

The Quiet Word



‘Support Fairtrade Fortnight’ 24th Feb to 9th March’ nb see diary for 07/03/14

Dates and Events

Sunday Meeting for Worship 10:45 at all Leeds Meetings except Ilkley which is at 10:30am .

All welcome to Leeds Area Quaker Meeting at Gildersome Quaker Meeting House, 75 Street Lane, LS27 7HX on **Saturday 29th March 10.30am and 1.15pm for the workshop.**

Programme:

Arrivals and tea from 10am

10.30 Worship

11am Business as led

12.30pm shared lunch

1.15 Worship

1.30 Workshop : **Leeds Quakers Concerns** (includes 15 min break)

4.00 Tea

March:

Wednesday 5th End Hunger Fast At the start of Lent, join with Christian clergy, foodbank volunteers and poverty activists in day/s of fasting to raise awareness of hunger See www.endhungerfast.co.uk

Thursday 6th 6pm to 7pm Meeting for Worship followed by 7pm refreshments at Carlton Hill QMH

Friday 7th 8am to 10am –help Carlton Hill Quakers give away 1000 fairtrade bananas outside the Quaker Meeting House – supporting Fairtrade

Saturday 8th 10am Light Group at Adel QMH

Saturday 8th 10am to 5pm AWE non-violent direct action training day at Carlton Hill QMH (*Action AWE Atomic Weapons Eradication* E-mail mobilise@actionawe.org to book or for more information. www.actionawe.org

Saturday 8th 7pm Making Trouble Fairtrade Fortnight Gig South Parade Baptist Church, Headingley. An evening of songs and stories promoting trade justice – putting faith into action. Tickets £7 on the door

Thursday March 13th Baha'i Rites of Passage 7pm
The last in **Concord's** series on *Rites of Passage* given by Dr Hamed Pakrooh at Carlton Hill QMH

Friday 14th 7.30pm Ilkley QMH Play; 'Nine parts a Quaker'

Saturday 15th 9.30am for 10am till 1pm 'Aspects of Reformatory Justice' by Martin Wright, former Director of the Howard League. Arranged by Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group – all welcome at Carlton Hill QMH.

Sunday 16th 10.45am All Aged Otley Meeting at Otley Court House

Saturday 29th Leeds Area Quaker Meeting at 10:30am at Gildersome QMH with business as led, then 1.15pm afternoon topic: **Leeds Quaker Concerns.**

April:

Thursday 3rd 6pm to 7pm Meeting for Worship followed by 7pm refreshments at Carlton Hill QMH

Saturday 5th 10am Light Group at Adel QMH

Saturday 26th 10.30am Quakers in Yorkshire at Sheffield QMH

Yearly Meeting Gathering
2 to 9 August 2014



Bookings at <http://quaker.org.uk/>

Welcome to the March Quiet Word – we will be reviewing the future of the Quiet Word at our Area Meeting on 29th March – are there any changes that you would like to suggest? Contributions for the next edition should be sent by Wednesday 2nd April to robertkeeble@hotmail.com. Please note that the Quiet Word is available to anyone as it is displayed on our website at www.leedsquakers.org.uk – see it in full colour on the website!

Did you see Carlton Hill QMH on the BBC1 news on 26th Feb? Actually, the headline news was about dyslexia and featured interviews with Dyslexia Action in Leeds who rent part of the Meeting House.

Data Protections:

From advice given to the Area Meeting Clerks by Friends House regarding Data Protection, Leeds Area Quaker Meeting is now asking all Local Meetings to read the following statement prior to local business meetings to July 2014.

'If any Friend wishes their details to be edited out of Minutes to be circulated electronically via email or on the website, or in paper format, s/he should contact the clerk/s at the close of the relevant meeting'

This is because friends need to consent to their details being used in all situations. We do not have to ask every friend prior to every minute being offered - as long as all those present at the meeting understand how a Quaker business meeting works and that minutes are distributed electronically there is no problem. Where there is anyone new to our Quaker ways, we must ensure they do consent to their details being recorded in minutes. In smaller meetings this may not seem very relevant if all present at the business meeting are seasoned friends, but at larger meetings such as Carlton Hill, there are often many new attenders in the Business Meeting who may be attending their first Quaker Business Meeting. The appointment of friends 'subject to consent' is a particularly 'risky' practice and as such, LM's are now advised against doing this. If it was felt necessary to make an appointment 'subject to consent', LM clerks could make a provisional minute which would stand if the friend concerned does consent to the appointment - or be deleted if the friend concerned is not available for appointment - in both cases, the LM clerks would need to contact the friend concerned **before the minutes could be signed and circulated.**

Robert Keeble (LAQM co-clerk)

News updates from Friends House:

Every month, staff at Friends House inform Area and Local Meeting Clerks about news and events that may be of interest to local Quakers.

Children and families day *Monday 7 April 2014, Friends House* This day is booking fast. A great opportunity for children (0–18 years), with an accompanying adult, to visit Friends House and to learn more about the work that goes on there. To book go to www.quaker.org.uk/cyp-family-day-april-2014

Exploring the Quaker way with Woodbrooke's 'Friendly Introductions'

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham

Woodbrooke's 'Friendly Introductions' is a programme of short courses. If you book three 'Friendly Introductions' courses within a 12-month period, you will get the third at half price. For more information visit <http://bit.ly/friendintro>

Hurt and Healing: a conference run in partnership with Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

Friday 11–Sunday 13 July 2014 At Woodbrooke: £200 ensuite, £190 standard room

Hurt can be the spring that feeds the disease of addiction, and a well of hurt for all those involved. In his poem 'For an Addict', John Donaghue prays "May some glimmer of outside light reach your eyes". Join us to explore the ways light can come from without and within, through spiritual life, sharing, poetry, music, and our own paths – whether you have experience of addiction or none. Harvey Gillman will be one of our facilitators. To book your place visit <http://bit.ly/hurtneal>

'This Light that Pushes Me' exhibition, book launch and film festival

Launch on 9 April, Friends House, London

An exhibition and book highlighting African Quaker peacebuilders called 'This Light that Pushes Me' The exhibition will be on until May 9. www.quaker.org.uk/africa-peacebuilders

Nobel Peace Prize – nominations requested for 2015

In 1947 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Quakers worldwide for the work they had done, particularly relief work, between the two World Wars and after World War II. Friends and meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting can provide their nominations for the 2015 prize to the Quaker Peace & Social Witness representative on the American Friends Service Committee Nobel Peace Prize Nominating Committee, by 1 May 2014. www.quaker.org.uk/1947-nobel-peace-prize.

Aspects of Restorative Justice

15TH March 2014

9.30am (for 10.00am) until 1.00pm



Carlton Hill Meeting House

Speakers:

Martin Wright, Former Director of The Howard League

for Penal Reform

A person who has benefited from Restorative Justice

Members of the West Yorkshire Probation

Restorative Justice Team

FREE SATURDAY SEMINAR

For further details contact Judy Kessler of Leeds Quaker Criminal Justice Group
tel. 0113 2624711 or judyed.kessler@sky.com

Plain Quakers Theatre

presents

**a performance about
SLAVERY**

**NINE PARTS A QUAKER
... UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

written, directed and performed by
Mike Casey and Arthur Pritchard

The story of Thomas Clarkson's part
in the campaign to end the misery of slavery
in the 19th century
intercut with stories of modern day slavery

at

ILKLEY QUAKER MEETING HOUSE
Queen's Road, Ilkley

7.30pm
Friday 14th March 2014

FREE ADMISSION

EVERYONE WELCOME

Plain Quakers Theatre is again coming to Ilkley Quaker Meeting House, Queens Road, after a very successful performance 2 years ago. This time they will be performing:

‘Nine Parts a Quaker.....Unfinished Business.’

The play is the story of Thomas Clarkson and his campaign to end the misery of slavery. Clarkson was an ordained Anglican deacon. When at Cambridge, Clarkson wrote an essay in Latin for a competition ‘Is it lawful to enslave the unconsenting’ and in the course of his research, he met and interviewed those who had personal experience of the slave trade and of slavery. The revelation of the horrors led him to devote his life to abolishing the slave trade. He helped set up the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and was given the responsibility to collect evidence to support the abolition of the slave trade. He faced much opposition from supporters of the trade in some of the cities he visited. Clarkson travelled extensively, visiting slave ports. On a visit to Liverpool in 1787, Clarkson was attacked and nearly killed by a gang of sailors paid to assassinate him. He barely escaped with his life.

Clarkson worked tirelessly with others to change the law and in 1807 the first bill for the abolition of slavery was passed. Today, however, there are an estimated 30 million people working as slaves: bonded labourers, child workers doing extremely hazardous work, domestic workers many of whom are in slavery, forced labourers and trafficking. Most coverage of the trafficking issue has focused on trafficking for sexual exploitation, but around a third of all trafficked people are used exclusively for labour exploitation (for example, domestic work, agricultural work, catering or packing and processing).

The Plain Quaker Theatre Company has travelled all over Britain with their performances. They always give stunning performances and have returned to Ilkley regularly. This time, they will perform on Friday 14th March 7.30pm – admission free.



Leeds Citizens

A meeting between Leeds Quaker (including the Area Meeting Clerks) and ‘Leeds Citizens’ (represented by John Battle and Cath Muller) took place at Carlton Hill Quaker Meeting House on Thursday 20 February 2014. This meeting was arranged for Leeds Quakers to find out more about Leeds

Citizens and it is proposed to consider our Quaker involvement with Leeds Citizens at our LAQM on Saturday 29th March at Gildersome QMH.

'Leeds Citizens' is currently linked to Citizens UK, which is a registered charity with a national trustees board. However, the plan is that the Leeds group, which is a co-operative at the moment, would opt for the status of a Citizens body. To help make this possible, they need:

Thirty-five committed institutions/groups willing to commit themselves to helping 'Leeds Citizens' set up during the pre-founding period, including voting to employ a full-time organiser. This will be at least 6 months (probably longer), during which time teams within each institution will be trained by the organiser to carry out a 'listening campaign' within their community/ies. The hope is that these institutions will go on to become dues-paying members much further down the line, but there is no commitment at this stage. These members would pay an annual amount; the rate for this is not yet set but in West London it is currently £500 per annum. The payment of these dues would enable 'Leeds Citizens' to become self-financing after the first two years.

Founding partners who would pay £5-10,000 each as a one-off payment to reach a minimum of £50,000. So far £35,000 has been pledged in this way by groups such as the Anglican diocese, the Catholic diocese, and the Methodist Circuit. £50,000 is needed in order to pay for a co-ordinator, premises, administration, and so forth, for the first two years.

On 31 March there will be a Pre-Founding Assembly in Leeds when representatives of all groups, Founding partners, and institutional members, should be ready to sign up and vote to establish 'Leeds Citizens' formally. At this point, or very shortly thereafter, any money pledged by the Founding Partners would be payable.

A listening campaign will then be run for six to eighteen months. Problems found in neighbourhoods will be discovered by listening teams. Action and research groups will then be developed to do something about these problems as one of the aims of 'Leeds Citizens' is to change individual circumstances for the better through community organisation.

Further meetings will be held in advance of 31 March as follows: 6–8 pm on Thursday, 27 February, at the Hamara Healthy Living Centre, Beeston and 2–4 pm on Monday, 3 March, at David Young Community Academy, Seacroft (contact office@leedscitizens.org.uk to book a place)

End Hunger Fast



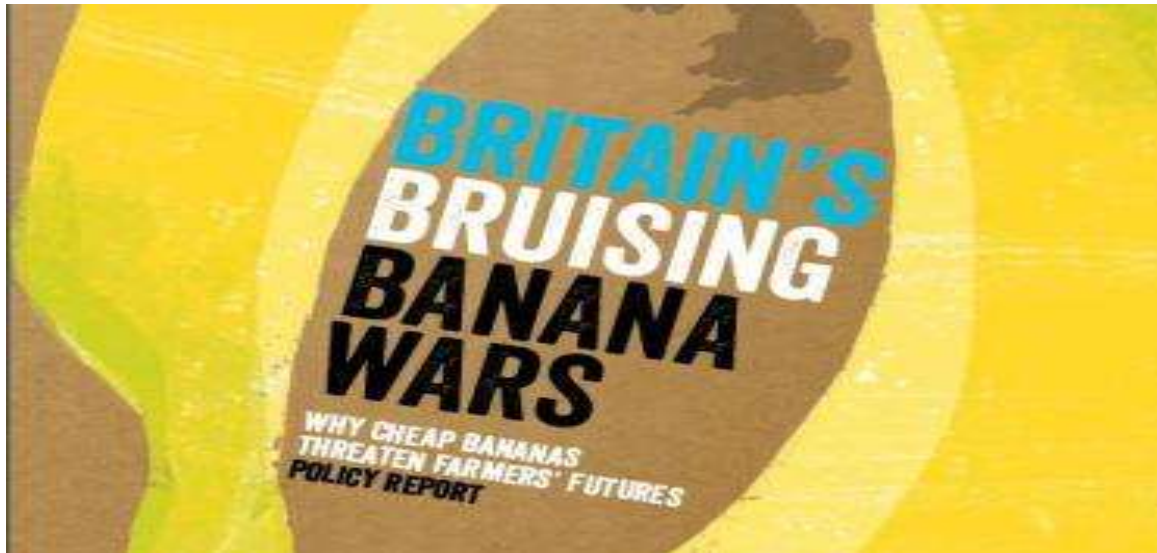
Quaker Peace and Social Witness is supporting an ecumenical campaign, in the form of a hunger-fast and an open letter signed by church leaders and representatives. **End Hunger Fast** aims to shift public opinion and to promote debate on food poverty in the UK.

The campaign is being organised by individuals, and is supported by Church Action on Poverty. The organisers are asking for as many individuals and local church groups as possible to get involved. The End Hunger Fast website will present a range of fasting options and other opportunities to join in. High profile secular figures will be positioned to publish their own letter in support of the campaign in early March to broaden the base of the campaign.

The campaign will culminate in a Vigil in Parliament Square on one day during Holy Week, where as many people as possible will be gathered to stand in sympathy with those who go hungry, week to week, and to call upon the government to act.

Many Quakers are already working to challenge, and to mitigate the impact of, the social security cuts and wider poverty and inequality in our society. In uniting with a range of churches locally and nationally, we hope that this campaign offers an important opportunity to challenge food poverty, and to build political and public commitment for a fairer society, in which our testimony can flourish.

To be part of the campaign, or for more information, please visit the website www.endhungerfast.co.uk Please contact qpsw@quaker.org.uk if you are planning to take part in any way, or would intend to attend the vigil in London.



Britain's supermarket price wars are trapping tens of thousands of banana farmers and workers in an unrelenting cycle of poverty

The Fairtrade Foundation has launched a new campaign Make Bananas Fair asking the UK public to help end the supermarket price wars, including a petition asking the government to urgently step in and investigate the impact of retailer pricing practices.

As part of the campaign, a new report called Britain's Bruising Banana Wars reveals that, in the past 10 years, the UK supermarket sector has almost halved the shelf price of loose bananas while the cost of producing them has doubled. We now typically pay 11p for a loose banana compared with 18p a decade ago, while a loose apple grown in the UK now costs 20p. Meanwhile living costs for banana farmers and workers in the three countries that provide 70 per cent of the UK's bananas, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, have rocketed – by 85 per cent, 350 per cent and 240 per cent respectively.

The report further exposes the real impact British supermarket price wars are having on banana farmers and workers and their families. The resulting drop in export prices for bananas in producing countries means an ever-tightening squeeze on what producers earn for their bananas. This, combined with escalating production and living costs, means many farmers and workers' standards of living have progressively worsened in the past decade.

“Small farmers and plantation workers are the collateral damage in supermarket price wars. The poorest people are bearing the cost of our cheap bananas and they have to work harder and harder as what they earn is worth less and less in their communities. As a result, a product that is worth billions

of pounds in global trade relies on poverty-level income for the people who grow it,” says Fairtrade Foundation Chief Executive Michael Gidney.

The Fairtrade Foundation report argues that as bananas are the fourth most important food crop in the world and one of the most valuable agricultural commodities in global trade, it is wrong that they do not guarantee a sustainable living for all the people involved in producing and supplying the market.

“With my hand on my heart, the price that we get for our produce is not enough for us to sustain production over here. It is too low for us to have a good quality of life, or at least a decent one. We don’t see real profit from the effort we put in, it’s frustrating,” say Albeiro Alfonso Cantillo, nicknamed Foncho, the Colombian banana farmer who is now in the UK to spearhead the campaign on behalf of banana farmers globally.

The unrelenting downward pressure on banana prices has driven a shift in many banana producing countries towards job losses, the casualisation of labour and the marginalisation of smallholder producers. It makes it much harder for farmers and workers to achieve the improvements they badly need in wages, access to services like education and healthcare and improved housing, as well as environmental sustainability in banana production.

To accompany the report, the Fairtrade Foundation commissioned the Ethical Consumer Research Association to conduct research to score retail practice in a Supermarket Scorecard. Retailers were ranked using a methodology that draws on the three pillars of sustainability: social, economic and environmental good practice, with an added benchmark of transparency of information about their banana supply chains.

Though The Co-operative, Sainsbury’s and Waitrose, which all source 100 per cent Fairtrade bananas, emerge more positively than other supermarkets from the scoring, the Foundation says no retailer can afford to be complacent. The ECRA research reveals that when it comes to the economics of the supply chain, supermarkets need to initiate change which ensures that all banana farmers and workers are always paid sustainable costs of production and living wages, in order to deliver a truly fair and sustainable banana industry.

The report acknowledges that Fairtrade’s engagement with supermarkets has been hugely positive, since it began 20 years ago with the first three products in 1994. Bananas have been a Fairtrade success story with Fairtrade banana producers now benefitting enormously as one in three bananas sold in the UK

is Fairtrade and three major supermarket have committed to selling only Fairtrade bananas . Fairtrade provides a vital safety net for these banana farmers and workers. But the report says intense price competition between supermarkets is preventing progress towards making the whole banana industry fair and outlines a series of recommendations to the various stakeholders. Britain's Bruising Banana Wars urges supermarkets to use their dominant position in banana supply chains responsibly, reflecting the true cost of production in their practices by paying a fair price to farmers and workers, as retailers do in other European countries. The retail price of bananas has increased in France, Italy and Germany by 10 per cent, 3.9 per cent and 7.2 per cent respectively .

Let us Switch!



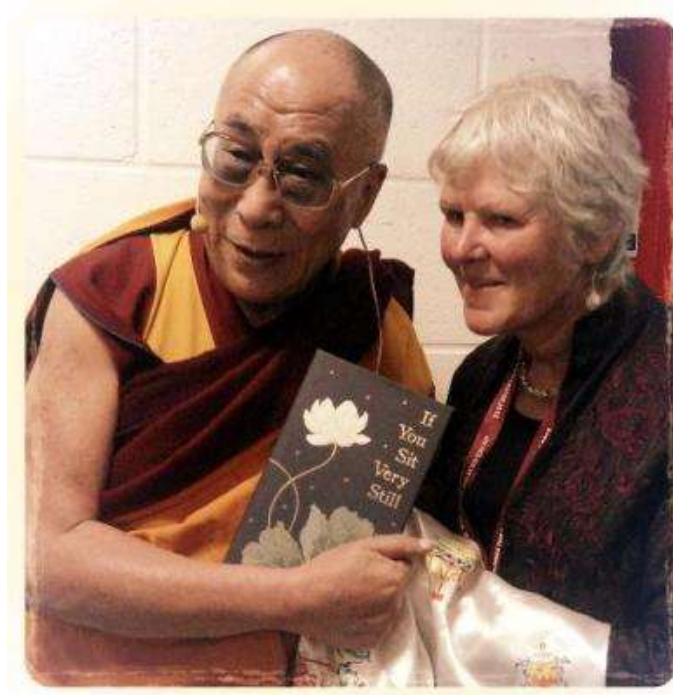
Many people on low incomes are forced to pay for their energy through prepayment meters (PPMs), which use more expensive tariffs than other means of payment. It is very difficult to switch from a PPM to a more affordable way of paying and as a result, people are trapped paying high rates for energy, exacerbating the cycle of poverty. Our partners Church Action on Poverty have just published *Let Us Switch!* <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/switch> an excellent report explaining why the energy market isn't working for poorer people and outlining what can be done to improve the situation.

Thanks to pressure from campaigners Ofgem - the energy regulator has already agreed to meet CAP to find ways to ensure that poor people aren't trapped on unfair energy tariffs. But we also need to get more MPs to understand and to be prepared to take action on this vital issue. If you haven't already done so, please also consider contacting your MP and asking them to address the problem of fuel poverty being aggravated by the use of inequitable prepayment meters. You can use this CAP briefing <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/mpan/stay-informed/briefings/mpanbriefing201402> to help prepare if you wish to speak to your MP.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation Workshop

Saturday 10th May 11am to 3.30pm at Carlton Hill.

Examine the links between forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.



We will be led for part of the day by Marion Partington author of **“If You Sit Very Still”** , look at Advice and Queries numbers 31 & 32 and we will look outwards – what are you drawn to do?

Cost will be £10 / £5 & lunch is provided.

Book by 27th April: phone 0113 2786 351 or email pauline@paulineleonard.plus.com Any money raised above expenses will be given to The Forgiveness Project

Introduction to Leeds Quakers and World War I - a summary of a talk given by Susan Robson to LAQM in February

At the beginning, Leeds Quakers, like other Yorkshire Quakers, didn't know what to do. And probably they never came to a coherent collective opinion about what to do, except perhaps to follow the Inward Light in their consciences. Unfortunately this led to different insights. The work of Thomas Kennedy and David Rubinstein tells us that in the first two years of the war starkly different views were expressed and acted on, and when conscription was introduced in 1916 there were even more fine lines to play tug of war over. The acrimony between the various groups was considerable, with 'fightings within and fears without' the Society but Rubinstein thinks that the fact that this was expressed was what held the Society of Friends together to face the future.

In my first meeting, Golders Green in London, were elderly Friends like John P Fletcher, of York, who had served time in Wormwood Scrubs, where there was once said to be the biggest Quaker meeting in London. So before I started researching this I had for forty years believed that Quakers were pacifist; that meant all Quakers were pacifist, you could not be a Quaker and a soldier, and also that most pacifists, certainly the exemplary ones, were Quakers. All these points were wrong. According to Rubinstein one third of Quaker men in the relevant age bracket in Yorkshire entered the armed forces, another third registered as conscientious objectors, and the last third were exempted or 'left undisturbed', which polishes off the first two points. Cyril Pearce, in his work on Huddersfield, tells us that the largest group of religious objectors to military service were Christadelphians, and that secular/political objectors formed about 60% of objectors, which polishes off the third point.

In 1913 the Northern Friends Peace Board had been formed to 'advise and encourage Friends [and others]...in the active promotion of peace' and staffed by Leeds Friend, Robert Long (?) it placed its offices in the first Carlton Hill Meeting House, now to be seen with the additional name of Old Broadcasting House, on the right on the way up to the University and the new Carlton Hill Meeting House. Northern Friends Peace Board continues to support Friends in working for peace, and their centenary exhibition came to this meeting in 2013. They have a very good website.

One of the Friends who worshipped at the old Carlton Hill Meeting House a hundred years ago was T. Edmund Harvey. He came from a solid Quaker family, had been on the Quaker 'tramps' and had married the sister of Arnold Rowntree. Both these men were active politicians (in the Liberal cause) and in 1914 Ted Harvey was MP for Leeds West. In Autumn 1914 he made an impassioned speech in the House against joining the war. Soon after that he worked with Arnold Rowntree to establish the Friends Ambulance Unit – this was highly controversial at the time, far too much of a compromise which involved talking with the military for some, too cowardly for others. The FAU was never officially adopted by London Yearly Meeting. But when conscription was introduced in 1916 the FAU was already up and running, and it offered one form of alternative non-military service. However there were men who wanted to make their own choices. T.E. Harvey served on the 'Pelham Committee' which was the government group which decided whether

non- military occupations for conscientious objectors qualified as 'work of national importance'. If an occupation was not considered suitable the other options included non-combatant duties in the army, or prison. The story of T.E. Harvey is one piece of the collage.

There is much more to be found in the Liddle Collection in Leeds University Library. Also in that collection are the papers of John Brocklesby and Norman Gaudie, both conscientious objector members of the Richmond 16, who were sent to France expecting to face death. We hope to find out more about these men, and perhaps their families.

British Quakers' Activities for WW1 Centenary

A lot is 'in the works' via the quaker.org.uk/WW1map site. There will be information about the following 'conscientious objection, the Friends' Ambulance Unit and Friends' War Victims Relief Committee, as well as a timeline of these organisations during WWI, marking defining moments in both national and Quaker history'.

'*Witnessing for peace on the centenary of World War I: a resource pack for Quaker Meetings*' will be available. It contains resources for your meeting, your children's meeting and for working with other groups marking the centenary, including a newspaper, peace education resources and postcards. To order a hard copy, please email the [Quaker Centre](mailto:quakercentre@leedsquakers.org.uk) or telephone 020 7663 1030.

The online storytelling project [The White Feathers Diaries](http://www.whitefeathersdiaries.com) will follow five Quakers from the outbreak of the war in 1914 to the introduction of conscription in 1916. The White Feather Diaries will go live on **4 August 2014**.

Some forthcoming Yorkshire exhibitions include

The Mount School Creative Arts Festival, The Mount School, Dalton Terrace, York (2pm, 2 July 2014), showcase of learning from a three-day project on World War I.

'An exhibition of Quakers in the East Riding of Yorkshire' (final title tbc): The Treasure House, Champney Road, Beverley, HU17 8HE (27 September to 29 November 2014), exhibition of several panels plus historical documents and artefacts.

Pascal Ansell (and others).

State of the Meeting 2013: Carlton Hill Quaker Meeting

We are glad to report that the end of 2013 finds Friends at Carlton Hill Meeting in good heart. Our Meetings for Worship this year have continued to be well attended by Friends of all ages and by enquirers and visitors, many of whom have stayed to become part of our Meeting community. We are grateful both for the gathered stillness and for the risky sharing of Friends' experiences that our Meetings for Worship can bring us. We are also grateful for all the Friends who enable our children's Meeting and the monthly teenagers' meeting to take place. Recognising that all of us can learn from each other's experience, we have recently begun the practice of giving, after Meeting, a brief account of what happened in the main Meeting for Worship as well as what happened in the children's Meeting. We also held one semi-programmed Meeting for Worship, planned to be accessible for all ages, on the theme of "sharing our gifts". We have instituted a midweek evening Meeting for Worship, held once a month.

As a worshipping community we are privileged to share in the most important events of each others' lives. In the summer we were delighted to celebrate the marriage of our Friends Jared West and Lorne Wolf, together with the wider circle of their family and friends. We also held a special Meeting for Worship to welcome and celebrate our commitment to our young Friend Hope Rowntree. The deaths of Elisabeth Hulland, Douglas Townsend, Jan Symonds and Gladys Wilson during the year were marked in Meetings for Worship at which we were joined by family members and others who wished to give thanks for their lives.

Our Meeting community is constantly growing and changing; we need to create opportunities to get to know each other better, to reflect together on our faith and experience and to build up our common life. In 2013 there were many such opportunities – including a weekend at Glenthorne attended by approximately 35 Friends, several new regular discussion groups facilitated by our Elders, social events for groups of Friends facilitated by Overseers, and our regular monthly shared lunches and weekly coffee mornings. Many Friends, including children and young people, have attended meetings and events and served on committees of Area Meeting, Quakers in Yorkshire, Northern Friends Peace Board, Britain Yearly Meeting and the Quaker Council for European Affairs. Their reports help to maintain our sense of connection to the wider community of Friends.

As a city centre Meeting close to several areas of economic and social deprivation we are very aware of the severe hardship suffered by many of our neighbours in Leeds, and we also do not forget the great economic disparities within our own Meeting. In the summer the children of the Meeting spontaneously organised a collection "for poor people". Along with our regular collections of food and other goods for PAFRAS, and hearing about Friends' various experiences of being involved in action for social change, this helps to remind us not to be discouraged in our pursuit of justice, truth and compassion.

The year has also had its many lighter moments. A rather unusual addition to our Meeting's life has been a succession of litters of kittens found in our Meeting House grounds – a symptom, albeit a very endearing one, of a growing problem in Leeds, as cat shelters fail to cope with the population of stray and abandoned cats. We wonder whether we are the first Quaker business Meeting in the country to have had an agenda item concerned with the neutering of cats.

We are blessed as always by the readiness of Friends to give generously in time, energy and financial support to the Meeting, and we continue to seek to share out the responsibilities so that individual Friends do not carry excessive burdens. For example, we have set up a rota of Friends to read the notices after Meeting, and have expanded the team of Treasurers.

In a Meeting for Worship towards the end of 2013 we were reminded of the importance of praying for one another and holding one another in the Light, and were reminded to be willing to ask for this help from others. We ask our Friends in Leeds Area Meeting for prayerful support for our life and witness in 2014, as we shall uphold you all in the months ahead.



Supporting Fairtrade Fortnight at Carlton Hill in 2013

Meeting for Sufferings February 2014

This was a meeting with a full agenda and quite a diverse set of issues were raised, although as usual the difficult parts were not where I expected them to be! Many Friends are clearly still uncomfortable with the decision – made by

our Hospitality Board, who are charged with the running of the commercial company which rents out rooms and sells food at Friends House, and passed to Trustees and hence to Sufferings only for information – to give the Large Meeting House, the big room where Yearly Meeting in London is held, an alternative name for marketing purposes. The name they have given it, in response to the new and very splendid skylight which has been installed, is 'The Light'. Perhaps it's living in Leeds, where we already have shopping centres with such theologically-loaded names as 'The Light' and 'Trinity', but I don't personally see this as a problem.

The big decision for the day – and the one with which I thought we might struggle – was whether to recommend to Yearly Meeting that the time has come for a revision of our Book of Discipline, *Quaker Faith and Practice*. In fact, although we felt varying degrees of urgency, everyone who spoke to this item said that it was time and we should go ahead. Accordingly, the recommendation will be taken to Yearly Meeting this summer, alongside some suggestions for exploring current and difficult topics further (the big ones are: how we talk about God, what we do about the environment, and getting to grips with new technology especially the internet). We expect, based on past experience, that re-writing the book might take a decade or so, but this is the first of many small steps in that direction.

Other items of interest were more procedural. We were glad to hear that contributions from Friends to the central work were up in 2013, compared to 2012, and hope that this will continue. A report from the 'Speaking Out' group offers guidelines about how to give public statements, and a reminder that we should always seek to be clear about which if any Quaker body we are representing when speaking in public and especially to the press – although since even a smile is a public statement, it's clear that not everything can be checked by a committee first! In due course, a 'checklist' version of the advice from this report will be available for use by local and area meetings.

Finally, a minor point of policy raises interesting issues. Following the success of October's young people's participation day alongside Meeting for Sufferings, we considered repeating this, but found that many Friends had struggled, in one way or another, to support the young people they had brought and/or to stay within safeguarding guidelines for a one-off event, and we were not able to commit to making a habit of this. We remain generally in favour of involving children and young people in our discernment in age-appropriate ways, however, and I came away with a question for more direct application: how could we include children and young people in exploring the topics which are raised at local and area Meetings for Worship for Business? Could some of the issues be explored in children's meetings, especially where children are staying alongside Business Meeting as we now make possible at Carlton Hill? Could area meeting workshops be sometimes made accessible to young people, perhaps with an option to meet separately during the business?

Finally, a reminder to all to book for Yearly Meeting Gathering in Bath this August, online if you can.

Rhiannon Grant