

**No. 53 February 2014**

Raising public awareness, scrutiny and accountability of US Visiting Forces and their Agencies in the UK and world-wide

Brief look at local, national and international news:

Dear friends

Mass surveillance by the NSA and GCHQ has been in the news ever since Edward Snowden, an American computer specialist, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee and former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor disclosed a large number of top secret NSA documents to the Guardian and Washington Post in May last year. GCHQ has had the spotlight shone on it and questions have been asked about accountability and the legality of their surveillance activities; not however the activities of the NSA in this country or indeed what goes on at US bases generally.

CAAB has been working away at these issues since we were formed in 1992. There has always been opposition to NSA Menwith Hill near Harrogate, North Yorkshire since there were rumours that the US Army was coming to set up an intelligence gathering and surveillance base in the early 1950s. We evolved out of the persistent work by Otley Peace Action Group (OPAG) throughout the 1980s.

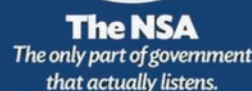
We spent a long time deciding on the title of the campaign after OPAG was disbanded in 1991. We decided that the word 'accountability' should be included. At that time it was rarely used. Now the word is included in many contexts where there is a need for accountability to a credible forum.

At long last there are some interesting developments concerning accountability of the intelligence services and the activities of the US Visiting Forces on US bases here. For example some members of the House of Lords put forward amendments in the debate in the Defence Review Bill going through Parliament and a ‘probing’ debate. *[see Amendments and Debate on 5 February 2014 below. We have included several links in this edition. So as to save space. Apologies to those who don’t have access to internet but perhaps a friend/family does? Ed].*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2013-2014/0060/amend/am060-b.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/140205-gc0001.htm#14020584000373>].

It failed of course but it is an important first step concerning accountability. Also the Labour and Liberal Democrats are calling for a review of mass surveillance by the security services.



It's impossible to produce a newsletter of 8 pages (due to cost) giving anything but a taste of the huge and complex issues involving 'all things' to do with US hegemony, US military policy and the US military industrial complex. For more information, the CAAB website is a good resource and gives some up to date news, information, videos, articles and links: www.caab.org.uk. We are always pleased to receive constructive comments or suggestions.

AROUND A FEW OF THE US BASES (UK)

NSA/USAF MENWITH HILL

(near Harrogate, North Yorkshire)



NSA Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Weekly Tuesday demonstration (now into 14th year): Since the last newsletter we have been having conversations with Aubrey Smith (Superintendent Harrogate North Yorkshire police (NYP) District Safer Neighbourhood Commander) to try to resolve the conflict about the very unsatisfactory and abusive policing by the Ministry of Defence police each week at the weekly Tuesday pm demonstration.

After 8 years of struggle to get the MDP to change their ways things radically changed. For 18 months the MDP actually enabled this protest to take place. Generally there was little conflict. Then it suddenly reverted back to the 'bad' years. This seemed to coincide with the crisis when the US and the UK were about to go to war in Syria. Since then it has been very difficult. There has been much conflict again with a spurious arrest and charge, 5 'reportings with a view to prosecution' and citizen's arrests on four MDP officers. All have been dropped or no further action taken.

On 3 January 2014 Martin Schweiger and Lindis Percy finally met Aubrey Smith NYP, Lee Finkling (PC Public Order Operations NYP) John Brizzolara (the then Superintendent Ministry of Defence police (MDP) Superintendent at NSA Menwith Hill and Terry Moody (Chief Inspector MDP). At the end of the meeting we shook hands on an Agreement which was satisfactory to both parties.

However a few days later this was rapidly 'torn up' after the MDP were instructed by MDP Legal Department and "Whitehall" that on no account were protesters to protest on MOD land. We had been permitted to demonstrate in the car park area of the base for 18 months.

As we had shaken hands on an Agreement carefully brokered by Aubrey Smith, some of us continued to uphold what had been agreed. However each week there have been problems with inconsistent

policing. It was clear that policing by the MDP did not match the way NYP wanted the demonstration to be policed.

Discussions continued including a meeting on base with NYP and the US authorities who we understand, were told in no uncertain terms as to how protests are policed in this country. *[We will report on how things proceed in the next newsletter – Ed].*

New Superintendent (MDP) arrives at NSA

Menwith Hill: Elizabeth Ditcher is her name. She is the first woman to take up this post as senior police officer (MDP) at NSA Menwith Hill. CAAB has, as usual written to Elizabeth Ditcher to welcome her to Nidderdale and invite her to come and meet us at the Tuesday pm demonstration. *[Please note that CAAB always refers to US bases according to who runs and occupies them; so it is NSA Menwith Hill NOT RAF].*

A tour of NSA Menwith Hill planned (Primetime programme with Harrogate Museums and Arts):

Welcome to Harrogate Museums & Arts' Primetime programme for 2014

featuring workshops, talks, handling sessions, lectures and tours for adults on the museums, galleries and heritage of Harrogate district

Thursday 18th September, 5.15pm – 8pm

Visit one of the famous 'golf balls' then enjoy refreshments and a briefing by Senior UK RAF and US personnel.

PLEASE READ – IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOUR:

It includes some open grid flooring and stairs so please wear flat, sturdy shoes. A liability waiver will have to be signed to say you are fit to undertake the tour. Each attendee must provide full name and address (to be provided in advance) and bring photo identification in the form of a passport or driving licence to gain entry to Menwith Hill.

Cost: £7.50 Please also bring £2.50 for refreshments or tell us in advance if you do not want any.

Departure from and return to the

Mercer Art Gallery

To make a booking telephone: 01423 556188 or email: museums@harrogate.gov.uk *[We have written to object and questioning this as a 'cultural' event which you might like to do too or join the tour and asked some pertinent questions: museums@harrogate.gov.uk and or local newspapers].*

We have known for some time that the NRO operates at NSA Menwith Hill:



One of NRO's logos

NRO at NSA Menwith Hill:

The **National Reconnaissance Office** (NRO) is one of the 16 U.S. intelligence agencies and considered, along with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA), to be one of the "big five" U.S. Intelligence agencies. [3] The NRO is headquartered 2 miles (3 km) south of Washington Dulles International Airport.

It designs, builds, and operates the spy satellites of the United States government, and provides satellite intelligence to several government agencies, particularly signals intelligence (SIGINT) to the NSA, imagery intelligence (IMINT) to the NGA, and measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) to the DIA. [4]

The Director of the NRO reports to both the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense [5] and serves as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Intelligence Space Technology). The NRO's federal workforce consists primarily of Air Force, CIA, NGA, NSA, and Navy personnel.[6] A 1996 bipartisan commission report described the NRO as having by far the largest budget of any intelligence agency, and "virtually no federal workforce", accomplishing most of its work through "tens of thousands" of defense contractor personnel (Wikipedia)



This is Forte Meade HQ of NSA

"A Guide to the NSA's Perversion of Privacy: what are the most outrageous breaches of privacy in your life"? plus excellent chronology since revelations by whistle blower Edward Snowden

<http://bit.ly/1gh79T5>

[There are several interviews with Edward Snowden which can be seen on the CAAB website].



Photo of Edward Snowden

RAF FYLINGDALES

(near Pickering, North Yorkshire)

Armed Forces Minister visits RAF Fylingdales: Mark Francois (Armed Forces Minister Conservative) was shown around the ballistic missile early warning site at RAF Fylingdales in Yorkshire, which plays a vital role in monitoring space for missiles, satellites and other debris on behalf of both the UK and US governments.

Mr Francois said: "This is the fiftieth year of ballistic missile early warning operations at RAF Fylingdales and to meet the men and women who perform such a vital role in the defence of the UK and her allies was a real privilege".

RAF Fylingdales has an important component of the US Missile Defense system and sends information directly to the US Space Surveillance Network through the Joint Space Operations Centre at Vandenberg Air Force Base. See something of what goes on at RAF Fylingdales BBC news:

9 September 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-23960820> *[Information from RAF article dated 13 November 2013].*

Developments: Planning Applications and outcomes for NSA Menwith Hill and RAF Fylingdales are listed on the CAAB website. There have been no significant applications for some time.

USAF ALCONBURY (near Huntingdon Cambridgeshire)

US Airforce is considering pulling out of RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth by 2020:

Documents seen by the Hunts Post say the possible closure of the bases has been the subject of discussion since the end of 2011. If they were to close, moving operations to RAF Croughton, in Northamptonshire, would be considered.

Talks are continuing and a decision on the proposals is yet to be made. It is understood one will be made in the near future. Were the outcome to be in favour of the Americans pulling out, a complete closure could happen as soon as 2019 or 2020.

A statement released by the US Airforce did not deny it was considering its future at Alconbury and Molesworth. Instead, it confirmed it was looking at ways to make cuts. Staff Sgt Brian Stives, 501st Combat Support Wing spokesman, said: "The Secretary of Defence has mandated cost-cutting efficiencies across the US forces.

"US Airforce requested that each of the subordinate units identified potential structure changes to fulfil that mandate. We have consulted and will continue to consult with our partners on the specific issues of force structure changes at bases throughout the United Kingdom."

The Ministry of Defence, which employs staff for the bases who provide services for US personnel, declined to comment.

Huntingdon MP Jonathan Djanogly said: "I have not formally heard from the US Airforce." But given the importance of Alconbury to the local economy, about £40m a year was the last figure I heard, I shall certainly be contacting them to ask them to explain the position."

Councillor Nick Guyatt, deputy leader of Huntingdonshire District Council, said the amount of revenue generated for the local economy by the bases was "very substantial". But he played down the prospects for closure. "We have heard the rumours," he said. "As far as we are aware the rumours are untrue."

Back in 2010, the Americans were looking at investing heavily in RAF Alconbury – moving the medical centre from RAF Upwood and relocating its main gate away from the Stukeleys. In all, the total investment in Alconbury, including new schools for the base children, was estimated at \$500 million but was subject to funding from Congress. It was hoped that all of the American activities in Huntingdonshire could be condensed on to Alconbury, making it a hub for about 6,000 people.

[Somehow we managed to miss this article in the Hunts Post by Stephen Waite Wednesday, June 19, 2013. We have spoken to the journalist re an update on this. He says: 'No comment' from the bases].

USAF BARFORD St JOHN (near Banbury Oxfordshire)

The arrest and alleged charge against Lindis Percy (s.69 'aggravated trespass' Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005) was eventually dropped. Lindis is now considering a legal action.

USAF CROUGHTON (near Croughton Oxfordshire)

Military Land Byelaws at Croughton: Cahal Milmo (the Independent) wrote an interesting article about the role of USAF Croughton, their role in surveillance, the bugging of Angela Merkel's phone (information from the documents revealed by Edward Snowden) and then an article on the introduction of 'draconian' laws (Military Land Byelaws). CAAB thinks that MLBs are not so 'draconian'. Only heard in a Magistrates' Court with a maximum fine of £500 the more important questions we are asking are: Why is this law being proposed when the base is covered by the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (this law is draconian)? We are of a view that it is probably because the base is due to expand? *[Cahal Milmo The Independent 30 December 2013].*

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mod-tightens-security-at-american-spy-bases-linked-to-drone-strikes-9030864.html>

Scrutiny of US airbases in Britain is stuck in the 1950s: Ministers have been complacent over the risk that US activities on British soil may result in the deaths of innocent civilians. Almost all first impressions of RAF Croughton – a small airbase that sits amid green fields, about 20 miles north-east of the prime minister's Witney constituency – are misleading. From the road running out of the nearby Northamptonshire village from which it takes its name, it is visible as a series of anonymous, barn-like buildings. An understated sign on a low brick wall and a couple of cold-war-era jets, no longer in use, would appear to mark it out as a relic; a sleepy airbase whose heyday has passed.



Photograph: Martin Godwin for the Guardian

But scratch the surface and the reality is very different. RAF Croughton, which despite its name has in fact been a US base for more than six decades, is a crucial hub for the operations of today's "war on terror".

Angela Merkel's call to Obama: are you bugging my mobile phone?

The US military describes it as the headquarters for the provision of "world-class ... communications and global strike operations". BT provides state of the art links between it and a US base in Djibouti, from which highly secretive drone strikes in Yemen are launched. And recent reports have demonstrated the central role played by Croughton in the NSA's mass surveillance programme, even implicating it in the US bugging of Angela Merkel's phone.

The picture that emerges suggests that US bases in the UK – and elsewhere in Europe – are central not only to mass surveillance but also to the secret drone campaign being waged by the CIA and American special forces.

This campaign is one of the worst excesses of the 'war on terror'. Strikes carried out in Yemen – a country with which the US is not at war – by robotic aircraft have killed large numbers of civilians, and are widely opposed by civil society and the country's parliament. Earlier this year, the Obama administration was forced to open an investigation – a depressingly rare event – into a drone strike that hit a wedding party in Yemen, after evidence was unearthed by human rights charity Reprieve.

Yet despite the position of bases such as Croughton at the bleeding edge of the hi-tech war on terror, the way they are regulated is stuck in the stone age.

When I asked the government about the arrangements under which it operates I was told: "RAF Croughton is made available for use by the United States visiting forces under the terms of the Nato status of forces agreement of 1951."

I subsequently asked whether this would be updated, in the light of the considerable changes in technology since the 1950s, but the minister replied that, in his view, "There is no requirement for an additional agreement regarding the use of RAF Croughton by the United States visiting forces" and, "The Department has no plans to review this arrangement nor review the activities undertaken by the US at the base".

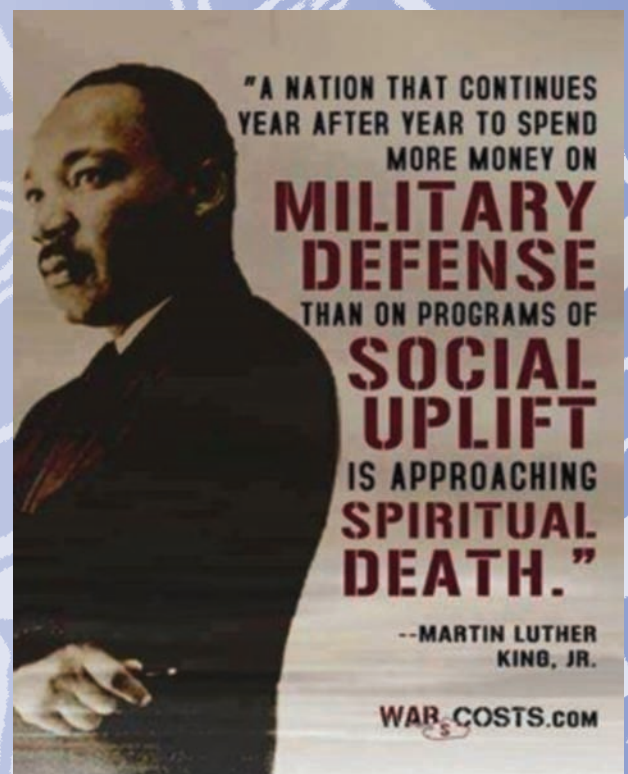
That is why this week's moves in the House of Lords to update and strengthen oversight of these bases are as welcome as they are overdue. Amendments to the defence reform bill, tabled by a cross-party group of peers, are aiming to drag the regulation of

these bases into the 21st century. They will require the defence secretary to report to parliament on what is going on at these sites; provide a scrutiny group, headed by a senior judge, to carry out oversight; and bring the bases under the remit of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, which oversees the use of surveillance in the UK.

It is shocking that ministers have so far displayed such complacency over the very real risk that activities undertaken by the US on British soil may be resulting in the deaths of innocent civilians and serious violations of international law; and it seems obvious that, in a world where drone strikes and mass surveillance on a previously unimaginable scale have become a daily reality, rules drawn up in the 1950s need to be updated.

My view has been reinforced by the expert advice of Jemima Stratford QC, which I commissioned as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on drones. Stratford advises that the government has a duty to investigate and prevent unlawful activity at US bases. She concludes that the amendments proposed may well help, where the Ministry of Defence does not "hold information" on US activities at the base.

The agreements that govern how these bases are used are almost as old as George Orwell's dystopian portrayal of the UK as "Airstrip One", subservient to a US-led super-state. That this portrayal now seems in some ways more up-to-date than the government's feeble regulation of US bases in this country is surely a compelling reason for ministers to support these eminently reasonable amendments. *[Article by Tom Watson MP The Guardian 5 February 2014]*



CROUGHTONWATCH:

A new website has been set up by Paul Mobbs called 'CROUGHTONWATCH' Paul says: USAF Croughton is part of a global system of electronic communications, control and surveillance that works on behalf of the US military and intelligence establishment; in turn it is an active part of both US foreign policy, the military projection of American power across Europe and the Middle East and as part of that, the increasing use of electronic surveillance and unmanned weapons systems (aka 'drones'). The site brings together information about what Croughton is/does, those working to highlight its role in conflict and the use of advanced surveillance and weapons technology, and recent reports/articles which highlight the role of Croughton.

<http://www.fraw.org.uk/croughtonwatch>

[CAAB has given attention to these bases for years so this new website is very important and very welcome].

USAF LAKENHEATH

(near Lakenheath, Suffolk)

Four helicopter US air crew who were stationed at USAF Lakenheath were killed on 7 January 2014. We were so sorry to hear this and are thinking about their families, friends and colleagues.

USAF MILDENHALL

(near Brandon, Suffolk)

On 13 January 2014 the main gate was closed for three hours after a suspicious package was found in a car attempting to drive into the base.



PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Hansard source)

Fabian Hamilton is MP for Leeds North East has regularly asked PQs for CAAB

RAF Menwith Hill

Q: Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer

(Liberal Democrat)

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Astor of Hever on 26 November (WA 272), whether the use of RAF Menwith Hill is still subject to a renewable security of tenure agreement; and, if so, when the agreement was last renewed and for how long.

A: Lord Astor of Hever:

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Conservative)

The use of RAF Menwith Hill by the United States Visiting Forces is no longer subject to a renewable Security of Tenure [Hansard December 11, 2012 – CAAB has some interesting, historical documents on this subject which will be on the website soon].

Q: Fabian Hamilton:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) UK contractors (b) UK civilians (c) MOD personnel (d) Ministry of Defence Police (e) RAF personnel and (f) GCHQ personnel work at NSA Menwith Hill.

A: Mark Francois

(The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence; Rayleigh and Wickford, Conservative):

As of 31 October 2013 the following UK personnel were employed at RAF Menwith Hill:

	Number
UK Contractors	179
Ministry of Defence/UK Civilians	360
Royal Air Force	2

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not release the numbers of police officers at particular locations for security reasons.

The MOD does not comment on whether there are personnel working in intelligence at specific locations. *[HC Deb 22 November 2013, c1046W]*

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Q: Tom Watson

(MP West Bromwich East, Labour)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2013, Official Report, columns 197-8W, on unmanned air vehicles, if he will disclose details of the funding provided by the United States Visiting Forces (USVF) to meet their day-to-day activities at RAF Croughton and RAF Molesworth identified by reference to each (a) unit present, (b) activity carried out and (c) facility used by USVF.

Q: Mark Francois

(The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence; Rayleigh and Wickford, Conservative)

The United States Air Force 422nd Air Base Group at RAF Croughton has an annual budget in the region of £10.5 million to support its operations at the base. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not hold a breakdown of this figure. Units at RAF Molesworth are supported by budgets from multiple commands including NATO, US European Command, US Africa Command and the US Air Forces in Europe. The MOD does not hold a breakdown of these budgets. (HC Deb, 19 December 2013, c708W)

The MOD does not comment on whether there are personnel working in intelligence at specific locations:

[We have now been told by Fabian Hamilton's researcher that 'the Table Office said that the Department won't accept any questions about US affairs, including personnel at Menwith Hill or other bases where US military personnel are stationed' Ed].

However Sue Miller (Baroness) asked this question in the House of Lords recently.

Q: Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Damer

(Liberal Democrat)

My Lords, my noble friend mentioned how important accountability is but there is a very unfortunate issue here: Menwith Hill is Little America, albeit that it is in the north of England. Ever since 1994, Parliament has been asking for, but never receiving, any information about what goes on at Menwith Hill. I appreciate that there have been several visits by the ISC, although I gather that they were very uninformative. How can my noble friend imagine that that situation will become more accountable when that place is accountable only to the United States Government?

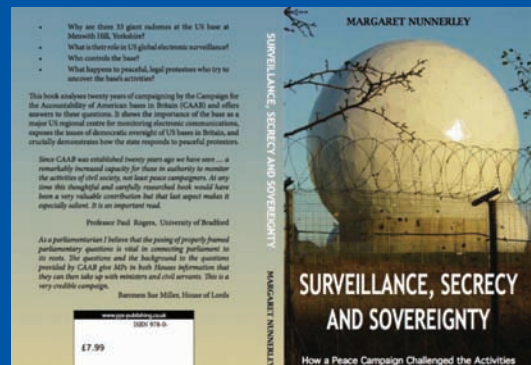
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldhansrd/text/131120-0001.htm#13112089000028

[House of Lords 20 November, 2013].



A critical analysis of the work of CAAB:

Written by Dr Margaret Nunnerley
 “Surveillance, Secrecy and Sovereignty:
 how a peace campaign challenged the
 activities of a US base” will be launched in
 May (date and place to be confirmed).



FINALLY:

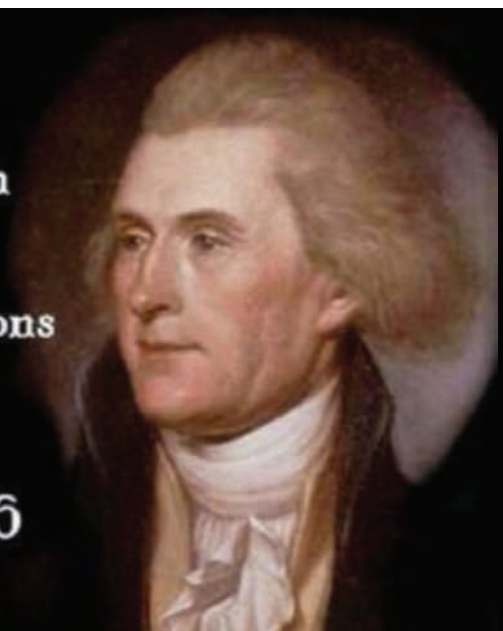
A Christmas Truce: CAAB was present (played football and had a stall) at this creative and wonderful event organised by Bradford Quakers when ‘Christmas Truce’ football match was played on 10 November 2013.

The game was played at Centenary Square in Bradford city centre. It was played in the style of the truce match between German and British troops on the Western Front on Christmas Day 1914. Chris Butler of Bradford Quakers said the intention was to “recreate the atmosphere of humanity and friendship”. Chris Butler said he had the idea for the Remembrance Sunday match while talking to members of the University of Bradford Peace Studies department. During the Christmas Truce, British and German soldiers stopped fighting and ventured into no man’s land to talk, exchange gifts and play football.

The Lord Mayor of Bradford Khadim Hussain kicked-off the match with Yorkshire’s German Consul, Mark Green. Khadim Hussain said: “My father and my uncle served in World War Two so it is important to me - for us - to remember the sacrifices made by those who have served and continue to serve in our armed forces.” “This event helps us to reflect on the amazing show of human spirit that happened on Christmas Day 1914.” *[excerpts from BBC Sheffield & South Yorkshire. Perhaps others might like to consider emulating this as an alternative event to the ‘glorification’ by the Government of WW1 this year?].*

"The end of democracy and the defeat of the American Revolution will occur when government falls into the hands of lending institutions and moneyed incorporations."

-- Thomas Jefferson, 1816



CAAB TALKS, MEDIA INTERVIEWS, ARTICLES, LETTERS TO NEWSPAPERS

CAAB has provided information and advice to the press.

Interviewed by Russian TV x 2, Radio Leeds,

Quoted in Morning Star, Cahal Milmo
(the Independent),

Seumas Milne (the Guardian)

Talk to students and staff
at Trinity University
U3A Harrogate

Quaker Meeting for Worship 2014

NSA Menwith Hill:

2.00pm – 3.00pm;

5th April, 7th June, 2nd August, 5th October
6th December

RAF Fylingdales:

12 midday – 1.00pm;

1st March, 3rd May, 5th July, 6th September
6th November

USAF Croughton:

2.00pm main gate 4th Saturday each month

Contact: Maria Huff,
Banbury & Banbury Evesham Area Meeting

01869347178

It is now possible to donate to CAAB on the website. A Paypal account has been set up which will make it much easier to donate money for the work of CAAB:

CAAB account No: 500095311 Sort Code: 089229

The Cooperative Bank , 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP

WHO'S WHO AT CAAB?

Hon Treasurer: Judith Rushby, 31 Blossomgate
Ripon, HG4 2AJ. (Bank signatories
Judith Rushby and Martin Schweiger)

Webmaster: Ray Middleton

Mailing list organiser: Melanie Ndzinga

Fundraiser: Christine Dean

Graphic designer: Paul Wood

Monitoring planning applications: Steve Hill

Photographer: Steve Schofield
(sdschofield.wordpress.com)

Twitter page manager: Ian Bell

Merchandising designer: Sarah McEvoy

Coordinator: Lindis Percy

Contact: Email: mail@caab.corner.org.uk

CAAB is on Facebook and Twitter: @C_A_A_B

This newsletter is printed on 100% 