



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

July 2022

Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki

As every year we shall hold a silent vigil on Hiroshima Day, August 6, to mark the first terrible use of nuclear weapons. They are still a real threat to us all. (A retired NATO general was heard on the radio advocating bombing Russian ships in the Black Sea if necessary, going on to say we must “be willing to take risks”).

Our vigil will be held on August 6, at the Abingdon war memorial from 7.45 am until 8.15 am, the time when Hiroshima was bombed.

Abingdon Peace Group picnic tea

On Sunday 7th August we will once again have a bring-and-share picnic tea in the Abbey Meadows close by our Japanese flowering cherry tree, weather permitting. It will start at 3.30 pm. (The tree is quite close to the river and beyond the children's play area).

We hope you will come to one or both of these face-to-face gatherings.

In this edition:

Ukraine, the role of diplomacy p2-3
An ill wind: Armourers profits p4
Remembering Bruce Kent pp4-5
International Air Tattoo demo at Fairford p5
Diary pp5-6

Next meeting: Tuesday, 19th July

A two stage peace campaigning evening

Stage 1: ICAN UK Workshop (7pm) - How to get our councils to support the TPNW

CND, the NFLA (Nuclear Free Local Authorities), supported by the Nobel prize-winning ICAN, have co-organised this event to discuss progress on this campaign. Facilitated by Kate Hudson, the meeting will be joined by Seth Selden of ICAN, who was instrumental in getting New York to back the campaign. Experienced and novice campaigners alike are welcome.

More information here, as well as the link to register:

<https://cnduk.org/events/how-to-get-our-councils-to-support-the-tpnw-cnd-workshop/>

Stage 2: Brief APG zoom meeting to discuss and develop our plans, at 8.30pm

We envisage a short focussed zoom of about 30 minutes straight after the workshop, just to decide who will do what. To join in this second stage, either use the link below or look out for a message with the link on July 19. If you don't receive it and would like to take part, simply email us (abingdonpeace@gmail.com).

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101>

pwd=RmxHLzBQaXIHjYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09 Meeting ID: 913 1513
Passcode:015836

We hope as many APG supporters* as possible will take part in these two, but for us linked, events. The TPNW is definitely having some effect, indicated by the rather nervy statement by several nuclear powers (including the UK) that wars cannot be won by the use of nuclear weapons. The nuclear states are going to come under increasing pressure from much of the rest of the world; and they need to hear popular voices of dissent, too. Through our local government councils is one way and we must surely pursue it.

* Supporters in the widest sense – our online meetings have been joined by many non-local peace campaigners. All welcome.

June meeting: John Gittings on preventing a longer war in Ukraine through diplomacy

This was an important meeting, both for the observations that John shared and discussed with us and for what followed from it. First, here is the link to a recording of what John had to say:

<https://www..com/watch?v=AK929Nxa8jYyoutube>

We do strongly recommend that you watch it, as we can do little more than mention a few of his points. His principal concern was that there has been vanishingly little discussion on the part of the political classes in the UK, as reported in the dominant media, on the possibility of a cessation of hostilities in the Ukraine war. Let alone an acknowledgement that ultimately there will need to be a peace agreement, even though that could take decades to achieve. But all wars eventually come to an end and it is surely better the process starts sooner rather than later and in a managed way. When you listen to John speaking you will quickly gather that he is not naïve.

Instead of pushing for an end to the slaughter, however long it may take, our leaders – no doubt with votes in mind – beat the drum for war, victory and just possibly for armourers' profits. Mr Johnson is willing to fight to the last Ukrainian soldier, and for that matter the last Russian conscript. How very brave.

However, certain other governments in Europe and in the wider world are on occasion speaking of peace plans. Even Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary-General of NATO, has spoken of the need for negotiations, though he subsequently contradicted himself. So there are stirrings, even if only faintly in the UK.

In the discussion it became clear that ordinary members of the public need to bring pressure to bear on our politicians to start talking about ending the war; and not just rehearsing the awfulness of Mr Putin, which pretty well everyone fully understands. At the end John said he would write a very brief paper summarising his key points and suggesting ways to proceed. The result, **MEMO ON UKRAINE DIPLOMACY** landed in our inboxes within twenty-four hours and you can read it below.

Please do read it and send it to your MP and leaders of any political party you belong to; and of course to all your friends and acquaintances. Let's make peace a viral message. (Copy and paste it from the newsletter or ask us for a freestanding version). (*Mike Bloom*)

MEMO ON UKRAINE DIPLOMACY John Gittings

1. The Ukraine war will have to end through diplomacy and negotiations. This has been reaffirmed recently by Ukraine's chief negotiator, David Arakhamia, by NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, and others including President Macron and Chancellor Scholz. [*see below for references*]
2. Although the conditions to restart negotiations do not seem favourable right now, preparatory ground work is already under way, with little publicity, between Ukraine and its allies to produce a potential framework for a ceasefire.
3. The call for an "immediate ceasefire" has already been voiced by world politicians including the US Defence Secretary and the Chinese and Indian foreign ministers.
4. The UN Secretary-General has received a peace plan from Italy that has been part of current discussions. This looks at critical issues including Ukraine's neutrality, security guarantees, and the future status of Crimea and the Donbass areas.
5. In terms of timing, David Arakhamia has suggested serious negotiations could resume in August. Other forecasts point to the autumn. It should be remembered that there were intensive negotiations in the first weeks of the war, before these stalled.
6. However the general public narrative – particularly in the UK – suggests that the war must and will proceed for a long time until it results in Russia's withdrawal and defeat.
7. This narrative is inspired partly by the Ukrainian desire to maintain morale, and also by questionable optimism that Russia can be defeated. Outside Ukraine it also serves wider geopolitical and (again particularly in the UK) domestic political aims.
8. There is a danger that unless this unrealistic narrative – with its inherent dangers of escalation – is

9. engaged and contested, it will entrench hard-line positions and make it harder to negotiate a ceasefire and peace settlement when this should be possible.
10. It is vital therefore that there should be as much public discussion as possible on how to achieve peace through negotiation, and that those in positions of influence in the media, in government or opposition, in the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies, in foreign affairs think tanks and disarmament NGOs, should take this up.
11. Britain as a permanent member of the Security Council has a particular responsibility under Article 24(1) of the Charter to work for the maintenance of world peace. So does China, and in spite of UK-China differences, an attempt should be made to engage Beijing in a joint initiative.
12. The UK House of Commons should hold a Westminster Hall Debate as soon as possible to raise parliamentary and public awareness. Britain should seek to mobilise UN support for a new General Assembly Special Session.
13. Issues to be debated and explored include:
 - a) The modalities of a cease-fire and the demilitarization of front lines – the use of UN peace-keepers should be discussed.
 - b) The nature and scope of security guarantees for Ukraine’s neutrality, and the identity of those offering guarantees (preferably underwritten at the UN).
 - c) How to clarify the future status of Crimea and separately of Donbas in terms of territorial integrity and freedoms including language rights. The evident difficulties here only underline the need for early discussion and research.
 - d) How to establish a new EU-Russia relationship that would lead to a withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine and the winding down of sanctions.

23 June 2022

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References:

David Arakhamia, Ukrainian chief negotiator

- (1) *“Ukraine plans to resume peace talks with Russia by August, officials say” 19 June*
- (2) *Ukraine suffering up to 1,000 casualties per day in Donbas “He said there was domestic backlash to the idea of negotiating with Russia at all after the alleged war crimes in cities like Bucha and Mariupol, but also noted the war would have to end through ‘compromise” 15 June*
- (3) *NATO Sec Gen Jens Stoltenberg: “So our military support to them is a way to strengthen their hand at the negotiating table when they, hopefully soon, will sit there and negotiate the peace agreement.” 13 June*
- (4) *“Macron and Germany’s Scholz urge Putin to hold ‘direct negotiations’ with Zelensky”, 28 May Western allies meeting regularly to game out potential framework for Ukraine ceasefire as war hits 100th day 3 June*
- (5) *Pentagon chief urges ‘immediate’ Ukraine ceasefire in call with Russian counterpart, 13 May*
- (6) *India and China for immediate ceasefire in Ukraine - Indian foreign minister 25 March*
- (7) <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-05-20/card/italycirculates-4-point-peace-plan-h2o9EfwULf6P1mwDbjdn> 20 May

It's an ill wind ...

If you would like to know which companies are doing well out of the Ukraine conflict, many of whose prices have risen, go to: <https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-how-weapons-makers-are-profiting-from-the-conflict-12624574>

NIS (Nuclear Information Service) update

Just a few headings that give a sense of the range of vital, if unpalatable, work NIS does:

- An update on UK nuclear weapons modernisation
- MOD equipment affordability risks remain despite £48bn extra funding
- Preparations for US nuclear weapons storage in UK
- Burghfield leaves 'special measures' after eight years

Go to: <https://www.nuclearinfo.org/>

Bruce Kent

22nd June 1929 – 8th June 2022

It is hard to believe that Bruce is no longer with us. He has been such a towering figure in the peace world for 50+ years. It is testimony to the influence he had that his death was marked so widely and fully not only in the media, from the Guardian to the Telegraph, on radio and TV, but in the huge wave of individual tributes that Valerie, his wife, received from all parts of the world - all speaking so warmly of the esteem in which he was held and the impact that he had had on individuals and audiences over the years. He was such a powerful orator with a gift for communicating with all age groups, always seeking to address the causes of problems, not just the symptoms.

I first got to know him in the late 1960s when he was Catholic Chaplain at London University. After a visit through War on Want to war-torn and starving Biafra, he became deeply aware of the horror of war and the hypocrisy of governments permitting the selling of arms to belligerents on both sides and, through this, became the Bruce we knew of CND, Movement for the Abolition of War and so many other peace – related organisations. It was through Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace that I knew him best over the years but I also have vivid memories of

canvassing for him passionately when he stood as the Labour candidate for Parliament for Oxford West and Abingdon in 1992. Thank goodness though, he didn't get elected as he could then devote himself for a further 30 years of single-minded commitment to peace and justice issues. I don't think he was ever a speaker - in – person at Abingdon Peace Group meetings but he was seen regularly at Faringdon Peace Fete year by year where our Peace Group always had a stall.

Like so many others I deeply admired his passionate commitment, rooted in faith. He never flagged, always encouraged others and had such integrity and warmth. We will all miss him so much.

All the obituaries so far and an increasing number of individual tributes can be found on one website www.bruce-kent.com. (Anne Dodd).

The funeral took place in London on Monday July 4 and a recording, including moving tributes, will in due course also be on this website.

As Anne mentions, Bruce was a regular attender at the annual Faringdon Peace Group *Grand Peace Fête*. Sadly, the fête has had to be discontinued. In its stead, FPG held a *Grand Peace Picnic* on July 2, which was attended by a number of APG members. They report that the following poem in tribute to Bruce was read by its author:

A mighty tree has fallen.

Right here in our midst.

Like Tony Benn before him Bruce Kent was always right here when he was right here. And we knew that was true wherever he went.

He knew us, valued us and brought his fierce courageous love to warm us in cold times.

He who unswervingly followed his thoughts and values through to their conclusion, followed his own path knowing often that it meant going against the norm, breaking rules he did not respect, changing what he believed, speaking truth to power.

His clear eyes saw through and beyond and right up close.

He was ready for any conversation with a small child, young person, old compatriot.

When he was around us we felt safer, surer, braver.

His branches rustled above and around us.

And now he has fallen we know that thanks to him many new seedlings will reach for the light, inspired by him, nurtured by him.

A life well lived. A man much loved. Rest in peace.

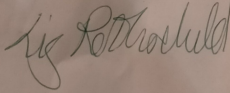
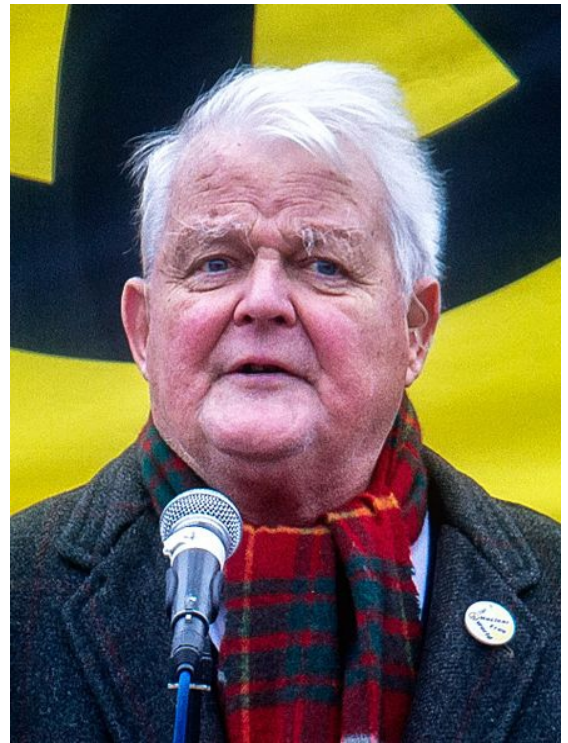



image acknowledgement - Wikipedia

USAF Fairford Thursday July 14: **Royal International Air Tattoo demo.**

The Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) is the world's largest military air show, held annually at (RAF) USAF Fairford on the Gloucestershire / Oxfordshire border. The Trade Day is Thursday 14th July when 'special guests', some possibly potential arms buyers, are admitted, and before the very busy public weekend.

USAF Fairford is actually an active USAF base, currently hosting U2 intelligence aircraft, and also hosting periodic exercises by US nuclear-capable B52, B1 and B2 (Stealth) bombers.

Oxfordshire Peace Campaign will hold a banner demonstration at 11.00am for an hour at the roundabout on the A417 at the western edge of Lechlade. The banners will show the true nature of the base to the incoming RIAT campers. You can park in a side road off the roundabout. Please join us.

Sally is going and would like to fill her car with 3 others. Leaving Abingdon around 9.30, return time can be flexible. Contact her on 07786 055195.

DIARY

Sat July 9: Dances of Universal Peace led by Jackie and Radha. At Oxford City Farm, Cornwallis Road, Oxford, OX4 3NH from 2 – 4pm. Wheelchair accessible, refreshments available. Donations of £3 - £10 gratefully received. Farm open from 10am. Further info from: radhasuryaananda@gmail.com

Thu Jul 14: Oxon Peace Campaign demo at Lechlade highlighting the Royal International Air Tattoo. taking place at U.S.A.F. Fairford, See item above

Fri Jul 15 – Sun July 17: Royal International Air Tattoo. U.S.A.F. aboveFairford. Many toys for many boys.

Sat Aug 6: Anniversary of atom bombing of Hiroshima in 1945: silent vigil 7.45 am – 8.15 am at War Memorial OX14 5SZ. See also front page. (leaving plenty of time to get to Bonn Square for OX CND event).

Sat Aug 6: Oxford CND event: assemble at Peace Plaque in Bonn Square at 11am.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing remembered 'Not Once, but Twice – Never Again'

Each August the anniversary of the dropping of the first atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 is commemorated across the world. This year, Hiroshima Day, Saturday 6th August, will be marked with a gathering for reflection and commemoration at the Peace Plaque in Bonn Square, Oxford. There is an increasing risk of nuclear war over Ukraine. This conflict also presents a much wider threat: the existential threat of a nuclear war between NATO and Russia. Between them, they have around 12,000 nuclear weapons - some 100 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb. The possibility of nuclear war is the greatest for many decades. There is no possibility whatsoever that war will resolve these complex problems, and it might end with the destruction of humanity. Only dialogue and openness to the concerns of others will make a difference. We urge our government to get all parties to the negotiating table, to secure Russian troop withdrawal, to make the Minsk agreements work and call a halt to NATO expansion.

Sun Aug 7: Abingdon Peace Group bring and share picnic tea in the Abbey Meadows, Abingdon (near Abingdon Bridge). From 3.30 pm by the Japanese flowering cherry tree, weather permitting. Close to the river and beyond the children's play area on the town side. abingdonpeace@gmail.com for latest newsletter.

Tue Aug 9: anniversary of atom bombing of Nagasaki in 1945.

Sat Oct 1: Rally at USAF Croughton - 'Keep Space for Peace' week. Annual Oxon Peace Campaign event (APG is a constituent part of OPC). Speakers – Paul Mobbs (Croughtonwatch), Dave Webb (Global Network) and Tom Unterrainer (CND Chair). This major U.S. communication and intelligence base supports space communications, data links, military drone information, bomber guidance, missile defence, diplomatic communications, and command and control functions. It is a key link in the 'chain' controlling US operations across Europe, Africa and the Middle East. More next month.

Sat Oct 8: **(NEW DATE!)**: Abingdon Peace Group Jumble Sale – Doors open for the sale: 3 – 4pm at the Northcourt Centre (in Tatham Hall). Please deliver items for sale between 1.30 and 3pm and stay on (or return) to help with the clear-up. Please note different timings from past jumble sales.

An extremely valuable resource: www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/events (and the rest of their website) for up-to-date news and listings.

Corrections, contributions 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. Contact us on abingdonpeace@gmail.com and (01235) 526265 & 522163.