



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter September & October 2023

Saturday 7th October is USAF Croughton Rally!

Speakers outside the main gate 1-3 pm - contact Sally for lift sharing.

Saturday October 14th is JUMBLE SALE time again!

As last year, we can only have the Northcourt Centre from 1.30pm so need help with sorting then before the doors open at 3pm. Can you bring your car and take leftovers to your favourite charity shop at 4.30pm?

Home-made cakes are welcome for both events!

Please let Denise know if you can help on 01235 529235.

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This month's meeting:

Tuesday 19th September 8pm online

The Nuclear Nightmare

- from Oppenheimer to Lakenheath.
A joint meeting with Salisbury CND.

We are delighted to have Tom Unterrainer, the Chair of CND, as our speaker this month, and have decided to co-operate with Salisbury CND (some of whom often zoom in to our meetings) to host him.

Tom's day-job is co-Editor of The Spokesman, journal of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and he shares CND's outrage that US nukes are soon to be based at Lakenheath in Suffolk again (they were last there in 2008 and were withdrawn after vigorous protest).



The film Oppenheimer has been a box-office hit all August (it is still showing in the Abbey Cinema in Abingdon and well worth watching!). It has raised nuclear weapons and the potential for nuclear war in the public consciousness for the first time in a generation, and has created a huge opportunity to tell people more.

N.B. We plan to leaflet outside one of the last showings, on Sunday September 24th, just after 5pm, and would welcome leafletters! Let Sally know if you can help!

To join our Zoom meeting, click this NEW link any time after 7.30pm:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83703466578?pwd=M2tEQUhYcUVleKxOalA5d2NjSWF0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 837 0346 6578 Passcode: 089900 . You can also join by phone: email abingdonpeace@gmail.com for help.



It was a delight to see so many people crowd into the Garden Room at St Ethelwold's House to browse the photos and memorabilia of our 40+ years of campaigning, and it was impressive that 4 people who were at the very first meeting of the "Abingdon branch of the South Oxfordshire Peace Campaign" in 1981 were with us. We were joined by Andrew Jackson, the Chief Executive of Pax Christi, to present a Pax Christi Peace Award, which Sally accepted on behalf of the group.

A lovely surprise at the meeting to prepare the exhibits was the arrival of Michael Hertz from Berlin, in whose garage the APG newsletter was printed for many years by Gaby Hertz. They both read the newsletter still!



We were sad that the Mayor of Abingdon didn't come, but we had a very encouraging message from her the next week, which said in part, "Dear Sally, I am very sorry I missed your last Peace celebration. It wasn't in my diary I'm afraid I am highly supportive of your work and when I was a junior doctor was a member of the medical association against nuclear weapons and went on many marches. With very best wishes, Gwyneth Lewis OBE, Mayor." Sally Reynolds

U.S.A.F. Croughton
(US communication base)

Keep Space for Peace



Global Action Against Weapons in Space: Rally Saturday 7th October at the "Nerve Centre" in Croughton

CovertAction Magazine ran a report of a webinar in mid-July hosted by the War Industry Resistance Network. <https://covertactionmagazine.com/2023/08/23/ukraine-providing-an-important-testing-ground-for-space-based-weapons/> It makes chilling reading. 1991 Operation Desert Storm was the first space war and set the groundwork for Ukraine. By 1997, the U.S. Space Command's goal was "full-spectrum military dominance" over space by 2020 – which led in 2019 to Trump's new Space Force as a branch of the U.S. military.

Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, pointed out that, for the last quarter century, Russia has presented its demand for a new cooperative space treaty before the United Nations but has been blocked by the U.S., Israel and a few of their allies.

You can read the full article [here](#) and hear much more at the Croughton Rally on Saturday October 7th 1-3 pm outside the main gates, where speakers will include Tom Unterrainer, Peter Burt, John Gittings and Paul Mobbs. Contact Sally on abingdonpeace@gmail.com to share lifts.

BRITAIN AND SAUDI ARABIAN STATE VISIT

Demands are growing for the British government to withdraw the invitation to a State Visit this autumn by Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the de facto ruler of that country. According to US Intelligence, MBS, as he is known, approved the killing of the Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul. Britain continues to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia and in the 5 years since Khashoggi's murder has sold arms worth **£12.9bn** to Saudi Arabia, despite all the evidence of its human rights abuses. This State Visit should not go ahead if Britain is to retain any shred of an ethical foreign policy, as it claims to have. I have shared a petition from <https://reprieve.org/uk/> on Facebook.

Anne Dodd

Note: In a judgment issued on 6 June, the UK's High Court dismissed the case brought by CAAT challenging the Government's decision to renew arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Shocking.

Members Corner! Lesley Lovell's memoir, instalment 4. [Fascinating in the light of the Oppenheimer film, which covers the same period!]

"My teen years were of background fear and apprehension; of being bombed, or of being hauled to prison for protesting, which was sort of exciting too. Then Russia got a bomb too; really frightening. It was sometimes calmer when somebody saw sense and made moves towards the Russians. I remember the huge relief when Kennedy was elected: he was one of "us", not a grandad with the more distant affection for grandchildren, but breeding right now.

Nuclear physicist Josef Rotblat was a Polish Jew caught here while studying in 1938/9; he could not return home when war broke out. He lost his young wife who was caught and died in Poland in 1939. As a Polish Jew he dreaded Hitler having the bomb. In 1942 he realised that Hitler was not enough advanced to make the bomb so started to oppose its manufacture and was a leader of opposition to the Bomb from 1942 on.

After the war, scientists from both sides who understood the disastrous nature of a nuclear war started discussion across the divide. They made quiet contact with each other behind the scenes and wanted to meet to try and persuade their govts but of course got no official help. They could not find anybody willing to hire out a meeting place. Then Cyrus Eaton, a Canadian magnate and not under such tight control as those in power in the USA, here, or Russia, offered his place in Canada, called Pugwash. There were only about 30-40 that first meeting, but the process was started, Eventually they gave suggestions to the govts and gradually were accepted as useful go-betweens. They started the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and had regular meetings, their influence grew. The front page of their website shows a clock set a few minutes to midnight: the clock was moved closer to midnight last autumn with Putin's invasion. The meetings continue."

Lesley Lovell. To be continued...



Mike Bloom R.I.P.

Mike Bloom died on 26 July aged 78, at home as he requested, after a long illness. He was our chair or co-chair until his death, and a brilliant editor of our newsletter for many years until he retired from this recently, owing, he said, to stress.

He was a constant presence at almost all our events, always joined early morning witness to protest against nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki days, and was a faithful presence at our Monday morning vigil against the Ukraine war until illness prevented him in November 2022.

Mike was a witty and kind friend, devoted to Helen his wife, and father of a loving family. He was born in London, went to Marylebone Grammar School, then to Reading University to study German and Philosophy, where he met Helen. He went back later on to study for an MA in linguistics. His mother was a non-believer, and his father went to the local synagogue to celebrate special occasions. Mike always said he was an anarchist, while Helen remained a socialist. He was approachable to all and had many interests: reading of course, the only person we know to have actually read Buddenbrooks by Thomas Mann!

Mike was also interested in film and started what is now the Abingdon College & District (ABCD) film society, remaining a leading light in it for 45 years. Many films were shown, including silent ones accompanied by his friend Andrew Youdell on piano.

Mike was highly intelligent, with a wry sense of humour. Of non-orthodox Jewish ancestors, he kept in touch with many friends in Germany. He will be missed by so many, even those at the local Monday market, one of whom promised to send fruit free to the wake! May he rest in Peace.



Oonagh Godfrey, with approval from Helen Bloom.

The Irish government's principled approach to the Ukraine conflict.

We recently saw this letter, published in the Irish Times last year – are they still sticking to it?

Sir, – I strongly disagree with Seamus Malloy's assertion that Ireland's neutrality is morally degenerate. As a lifelong pacifist, I take great pride in Ireland's military non-alignment and our refusal to fund weapons of war and destruction. Instead, we focus our efforts on peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts.

Therefore I see no shame in Ireland's "Not one bullet" approach to this conflict. Rather than sending bullets, we have sent combat helmets, bulletproof vests, money, medicines, imposed strict sanctions on Russia and offered to house over 100,000 refugees. Far from telling our friends "If you are attacked, we will not help you", we tell them "We will help you to live, but we will not help you to kill".

Shockingly, Ukraine is now the most mined country, and will take decades to make safe.

An article in the Washington Post on 22nd July said that in a year and a half of conflict, land mines — along with unexploded bombs, artillery shells and other deadly byproducts of war — have contaminated a swathe of Ukraine roughly the size of Florida or Uruguay. It has become the world's most mined country. "The sheer quantity of ordnance in Ukraine is just unprecedented in the last 30 years. There's nothing like it," said Greg Crowther, the director of programs for the Mines Advisory Group, a British charity that works to clear mines and unexploded ordnance internationally. You can donate at <https://maginternational.org/how-to-help/>

DSEI - Defence & Security Exhibition International

DSEI is one of the world's biggest arms fairs. For one week every two years, in East London, arms companies display their weapons to buyers from around the world, including countries in conflict, authoritarian regimes and countries with serious human rights problems.

The UK government helps to organise this arms fair, invites these military buyers from around the world, and helps arms companies to make deals, at taxpayers' expense.

DSEI 2023 is open to arms dealers from 12-15 September but the resistance against it has started already - from vigils to pilgrimages, direct action to leafletting. Everyone can get involved!

There are too many events to list here, check them out at <https://stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/> , <https://www.quaker-roots.org.uk/events/#witness> or <https://caat.org.uk/events/dsei-stop-the-arms-fair/>



DIARY. For more events see <http://www.networkforpeace.org.uk/calendar> and also the very up-to-date collection on CND Salisbury's website <https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/events>

Every Monday 8.15 - 8.45am. Vigil for peace in Ukraine. War Memorial, The Square, Abingdon.

8 Sept - 30 Oct "The Mistake" tours the UK: <https://michaelmears.org/tour-dates-for-the-mistake/>

Tues-Fri 12-15 Sept. DSEI arms fair , Excel Centre, London <https://stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/>

Tues 19 Sept. 8pm. APG meeting with Tom Unterrainer. See front page.

Sat 23 Sept CND day of action against Lakenheath. See <https://cnduk.org/lakenheath/>

Sunday 24 Sept. 5.10 - 5.30pm Leafletting outside Abbey Cinema after Oppenheimer film.

Sat. 7 Oct. 1-3pm. Keep Space for Peace rally outside USAF Croughton.

Sat 14 Oct. 3pm. APG Jumble Sale, Northcourt Centre (sorting from 1.30pm) - see front page.

Corrections and contributions to this newsletter are very welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group now intends to meet on the third Tuesday of alternate months on Zoom. All who are interested in peace and campaigning for it are welcome to take part, and people with IT skills are urgently needed! The Group has no party political affiliations.

Contact us on abingdonpeace@gmail.com , 07786 055195 or (01235) 526265.