taking a stand against militarism. Veterans for Peace, Pax Christi, Refuse to Kill Group and the Womens International League of Peace and Freedom. There are more and more peace memorials around today, the iconic tower in Hiroshima, the Conscientious Objector stone in Tavistock Square in London and the Arboretum in Staffordshire.

I feel that these brave men and women should be recognized officially by government every year. After all we have Remembrance Sunday. I have a personal interest in this subject as my father and my father-in-law were both CO's.

I wish to thank Elizabeth and Melissa at Friends House in furnishing me with information on this subject.

Sila Collins-Walden QPSW Correspondent and Member of Inverness LM.

Book review We Will Not Fight; Will Ellworth-Jones 2008 Aurum Press.

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Along with many people I had a vague awareness of some aspects of conscientious objection. I was aware that some Quakers and others whose faith prevented them from bearing arms elected to serve in other areas, such as the medical services, e.g. the Friends' Ambulance Service. I also remembered from my training that some Conscientious Objectors (COs) ended up imprisoned and were otherwise mistreated – COs were used to

test the transmissibility of scabies by being forced to sleep in blankets previously used by sufferers. In the 100th anniversary of the introduction of conscription in the First World War, Will Ellworth-Jones' book presents a very informative and readable history of the COs which charts the story of those who resisted the patriotic fervour, sometimes at great personal cost.

As its vehicle it uses the story of John Hubert (Bert) Brocklesby, a schoolteacher and Methodist lay preacher, from Conisborough in Lincolnshire. He was one of four sons of a local magistrate, John Brocklesby, who was a pillar of the local community. At the outbreak of war John was elected chair of the local War fund Committee and his wife, Bert's mother, was on the Ladies' Committee for Soldiers' Relief.

One of Bert's brothers was medically unfit for armed service, but was the local recruiting officer and signed up one of his other brothers. The fourth brother joined up through the Officer Training Corps. Bert however, after much soul searching, decided that playing any part in supporting the war was against his Methodist faith and became a Conscientious Objector.



The Brocklesby family (Bert 2nd right)

Imprisoned in Richmond castle, Bert was the creator of some very artistic graffiti on his cell wall which still exists (see end of article). He became one of the so-called Richmond Sixteen who were a group of "absolutist" COs, i.e. they refused any compromise such as non-combatant duties.

The sixteen, along with other COs, were transported to France where they were deemed to be on active service in a war zone. They were forcibly

dressed in uniform and commanded to obey an order (in one case to pick up a box) and, when they refused, they were court-martialed. One of the sixteen relinquished, but the remainder were paraded one by one in front of two battalions of 1,000 men and formally sentenced to be executed by firing squad. The sentences were immediately commuted to ten years' penal servitude and thereafter Bert was repatriated to Britain and served his sentence in various locations, at one point breaking rocks in Dyce Quarry where he was able to attend at the Aberdeen Quaker Meeting House.

Will Ellworth-Jones is meticulous in describing the political and social backgrounds to conscientious objection and the reader gains a real feel for the dilemmas and pressures that conscientious objectors faced. As well as the notorious white feathers handed to individual men in the street, the families of objectors were also targeted; one mother received an anonymous note (reproduced in the book) inviting her son to join the local Girl Guides "as washer up". A cartoon coat of arms published in a national newspaper featured a baby's bottle, maggots and rabbits.

One remarkable feature of Bert Brocklesby's own experience was that his family supported him and one of his brothers, Phil, took absence without leave whilst on active service and visited Bert in a Boulogne camp when he was awaiting his court martial. Bert's fiancée Annie Wainwright, also supported him, despite losing her own brother in the war.

However, the stigma of being a CO persisted after the war. As well as being disfranchised for five years following his release, Bert found difficulty in resuming his employment as teacher and his fiancée Annie broke off their engagement when he undertook war relief work in Austria, the former enemy which she viewed as responsible for her brother's death.

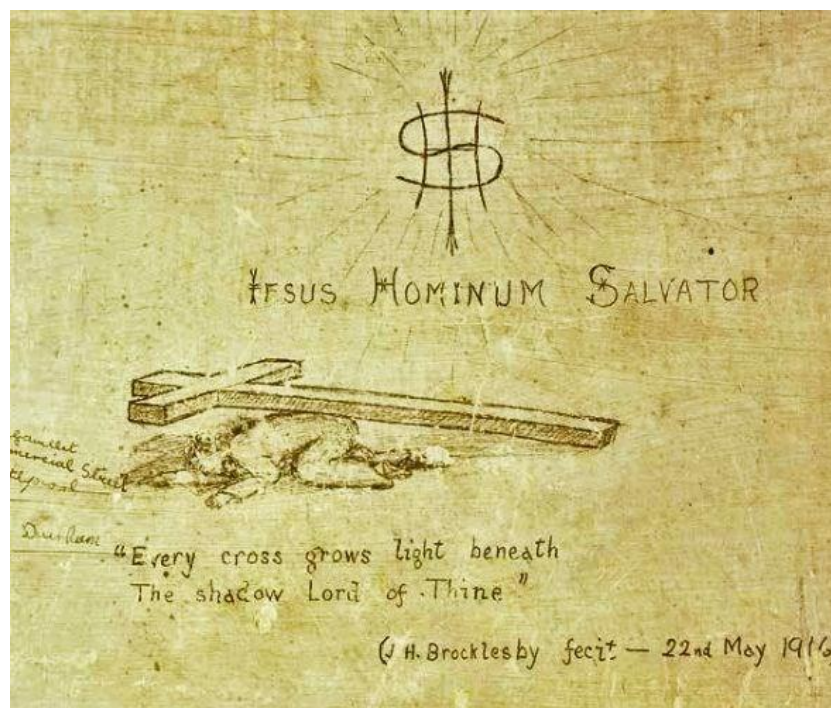
Throughout his life Bert maintained his opposition to warfare, although undertook fire watching duties during the Second World War "provided he was not forced to do so". However, he continued to demonstrate his convictions in acts such as in his school's morning assembly refusing to play the piano for any hymn which he felt glorified combat, much to exasperation of his headmaster.

The hardships and privations that CO endured do not compare with those of many common servicemen, whether volunteers or conscripts. However, their decisions to maintain their beliefs in the face of social and legal

pressures won support sometimes from the most unlikely quarter; one NCO charged with brutalising his CO prisoners in an attempt to break their spirits later admitted to admiring their conviction and determination.

There was a choice very few – if any – of us reading this book have had to face and it is impossible to put ourselves in their shoes or, equally, the millions who chose the opposite course and joined in the war, either voluntarily or through conscription. I would recommend this book as an authoritative, yet readable, account of this often neglected aspect of the tragedy that is the subject of so many commemorations in this centenary year.

Harry Horsley Aberdeen LBM



A drawing by Bert Brocklesby on a cell wall of Richmond castle

Finland - Quakers; World War 2; and World Quaker Day [^contents](#)

Finland was on the wrong side in World War 2. After being part of Sweden and later of Tsarist Russia, it got independence at the time of the Russian

Revolution. When the Second World War started barely two decades later, Finland, with good reason, was afraid of Stalin's ambitions to get at least part of Finland back. Following the 1939 Winter War attack by the Soviet Army on Finland, the Finns decided to co-operate with Germany without being formally allied. It all ended badly. In late 1944 Finland had to give about 10% of its land area to the Soviet Union and had to drive German forces out of the country. The Germans in northern Finland destroyed everything in their path as they withdrew across the border to northern Norway and, as it happens, joined fellow German forces there in carrying out the same level of destruction there.

Because Finland had been on the enemy side, the Allied victors were not minded to support the country with postwar rebuilding. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) decided to step in. In their judgement, the fact that Finland was seen as a 'pariah country' did not mean that Finnish people needed or deserved support and practical fellowship any the less.

In early October 2015, Finnish Quakers and others joined in a weekend seminar in Rovaniemi in Lapland, the most northerly county in Finland, to mark the 70th anniversary of the start of the Quaker-led relief work and, for good measure, also celebrated World Quaker Day, which is always on the first Sunday in October. I was fortunate enough to be one of the people there.

On the Saturday we heard from a range of speakers about the background to and history of the relief work. AFSC's work was carried out in co-operation with the Finnish Settlement Movement, an organisation which worked and still works to build civil society through education, housing and a wide range of social support services. The Rovala Settlement, founded in the 1920s in Rovaniemi, had had its property destroyed by the retreating Germans as had all the other people and organisations in the region. The relief workers provided different kinds of support to help rebuild destroyed communities, their main project being to work with local schools in northern Finland to provide nourishing meals for children. A Canadian artist, Naomi Jackson, who was one of the AFSC volunteers, gave art lessons in schools. Some of the children's drawings and paintings survived and Anniina Koivurova, an academic at the University of Lapland who has researched the children's artwork, explained how they show children's experiences of the war and its aftermath: a mother and her children weeping for the husband

and father who would never return; a family - again a mother on her own with her children - walking barefoot back to where their home had been. They were barefoot because they had lost virtually everything when their home was destroyed. Quakers also worked in a new village, Varejoki, which had been created to house some of the Finns who had had to leave their homes when their region of the country had to be surrendered to the Soviet Union shortly before the end of the War. In addition to the destruction of Lapland, there were tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of internally-displaced refugees in various parts of the country who had had to leave their home areas when they were ceded to the Soviet Union.

The rebuilding of Lapland is not simply an historical event. The seminar took place in the very pleasant community centre in Rovaniemi owned and run by the Rovala Settlement today. There was an opportunity for any seminar participants who wanted to do so to visit the provincial museum in Rovaniemi to look at a current exhibition about the relationship between the Germans and the Finns before Lapland was burned. We had expected to pay our own museum entrance fees but were told that the Settlement would pay for us. When I later had the opportunity to thank the Settlement's Director for the generous gesture, he was very clear that the Settlement still remembers with great gratitude the help Quakers gave in helping them to rebuild after the Settlement, along with everyone else in the area, lost everything in the deliberate destruction of the region.

On the Sunday, Finnish Quakers looked to the present and the future to think about how Quaker work can be continued. We heard about AFSC's current work in the US and elsewhere. I had no idea that they have been working in North Korea - very much a pariah nation - since the 1980s. The objective in being there is to help farmers improve their rice yields to try to combat the chronic shortage of food in the country. They also help owners of small business with management skills so that the businesses have a better chance of succeeding and being a way in which local people's standard of living can be improved. (Shan Cretin, the AFSC General Secretary, told us that the FBI file on AFSC is extensive, not surprisingly as the USA is still technically at war with North Korea. I tried to imagine what the FBI might make of Quakers - and failed completely.) Jonathan Woolley, the Director of the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva, talked about the Office's quiet, behind-the-scenes work with international diplomats. Their work is impressive and practical. Marisa Johnson described the work of the European and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee

for Consultation.

To round the weekend off, Finnish Quakers - and there are fewer than 40 in the entire country, a good proportion of whom attended the seminar - spent time considering how they could best contribute to work in Finland and elsewhere that will address needs in today's world. An impressive aim for such a small community.

There was a warm welcome for everyone attending. The weekend was one of the most interesting and enjoyable events I have been to for a long time. It was informative, thought-provoking and notable well-run. Language issues were well catered for - after all, how many of us non-Finns speak Finnish? A grant from the European and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation enabled the organisers to provide simultaneous translation on the Saturday. On the Sunday, texts of presentations were available in printed form in both Finnish and English so no-one lost out by not understanding one or other of the two languages used.

Thank you to the North of Scotland Quaker Trust for awarding me a grant towards the cost of attending the Quaker event in Rovaniemi. Quickly putting on my Trust treasurer's hat, if any North Scotland Quaker people would like to take part in a Quaker event and it is not one that AM has suggested that you attend, please think about applying to the Trust for support to do so.

Marion Strachan, Aberdeen LBM

Northern Friends Peace Board (NFPB) in Nottingham on 5th March 2016

[^contents](#)

I wondered at the point and wisdom of going this far – 10 hours on a train seat interspersed with 2 transfers with less than 8 mins crossover.

But then the whole NFPB experience kicked in, sharing experiences is a value in itself. So here are the bits that grabbed me J

One Friend told us about the City of Sanctuary movement, caring for those who have fled conflict and now suffer from the cruelty of the asylum system.

Another weary Friend had been cooking for 40 refugees the night before and was rushing back to make sure all was OK.

Robert Keeble, from Leeds AM, shared the inspiration he has gained from members of his family who have taken conscientious stands for peace over the past century.

He told us of his two great grandfathers: one suffered a mental collapse sometime after traumatic experiences serving as a chaplain in the First World War. The other great-grandfather Hubert Peet, a journalist and Quaker was imprisoned and subsequently condemned to hard labour. He found out even more about that grandfather in *The Friend* 26th Feb this year. (Have you read this copy- its dedicated to articles on Conscriptation and Conscience, 100 years of conscientious objection. If not please DO!! Sooooooooooooooooo interesting).

Robert gave a lot of information about all aspects of being a CO. I love these stories and always learn e.g. at one point CO's who didn't report for conscription, or ask for exemption, wouldn't acknowledge the war machine in any way, were therefore deemed to be army deserters. They were arrested and taken to France, and some eventually shot. His grandfather became a Friend and a CO in World War Two. Robert has told us that he is now involved in the Taxes for Peace campaign begun by that grandfather, and sees the thread leading from 1916 to 2016 in this action. Robert has also described how this has helped him in discerning what action he could take today, with the possible renewal of Trident being a particular focus.

Trident -Wider activities

After Michael Fallon announced further government finance for Trident (the day before our meeting), Janet Fenton gathered Friends in Edinburgh to protest when this announcement was made. Janet works with ICAN (International Coalition against Nuclear Weapons) which is part of an international movement.

NFPB is hoping to play a role in keeping in touch with different parts of the Quaker world on this concern and is planning a joint interest group session at Britain Yearly Meeting.

Sam Walton QPSW emphasised the importance of this current year for resisting Trident renewal. He told us of the huge input of Quakers on the march in London on February 27th. (Needless to say quite a few in the room

had been there.) Tim Wallis of QPSW has written a detailed analysis of the history of and arguments around Trident together with guidance as to how to talk to others about the issue. Young Quakers are very involved. We are all pulling together.

QPSW – update from Sam Walton

Sam Walton, the inspiring and energetic joint manager of the Peace and Disarmament programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, described some key aspects of that programme's work, which is addressing issues of militarism and Trident renewal, amongst other concerns.

He has told us of the second edition of the Teach Peace pack for primary schools . and was very enthusiastic about a resource Fly Kites not Drones and has informed us of a day, 21 March, for flying kites to mark the Afghan new year..

Sam said the work on refugees is being taken very seriously by Friends' House. He described militarism as a tricky issue to pose to the public, so on May 7th two workshops in Scotland are designed to help us. He has asked for stories from our Meetings because that is the best way to get actions off the ground. He has encouraged us to subscribe to the newsletter Educate and Disarm that QPSW produces. He described the actions planned for the Global Day of Action on Military Spending on April 18th (<https://demilitarize.org.uk/day-of-action/>).

Some meetings have been inviting speakers from Veterans for Peace founded in 2011. Military personnel with varied active experience since WW2 to this day. I have just been trawling through the web on this. DO! These are people who can speak better than most of us against militarisation, war, government policies, and the media misinformation. They have been there, done it, and come to the conclusion that what is happening is wrong.

“Meeting face to face, we are reminded, is a powerful stimulus to action, as is training in non-violence.

Reminding ourselves of campaigns in the past can also stimulate us.

The importance of our own individual day to day behaviour should not be forgotten: what we do matters.

Be the change you want to see.”

Useful web links

- Conscience – taxes for peace not war <http://www.conscienceonline.org.uk>
- Educate and Disarm – QPSW Newsletter - <http://quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters/educate-disarm>
- Fly Kites Not Drones resource pack <http://www.flykitesnotdrones.org/resources>
- Fly Kites Not Drones day of action - <http://vcnv.org.uk/fly-kites-not-drones>
- Hope not Hate: <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/>
- Scientists for Global Responsibility <http://www.sgr.org.uk/>
- Shaw Review into immigration detention (Guardian Article) <http://www.theguardian.com/uknews/2016/jan/14/uk-must-reduce-detention-shaw-immigration-report>
- Teach Peace Pack (from the Peace Education Network) <http://peace-education.org.uk/teach-peace>

Juli Salt NFPB rep Forres LM

Book – well pamphlet- review Islam Today: A Muslim Quakers View by Christopher Bagley 2015 [^contents](#)

This is a QUG – Quaker Universalist group, publication. ISBN 978-0-948232-66-4

Sitting in an NFPB meeting next to Christopher Bagley he spoke saying he was a Quaker Muslim. “Oh” says I – “I had met someone before who said he was the only one?” “No” says Christopher – this conversation was in 2015 – “there are about 20 of us recorded at Friends House”. So when he finished this pamphlet – 70 pages – I was keen to have a read. Now of course this is his view of the subject, but it is very well researched by this talented and interesting man. For those of you, if like me, who don’t have an academic ... longing, this is an easy but informative read, and he often cites passages from the Qur’an, Quaker books, and Bible alongside each other. Then for those of you who want to go much deeper there are a lot of footnotes. Oh did you know George Fox read the Qur’an? Inform and Enjoy!

Juli Salt, Forres LM

North Scotland Area Meeting Residential Weekend Pluscarden Abbey, 26 - 28th August 2016 [^contents](#)

Friends, we invite you to this year's residential weekend for Friends in the North of Scotland, which again will be held in the peaceful surroundings of Pluscarden Abbey. In addition to Meeting for Worship for Business and spending quality time with Friends the residential weekend gives us time to

think through a concern in more depth. This year we will be joined by Michael Long from Northumbria Area Meeting who will lead us into the Saturday afternoon session by describing the process of review that Northumbria took to bring new life into their Area Meeting. After that, through conversation and workshop we will explore how we might initiate a review for North Scotland Area Meeting. To make the most of this session, could we suggest you do the following homework; that of watching the short video: <https://vimeo.com/101928620> and reading: “Revitalising Northumbria Area Meeting – revised 2015” (which will be posted on the North Scotland Area Meeting Website; quakerscotland.org/north, and paper copies can be mailed out on request.)

Hopefully, by the end of the weekend we may have a clearer sense of who and what we are, the direction we might wish to travel and how we might get there. I'm sure that we will be journeying on with a deeper spiritual fellowship and a stronger sense of joy in what it means to be a Quaker.

Now for more practical information about the weekend: the monks at Pluscarden follow the practice of silence at most times and it is hoped visitors will be as quiet as possible within the precincts of the Abbey. The abbey is situated in a picturesque valley 7 miles from Elgin (on the Dallas road), 9 miles from Forres and much of our activity will be in the neighbouring St Scholastica's and the nearby village hall.

Sandy and William McEwen will host children's activities for part of the weekend, so families are welcome. If you would like to assist with the children's programme, please let Sandy know directly: sandy@westmanse.co.uk

If you would like to bring a reading, poem, song or game to add to the Friday or Saturday nights, please let us know so that we can add it to the programme.

Our charges cover a donation to the Abbey, food and hire of the Village Hall; we hope to break even. Nobody should be prevented from coming to Pluscarden for financial reasons as bursary help is available from North Scotland Quaker Trust.

Meals and accommodation

Please bring your own food for the Friday evening - all other meals

(Saturday breakfast to Sunday lunch) are mainly vegan/vegetarian and included in the charges, but additional contributions to meals and snacks, from Friday to Sunday would be most welcome – it is all self-service/buffet. Please let us know if you have any other dietary requirements.

Accommodation is available at Pluscarden Abbey. **Please book early to ensure a place.** Men and boys can stay in St Benedict's guest house in the Abbey, and St Scholastica's provides mixed accommodation in single rooms. People with a disability can be accommodated.

Camping is an option near the abbey, using the facilities there or at St Scholasticas.

B&B available in Pluscarden, Elgin or Forres. Information can be found at www.visitscotland.com.

There is parking near the accommodation and at the Village Hall, which is three quarters of a mile away from the Abbey. Dogs, smoking and alcohol can not be accommodated.

Sandy, Juli, Piers, Robert (2016 Organising Friends)

Programme for the weekend [^contents](#)

Friday

- 5 pm onwards : Arrive at St Scholastica's
- 7.30 - 8.00 : Meeting for Worship – check for venue
- 7.50: Office of Compline in the Chapel – Friends are welcome
Games, light entertainment & chat
- 9.00 - 9.30 : Introduction to weekend. Epilogue

Saturday

- 7.30-8 am : Meeting for Worship
- 8.00 : Breakfast (self-catering – supplies provided)
- 9.15 : Meeting for Worship for Business in the Village Hall
- 1 pm : Lunch at St Scholastica's
- 2.15 - 5.30: The 'Real' Area Meeting – with Michael long
- 6.15 : Evening meal at St Scholastica's
- 7.50 : Compline / Social time
- 9.00 - 9.30 : Epilogue at St Scholastica's

Sunday

- 7.30 - 8 am : Meeting for Worship
- 8.15 : Breakfast (self-catering – supplies provided)
- 9.30 - 11.15 : Any other AM business at Village Hall
- 11.15 - 12.15: Meeting for Worship at Village Hall
- 12.30 : Lunch - then cleaning up, laundry etc - all help appreciated...

BOOKING FORM

Name

Tel.....

Address

.....

email

Weekend - in residence

	Adults £50	1 st child £15	2 nd child £7.50	Others free
Number				
Cost				

Weekend - camping

	Adults £20	1 st child £10	2 nd child £5	Others free
Number				
Cost				

Day visitors

	Adults £5	Child £3
Number		
Cost		

Donation to Bursary Fund

TOTAL PAYABLE

Meals Please indicate below the number of each meal required

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	
Saturday				
Sunday				

I will bring a made-up dish [] (specify if possible and email / phone Juli Salt to let her know: juli@busybees.force9.co.uk / 01309 673703)

.....

.....

Other dietary requirements?

.....

BOOKING -

Please send this form, queries and offers of help to Piers Voysey, Soineann, East Terrace, Kingussie, PH21 1JS or piers@voysey.plus.com. Tel: 01540 662812

Cheques are payable to “North Scotland Area Quaker Meeting”
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