



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

July 2021

Remembering Hiroshima

In August it will be time again to note the 76th anniversary of the dropping of nuclear weapons on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The former was bombed on August 6, the latter on August 9. For many years we have marked August 6th with a silent vigil at the Abingdon War Memorial. This year, as always, it will begin at 7.45 am and conclude at 8.15am, the time when the bomb was dropped, ending with an affirmation of our opposition to all war and support for constructive social alternatives.

Two days later (Sunday the 8th) we will have our annual Picnic Tea for Peace (Continued on page 4)

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 20th July 2021, at 8pm (online)

Grassroots activism, from Greenham to today

Forty years ago the Greenham Womens Camp came into being; and Abingdon Peace Group is of a similar age. We think it's very important to celebrate such anniversaries and retell the stories, if only (and not only) to inspire the successor generations of peace campaigners.

Thus for this month's meeting Marie Walsh, an APG member, has agreed to assemble a group of current activists who can present a panorama of what they are doing (and we might join in with) and what their predecessors did. So both history and the present. Topics planned and speakers are:

- Women for Life on Earth walk from Cardiff to Greenham: Sue Lent, one of the original marchers
- Faslane Peace Camp and the Public Interest Case Against Trident (PICAT): Jane Tallents & Marie Walsh
- Trident Ploughshares and the Occupation of Parliament: Sylvia Boyes
- Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp: Nuala Young
- XR Peace: Jane Tallents
- Greenham 40th Birthday celebrations September 4th & 5th: Lynette Edwell & Nuala Young

There are differences of emphasis within the peace movement about the relative values of doing things at community level – going on the streets to leaflet or to shout, taking non-violent direct action, displeasing the authorities versus constantly writing to MPs and Government ministers and asking them ever so politely to adopt violence reducing policies.

We surely need both approaches so that all bases are covered.

(More on celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Greenham Women's camp on page 2.)

To join the meeting: either use the link below or look out for a message with the link on July 20th. If you don't receive it and would like to take part, simply email us using: abingdonpeace@gmail.com

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101>pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nRE
VzYjdSdz09 Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode:015836

Events marking Greenham in August and September



ALDERMASTON WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP

Friday 3rd – Sunday 5th September 2021

A weekend of women's peace camps celebrations

AWPC's September camp will be moved to Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th to join in with the Greenham Peace Camp's 40th anniversary events (<https://www.facebook.com/ScaryLittleGirls/>).

Join us outside AWE Aldermaston for:

Guided tours of Aldermaston and Burghfield nuclear weapons bases

• **Activism Craft workshops**

• **Talks on nuclear weapons and resistance**

PLUS!!

**Saturday night party to celebrate 36 years of
AWPC's presence outside AWE Aldermaston
Wine, Song, Music – Party starts at 7pm**

– Bring a tent and sleeping bag – Some refreshments provided throughout the weekend – Accessible toilets near the Camp –

ALSO!

Join AWPC and Greenham Women for 'Weaving the Web(inars)' – Online March of Ideas between 27 August and 2 Sept 2021 (info@acronym.org.uk)

Organized by Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp, Paices Hill RG7 4WP, outside AWE Aldermaston

AWPC camps are held on the second weekend of each month. For more information please phone 07852 293386

and look out for messages next month about:

40th Anniversary Walk from Cardiff to Greenham Common (26 August to 4 September)
Greenham Control Tower (GCT) events
Social Gathering at Orange Gate
Marking the 40th with social media

Our June meeting – Jeremy Cunningham: The Public Awareness of Nuclear Weapons

Thank you to Jeremy Cunningham who shared his 'initial inquiry' into the level of public awareness of nuclear weapons. Starting from an education background, with a long-standing interest in political literacy and schooling for democracy, he gave us a great insight into how, when and if school children are exposed to information about peace, conflict and the presence, function and effects of nuclear weapons in particular. Then he looked at the percentage of voters who are aware of such matters and where they mainly get their information. In an intriguing conclusion, he discovered that of the Guardian, Independent, Sun and the Mail online editions, the Mailonline published a huge and regular selection of technical and opinion pieces and was doing the best job of delivering an education on nuclear weapons to its readership.

As part of a steering group in the Oxford Network of Peace Studies, he developed a quiz to gauge public understanding of and attitudes to nuclear weapons. This was the issue being considered for their conference this year. They are also raising funds to sponsor a Peace Chair at Oxford University.

He described how he started with the idealistic assumption that voters should be well informed, based on evidence and knowledge. Then voters in a democratic society could put pressure on legislators, even though opinion makers and lobbyists would be putting pressure on with different objectives.

Democracies that hold nuclear weapons include Israel, France, UK, USA, India and Pakistan. The authoritarian regimes include Russia, China and North Korea, who wouldn't be expected to be informed of their weapons.

The quiz was quite tough but most of the APG knew the answers (Well, we will report it so here!) A YouGov poll in January 2020 surveyed 2676 adults, asking as far as they were aware, does the UK have nuclear weapons? 75% said 'Yes'. 18% said they didn't know and 7% said 'No'.

In the 'simple test' that Jeremy put together, he asked people to

- 1 Describe the physics of a nuclear bomb (Uranium 235 is squeezed together and creates a chain reaction)
- 2 Which year was Hiroshima? (75 years ago last year)
- 3 What are the three effects of a nuclear explosion (Heat, Blast and Radiation, or Flash)
- 4 Give the 2 measurements of nuclear bomb power and their relationship to the explosive TNT (Kilotons and Megatons. 1000 kilos of TNT is 1 Kiloton, 1,000,000 kilos is 1 Megaton)
- 5 Explain the following acronyms: ICBM (Inter continental Ballistic Missile), SLBM, (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile), MIRV (Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle)
- 6 Name the nine countries possessing nuclear weapons (USA, Russia, China, UK, France, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea)
- 7 How many warheads are held by two largest nuclear powers (12,000, and by other 7 nuclear powers it's about 800, India and Pakistan have about 150, while China has 2 or 3 hundred)
- 8 MAD (Military Assured Destruction)
- 9 What did the NPT Non Proliferation Treaty commit to? Nuclear weapons countries agreed to get rid of theirs, if other countries promised not to acquire or develop their own nuclear weapons)
- 9 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty START (a recently revived treaty between Russia and America.
- 10 How many signed the TPNW – Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (more than 50 as we knew, as it was ratified and celebrated on January 23rd of this year)

Schooling – primary schools are addressing world issues but teachers and parents are probably sparing the young children the details.

Aged 14, school children will get one year on History covering 1901 to the present day. "Challenges for Britain, EU and wider world". This will include one lesson on Hiroshima and one on cold war and the Cuban missile crisis. One great educational asset was a BBC production: Bite size Revision which has a great 5 pages on the atomic bomb, including the physics and ethics.

Out of three quarters of a million pupils, over half wouldn't study it at all, History might cover the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Religious studies offers the widest overview, in their Peace and Conflict subjects; Just War, Holy War, Surgical strikes, Pacifism, Nuclear Weapons, the Space Race,

the Arms Race, the Warsaw Pact, Hindu views on the treatment of animals and war, Gandhi and the ethics of weapons of mass destruction. NGOs offer education too. CND, for example gave about 200 workshops in 70 schools, in 2019. They have a very good teaching pack. Unfortunately, only a tiny proportion will attend, so these sessions only have a small effect on the school population. At age 16 half the population will have heard of nuclear weapons in their curriculum, and in the following two years, 3%. The top five Universities offer pathways that do mention them but very little International Relations.

Where do the electorate (43 million people of whom 67% voted), get their news? The vast majority get their news from TV, which is poor in terms of nuclear weapons information. Radio, Facebook and printed media are also important. But online single source publications are the main contributors on this topic and the number of posts spike, obviously, when Treaties are in the news, for good reasons or bad.

In a 2016 survey 31% stated that the UK should renew Trident, 35% said we shouldn't and 25% said they didn't know. A CND survey found out that 77% of people in the UK thought we should support a global ban if it could be achieved. Incredibly, 68% of the UK public thought we should retaliate if the UK was attacked.

In conclusion, 25% are well informed, 25% have a bit of knowledge and 50% know nothing whatsoever. (Frances Micklem)

Hiroshima and Nagasaki 1945 (continued from front page)

The picnic will take place by our Japanese flowering cherry tree in the Abbey Meadow, weather permitting, from 3.30 pm. (The tree is quite close to the river and beyond the children's play area, on the way to the lock).

Do come to the vigil and the picnic and don't forget to bring a little food and drink to share on the Sunday. We thought that this year the picnic would also be a chance to celebrate our forty+ years as a local group.

Plant seeds from a tree that survived Hiroshima?

Thanks to Green Legacy Hiroshima (<https://glh.unitar.org>), CND has been sent seeds from a tree that survived the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, to be planted across the world to keep the legacy of what happened to Hiroshima alive and spread the message of peace. They are Camellia seeds taken from the Yoshijima Inari shrine and CND have full documentation and proof of origin from the Japanese government.

We have expressed interest in having one to plant in a local peace garden, public space or school, and are looking for someone with green fingers to germinate and nurture it. Could this be you? If you have the know-how, get in touch! (Sally Reynolds)

Were the bombings necessary for allied victory over Japan? Drawing on US historian Gar Alperovitz's *The Decision to Use The Atomic Bomb* (Fontana Press, 1995), Milan Rai cites information about the US decision to initiate the age of nuclear weapons:

The US had intelligence from several sources that the Japanese government would surrender if Russia, having finished its war in Europe, were to attack them. The Russians told its US war ally they would attack Japan on August 15. Why could the bombings not wait nine days?

In the months prior to August 6th the Japanese said they would only surrender if they could keep their Emperor. This condition was firmly stated to be unacceptable to the Allies. The Emperor continued his reign until 1989(www.peacenews.info/node/9692/hiroshima-nagasaki-75-years)

Paul Rogers: Afghans left to pick up the pieces of the West's failed war

This is Paul Rogers' latest blog on Open Democracy, sub-headed:

As the Taliban rapidly expand in the shadow of US and NATO allies' retreat, has anyone considered the impact on innocent civilians? (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/afghans-left-to-pick-up-the-pieces-of-the-vests-failed-war/>)

David Shaw, 1936 – 2021

David, a long-time member of Abingdon Peace Group, died in June. He was deeply committed to the cause of peace and always gave much encouragement to other campaigners. At his wake copies of Greta Thunberg's *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference*, boxes of which he had ordered for the purpose, were handed out. He was a teacher of music and held several posts in comprehensive schools in disadvantaged areas of the country as well as at the European School in Culham. He was rightly proud of the fact that he kept up with many of his former students over many years, some of whom were present at his wake. He was also a very active trustee of the Abingdon Music Centre.

(Mike Bloom)

Oonagh Godfrey adds: I remember him, with his hair swirling around his friendly, smiling face. I often met him around Abingdon, often shopping in Waitrose, or just wandering. He always wanted the latest news of the Peace Group, and hoped for better times. The invitations to his large, meandering gardens were enjoyable, and we were told how his mother bought the land long ago. This was often where he hosted the Peace Group summer party. Going into his music room was always a pleasure, we all enjoyed it, sharing the food we had brought with us, whilst being serenaded by his piano playing. He always struck me as such a positive and happy character.

We shall all miss him about the town, and we have been told that his desire for peace was so strong that he has left the Abingdon Peace group a contribution in his will. So his work will continue.

May he rest in joy and peace.



City peace trails

There are already booklets published giving information and directions for Peace Trails in London and Cambridge and Peace Trails exist in Leeds, Manchester and other cities. We are hoping to create such a Trail in Oxford, bringing together, on a short walking route in central Oxford, places and sites connected with peacemakers who have lived, studied or visited Oxford eg Gandhi and Olive Gibbs. Central to the Trail will be Bonn Square and the Peace plaque, the focus of many interfaith and peace groups meetings and vigils.

Parts of the London Peace Trail were used on 18th May by Pat Gaffney, former Co-ordinator of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace. We joined her and others on her sponsored walk which took in monuments and sites that highlight women and peace, finishing at the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park. Rev. Nagase, a Japanese Buddhist monk who helped to build the Pagoda in 1985 joined us on the walk.

If anyone would like a copy of the London or Cambridge Peace Trail or more information, please contact us :-) peteranne@aol.com. (Anne and Peter Dodd)

Disturbing children's drawings from Cameroon

Rebecca Tinsley, who visited us two years ago to talk about war and its effects in Darfur and the surrounding territories, has for some time now also been reporting specifically on the situation in Cameroon. She has inspired us to not look away from this country simply because it almost never figures in the British media.

Now she has written an article, *Children's drawings shed sinister light on Cameroon conflict* – with subtitle *the conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon has been raging since 2016. A series of children's drawings shows the degree of violence that pervades their lives.* **WARNING: Disturbing images.** It's on the Deutsche Welle website, (Germany's 'World Service'), www.dw.com/en/childrens-drawings-shed-sinister-light-on-cameroon-conflict/a-57982533?maca=en-EMail-sharing. Why won't the UK Government bring pressure to bear to stop this violence?

Message from CAAT: Stop Arming Israel - Email your MP

The bombardment of Gaza has killed 219 Palestinians, including 63 children. It has injured hundreds of people and left over 90,000 homeless and seeking refuge.

Israeli forces have used advanced F-35 fighter jets, 15% of the value of each aircraft is made here in the UK, with arms producers boasting that the "fingerprints of British ingenuity" are vital to the warplanes.

They have also used F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopters, both of which include UK-made components.

The UK government must act now to end its complicity in these atrocities. It is time to end the arms sales and investigate whether UK-made arms have been used in the destruction.

Email your MP now to demand they take action in Parliament to speak out – the easy way is to go to the CAAT website: <https://caat.org.uk/take-action/campaign-with-us/stop-arming-israel-email-your-mp/>

Michael Mears essential theatre

four dramatic online perspectives on war and nuclear weapons, performed last september are still available <https://vimeo.com/438259377>

Diary

Mon Jul 12: Nuclear Weapons? No thanks! Christian CNDs 60th Anniversary Speakers include: Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal OBE; Marie Dennis – Pax Christi International Senior Advisor; Bruce Kent and Valerie Flessati. Organised by Christian CND. christians@cnduk.org 020 7700 4200; <https://christiancnd.org.uk/12july/>

Wed Jul 14: The case for a people's vaccine Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice now, explains why we need to, and how we can vaccinate the world as he presents the case for a people's vaccine. 7 – 8.30pm. Register: <https://tinyurl.com/peoplesvacc>

Fri Aug 6: Hiroshima Day silent vigil at War Memorial (The Square, Abingdon) from 7.45 am until 8.15 am (time the bomb was dropped) .

Sun Aug 8: Annual Abingdon Peace Picnic Tea, but also celebrating our 40 years in existence. From 3.30 pm in the Abbey Meadows (and see page 4). Bring food and drink to share.

Mon Aug 9: Nagasaki Day (the second atomic bomb in 1945).

Tue Sep 14 – Fri Sep 17: Stop the Arms Fair DSEI the world's worst arms fair plans to return to the London Docklands in September. Help Stop the Arms Fair organise resistance! Email: resistDSEI@protonmail.com

Tue Sep 21: UN International Day of Peace - <https://internationaldayofpeace.org/>

and don't forget our Hiroshima vigil and the peace picnic (page 1) and see page 2 for Greenham dates in August and September.

corrections, contributions etc to this newsletter are very welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month except August. At present our meetings are taking place online. All who are interested in peace and campaigning for it are welcome to take part. The Group has no party political affiliations.

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