



# ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

October 2021

Next meeting: October 19th 2021, at 8pm at the Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon. *Important: please see note at the foot of this page.*

## What's not to like?

Feargal Dalton, a senior script consultant on the BBC nuclear subs drama series, *Vigil*, is an anti-nuclear campaigner. A former Royal Navy Submarine Service weapons engineer, he is a long-standing supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and has spent years protesting against Trident missiles carried by the Navy's four Vanguard-class submarines.

The Daily Telegraph rather disapproves. (Source: Rachel Western via Oxford CND).

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## AN OXFORD PEACE TRAIL?

Anne and Peter Dodd report

There are already Peace Trails: in Cambridge, London, Manchester, Leeds, as well as in a number of other cities in other parts of Europe – in Berlin and Prague, for example.

The possibility of creating a Peace Trail in Oxford, highlighting people and organisations who devoted their lives to non-violence and finding alternatives to war as a means of solving conflict has been a potential project for some years. Anne and Peter Dodd have made a start in the last few months and will share progress so far in drawing up a short walking tour of plaques and places in the centre of Oxford, commemorating people eg. Ghandi, Olive Gibbs and events connected with peace and alternatives to violence.

It is definitely a work in progress, raising questions of what and who should be included or left out in a Peace Trail . . . and how wide should a definition of 'peace' be? Suggestions and thoughts will be warmly welcomed to shape the Oxford Peace Trail further.



The Peace Plaque in Bonn Square has proved to be an excellent meeting point for Oxford area peace campaigners.

For this meeting we are **back to the Northcourt Centre**; and we must conduct the meeting safely:

\* **Do not come to this meeting** if you have symptoms of Covid or of a cold. Bear in mind that even the double jabbed can have mild symptoms and hence be infectious.

\* Before the meeting starts we will remind you of safe distance and mask-wearing requirements etc (don't forget to bring one).

## **Our September meeting – *The Climate Needs Peace***

*A warming world is incompatible with a dangerous technology dependent on cool water and fossil back-up power*

Speakers: Hilary Evans of MAW and Linda Modica of APEC

Acknowledging the humanitarian disaster of war, Hilary Evans of the Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW) said she would focus on the environmental disasters caused by war and the military. She started with the message that there is a vicious circle between climate change and war, and even the MOD agreed. Climate change is a major cause of war, through drought, floods, the inevitable displacement of people, political instability and unrest. Breaking down the areas in which war contributes to climate change, there were several huge areas where the carbon footprint and emissions had to be considered, including manufacturing weapons through to the steel and cement needed to rebuild bombed cities. Hilary produced evidence that military activities account for at least 6% of greenhouse gases, based on the limited available data.

The Ministry of Defence has been keen to share how they are offsetting their carbon emissions by using nuclear powered submarines, drone technology and increasing their use of biofuels on their bases. Everyone groaned in agreement as she pointed out how all three were equally bad news, what with waste from nuclear, the problems we know well with drones and the competition between biofuels and land available for food crops.

Finally she questioned the cultural acceptance of public spending on national security and the inevitability of war. The understanding of 'security' isn't one that we have agreed on and she shared a statistic that even a 1% increase in national security risk is seen by the government as justifying another significant increase in spending on defence.

Linda Cataldo Modica, the Appalachian Peace Education Center Co-chair, titled her talk "The Nuclear Racket's Fraud Against the Climate".

Nuclear warmongers instigate fights to divert attention from their thievery. First the Soviets were the threat. Then the Russians. The so-called "threats" are China and North Korea now. She likened this to the pickpocket gang that got the better of her in Barcelona. It's a racket and a very lucrative one for the war profiteers, but not for the climate, and she outlined the real costs: Not only has the industrial military complex directly produced greenhouse gases, the money squandered on bomb-making alone - estimated at ten trillion dollars - has been diverted from investments that would protect coastal cities from flooding.

One estimate was that the elimination of just one proposed nuclear weapons system could free up enough federal funding to "build a massive mechanical wall to protect New York City from sea level rise". Another showed how redirecting the money and the scientific talent from the 30-year, Two-Trillion-Dollar nuclear weapons modernization programme could pay for the Green New Deal. The US Move-The-Money campaign estimated that each Trillion Dollars spent on nuclear weapons could have bought three million home solar panel systems, or one million electric cars, or one million wind turbines, or 67 million clean biomass stoves.

The development of nuclear technology required nearly 15% of all the electricity produced in the US, so nuclear power's carbon footprint was giant-sized from the beginning.

10-25 Billion Dollar small reactors were proposed that would allegedly supply reliable baseload power. But a warming world is incompatible with a dangerous technology dependent on cool water and fossil back-up power.

Then Linda turned to a fascinating lawsuit filed in September 2020, by community members and whistleblowers. The defendants included the company that succeeded the quasi-public US Enrichment Corp, as well as BWXT, the owner of Nuclear Fuel Services. Individually named in the suit are corporate managers, supervisors, as well as government officials who sanctioned or themselves

participated in their conspiracy.

The lawsuit seeks to halt the “pattern of corruption and flagrant disregard for human life perpetrated by the Defendants and the United States Department of Energy”. The plaintiffs’ brief states that cancers “in some affected areas are “700% greater than the national average”, how the “criminal enterprise” altered or destroyed the medical records of workers at the Portsmouth enrichment plant and suppressed information about the release of “transuranics which were clandestinely introduced in the enrichment process”.

Even after “uranium and plutonium in homes, schools and creeks” were found, at a public meeting, DOE staff told a concerned crowd that the contaminants found were either from “fallout or from smoke detectors”.

In the court case, they are accused of operating “an association-in-fact enterprise...with the purpose of achieving pecuniary gain”. They also threatened physical harm against whistleblowers and their families.

From history, Linda shared a quote from Tolstoy who called out warmongers and their bureaucratic and political allies and all who would take from a poor family: “Its last cow for taxes to be spent on cannons or on the pay and pensions of idle officials who live in luxury...”. To Tolstoy in 1893, they were, in his words, “worse than useless”. To me in 2021, concluded Linda, “the violent, heavily-armed criminals of the nuclear racket are worse than pickpockets”.

You can view a recording of the meeting and hear Linda and Linda on You Tube at: <https://youtu.be/4Ciqqzt0DAo> (report gratefully received from Frances Micklem).

### **From the archive**

Mavis Howard has done great service to Abingdon Peace Group. She was one of the small group of people, over 40 years ago, who started the Peace Group in the wake of the Government decision to allow cruise missiles to be placed in Britain. She kept minutes of meetings, posters, leaflets relating to Peace Group activities and actions over the years – an archive of continuing action and commitment.

A first informal meeting was held, at Mavis and Jim`s house in South Avenue on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1980, of a small group of Quakers. Jim Howard wrote a letter to the Abingdon Herald expressing his concern and inviting any others sharing his concern to contact him. A follow up meeting of eight people was held at Mavis and Jim`s on 13<sup>th</sup> July to plan a public meeting and a leafleting of every house in Abingdon (300 leaflets per volunteer). It was at this meeting that it was decided that the Peace Group would have no affiliation to a political organisation or religious body.

An inaugural meeting was held in the Northcourt Centre on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1980. Abingdon Peace Group was formally set up, a committee was elected and plans drawn up. The first Hiroshima Vigil was held two weeks later on Aug 6<sup>th</sup> and the first public meeting was in September.

From such small beginnings 41 years ago Abingdon Peace Group have continued to do their utmost to inform themselves, influence others, especially the decision makers at all levels, in the name of creating a more peaceful world for us all to live in. (Anne Dodd)

### **A film about Afghanistan: Adam Curtis' *Bitter Lake***

Adam Curtis is a long time documentary filmmaker at the BBC. For the last 25 years or so he has specialised in quite long and discursive films consisting of material selected from the vast BBC archives and of (non-continuous) voiceover commentary. They are always about world affairs and their ramifications for war and peace. The BBC rarely, if ever, screen his material on one of their channels because, one would suggest, it usually tells a story that most would not recognise and would simply frighten the horses.

*Bitter Lake*, 140 minutes long, is available for the next year on the BBC iPlayer and covers Afghanistan's history and relations with the outside world, principally from the end of WW2 until the

year it was made, 2015. The USA, UK, Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, China are all involved in the story. The emphasis towards the end is on British troops in Helmand, with some breathtakingly frank observations from a UK officer. It's remarkable that although the film was completed six years ago, the points made seem to apply in precisely the same way now, six years later. [Though Curtis' films are not famous for their humour, he uses clips from *Carry on up the Khyber* very wittily and to very telling effect].

Usually, Curtis' films liberally feed one's paranoia, but in this instance the overriding interpretation of British and US motivation is quite conventional, namely that these western societies sought to impose a modern, democratic and emancipated society on this backward tribal country. This interpretation may well be correct, but surely begs questions about 'our' democracy – how 'model' is it, for instance?

One has to bear in mind that documentaries always present selected material, which must always of necessity skew the message one way or another. Nevertheless this is a magnificent piece of work.

*Bitter Lake* is at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02gyz6b>; and at: <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/tv/great-game-adam-curtis-s-bitter-lake>; for a positive but not uncritical review by Guardian/Observer Middle East reporter Jason Burke - well worth reading in its own right - go to <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/tv/great-game-adam-curtis-s-bitter-lake>. (Mike Bloom)



*More on Afghanistan:* Maya Evans, long-standing campaigner for non-violent alternatives in Afghanistan, has just sent us the latest newsletter (September 2021) of the Afghanistan Peace Project (formerly Voices for Creative Non-Violence). There's a large amount of really interesting material in it and we would be very pleased to forward it to anyone who requests it. You can also visit the APP website at: <https://afghanistanpeaceproject.co.uk/>. We would particularly recommend the Photo Exhibition – Afghanistan: Hidden Voices from a Forgotten War.

## **AUKUS - Planned new nuclear submarines for Australia**

Dr Sue Wareham OAM, President, Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia): [The] “concern from health professional colleagues in Australia, the US and the UK indicates the far-reaching implications of the deal that has been struck. Although the Australian government claims that there is no nuclear weapons agenda, the use of weapons grade uranium in the submarines will lead to questions being asked about our motives, just as questions are asked of Iran’s uranium enrichment program. The nuclear weapons proliferation potential will be significant. If our government wants to provide real assurance of Australian intentions, then signing and ratifying the nuclear weapons ban treaty would be by far the best way to do this.

Equally, there are huge questions and problems with this ramping up of preparations for war with China. We should be doing absolutely everything possible, including restoring the art of diplomacy, to avoid such a catastrophe, not running blindly into it.”

(Source: International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War)

For a very useful briefing on the AUKUS deal, with Kate Hudson, Paul Rogers and others go to: <https://cnduk.org/aukus-why-we-say-no-emergency-online-rally/>

## **Nuclear Power and the Military, insights from Sussex University**

Scientists for Global Responsibility 20th Sept 2021 have recently published an article entitled *Hidden military implications of 'building back' with new nuclear in the UK*. In it Dr Phil Johnstone and Prof Andy Stirling, University of Sussex, examine the entanglements between Britain's civilian and military nuclear programmes and ask, would the UK be building new nuclear power stations if it weren't for pressure from the military lobby? <https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/hidden-military-implications-building-back-new-nuclear-uk>



## Terrorists and Nuclear Bombs

An article in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (16th Sept 2021) reports that shortly before the Al Qaeda bombings in September 2001, their leaders discussed with Pakistani atomic scientists the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Go to: <https://thebulletin.org/2021/09/twenty-years-after-9-11-terrorists-could-still-go-nuclear/>



September 26 was the **International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**. It was duly marked by a Southern Region CND action involving Oxford CND, Salisbury CND, Abingdon and Didcot Peace Groups and Aldermaston Women's Peace Campers. This photo, of people purporting to be from Abingdon Peace Group, was taken at Aldermaston (AWE); while others gathered at Burghfield not far away.

This short video gives a feel for the event <https://youtu.be/iDAphIVwFhg>

## Vince Cable on nuclear weapons

"It has become commonplace to talk about the climate crisis as the greatest threat to the planet. It is certainly right to focus on an existential issue which we can do something about. But I fear there are other problems which could – at very short notice – prove even more pressing. Pandemics we know about. But the risks around nuclear war and weapons proliferation have slipped out of public consciousness. They mustn't...." Does Layla Moran agree?

Read the full item at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/nuclear-war-north-korea-china-vigil-b1919912.html>

## Cold War near disasters at RAF Lakenheath could have left Suffolk a wasteland

<https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/mildenhall/go-anywhere-just-get-away-from-here-how-suffolk-almost-9215663/>

## Spare copies of John Gittings book *The Glorious Art of Peace* (OUP, 2012).

We have recently heard from John, who has spoken to us a number of times, including when the book first appeared. It would make an excellent Christmas present. If you would like a free copy for yourself or someone else, you are very welcome to pick one up (John lives in Summertown, Oxford), or else just pay the postage etc. Contact him on [jgittiuk@yahoo.com](mailto:jgittiuk@yahoo.com) if you are interested. ([www.johngittings.com](http://www.johngittings.com))



The Oxfordshire Peace Campaign held its annual presence outside "RAF" Croughton on October 2nd.

Supporters from Abingdon and the other members of the OPC expressed our opposition to the growing international menace of monitoring, controlling and attacking us from space.

## Noam Chomsky weighs in on Afghanistan

The campaigner in a September interview, reviews the last 20 years of the Afghan disaster. With references also to Vietnam and Iraq. Running time: 25 mins. See if you can disagree with anything he says.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJRAMR8tGkQ>

## Declassified UK's new website

This is an excellent source of hard news from all over the world that would be very hard to find anywhere else. They recently conducted an 'Ask me anything' interview with Noam Chomsky.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=411tkwyLbzw>

## Diary

*Sat Oct 9: Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp. Contact Margaret on 01865 248357.*

*Fri Oct 10 until Sun Oct 17: (Re)Imagine Our World: Action for Peace and Justice with Noam Chomsky, Vandana Shiva, Jeremy Corbyn, Jody Williams, Beatrice Fihn and others. The International Peace Bureau's second World Peace Congress brings together 62 organisations from 40 countries. A mainly face-to-face event where many sessions can be followed online. Registration is free (€20 donation invited). Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain. More info: [www.ipb2021.barcelona](http://www.ipb2021.barcelona)*

*Sun Oct 17 until Sat Oct 23: One World Week The theme for 2021 is ACT NOW FOR OUR CHILDREN'S WORLD. We shall use virtual events if necessary, but hope we'll all be able to hold physical ones again by then. In the meantime, don't wait for OWW! Use every opportunity to promote awareness about the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP26) scheduled for Nov 2021, hosted by the UK in Glasgow) and to take action NOW to reduce climate change.*

<https://www.oneworldweek.org/>

*Thu Oct 28: Professor Philippe Sands QC: Thinking about an International Rule of Law - 12th Annual Rueff Lecture. Event organised by the Lawyers Group of Oasis of Peace, the charity working in support of the bilingual, binational peace community of Neve Shalom-Wahat-al Salam in Israel. Philippe Sands has spent his life working on matters of international justice and conflict. From a unique vantage point, he shares thoughts about prospects going forward. The event is on zoom, at 6.30. To register go to: <https://www.oasisofpeace.org.uk/Event/12th-annual-rueff-lecture-professor-philippe-sands-qc>. For further information or for guidance on registration or Zoom contact [office@oasisofpeace.org.uk](mailto:office@oasisofpeace.org.uk) or on 020 8952 4717.*

*Wed Nov 3: Faringdon Peace Group monthly meeting on Cop 26 with Pete Dilly local XR campaigner. At 7.30 - meeting maybe a zoom call or it may take place the Faringdon Friends Meeting House. Contacts Jennie (01367 710308) or Karen (01367 241707) or Dave (01367 240808).*

*Mon Nov 1 until Fri Nov 12: COP 26 – United Nations Climate Summit in Glasgow*

*Thu Nov 11: Armistice Day*

*Sun Nov 14: Remembrance Sunday The Peace Pledge Union (PPU) will be distributing white poppies in the run-up to Remembrance Sunday, representing remembrance for all victims of war. <https://www.ppu.org.uk/remembrance-white-poppies>.*

***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. [abingdonpeace@gmail.com](mailto:abingdonpeace@gmail.com). Our telephone numbers are (01235) 526265 & 522163*