

Challenging militarism, then and now

Our first members' meeting of the year saw us gathering in Huddersfield. As the crisis between Russia and Ukraine was developing, we agreed to write to the UK ambassadors from both countries and to the William Hague as Foreign Secretary calling on them all to make efforts to reduce tensions.

A number of our members have, with other Friends, been involved in preparing for the Wool Against Weapons demonstration between Aldermaston and Burghfield in August. Sections of the pink scarf were on show at our March meeting, whilst other NFPB members have since used the distinctive scarves in acts of witness throughout the North.

Looking ahead to the first world war centenary, historian Cyril Pearce shared some of the insights from his research into conscientious objectors and other radical opponents of war at the time. We were delighted to have this opportunity to learn from the work that he has undertaken and to consider how we can apply such insights and information to promoting awareness of those who took action for peace in the 1914-18 war.



Young people, peace and community

In mid June, we organised a day on this theme. We invited young people and adult helpers from groups in different parts of the north and from different cultural and faith backgrounds. They shared information about their activities, discussed topical issues and participated in workshops looking at such things as communication skills and the nature of friendship. This day was the latest in our series planned by our Building Peace in Diverse Britain project group. An initial evaluation suggests that a similar day would be beneficial later in the year, for which we would hope to involve young people in the planning.

Common good

Sustainable security encompasses a range of issues that form the underpinnings of a shared security based on common good rather than self-interest, competition and militarism. A workshop we ran earlier this year, with QPSW's Turning the Tide programme, highlighted the need to promote this alternative approach to security, in news media and other settings. Friends in Scotland have also shared with other NFPB members their visions for a new approach to security, whether or not Scotland becomes independent. We are developing project proposals to take this work forward and look forward to continuing this work with other Quaker and non-Quaker groups.

NFPB Visioning

When NFPB members met in Chester in June, they spent the afternoon reflecting on the positive role that NFPB plays for their own peace work and in promoting the sharing of information, inspiration and practical action amongst Northern Friends more generally. They also considered areas that could be improved or changed, thinking both of small steps but also longer term visions. These discussions will be considered further by NFPB's trustees later in the year.



First World War centenary

Our own centenary was in 2013 and quite a number of the resources that we produced for that are still of value to Friends who are, in many different ways, marking the centenary of Britain going to war. We have produced two new resources this year. The first is a simple leaflet for Friends to use, on the theme of 'There is another way'. That is also the thrust of our new poster, produced along with a set of reproductions of three of our historic posters. In the meantime, we are regularly updating our website and social-networking pages with information for Friends and others.

For further information

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