



# ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter May - June 2024

## BUILDING A FAIRER WORLD

Our friends in Faringdon Peace Group have gathered an impressive bunch of speakers for an afternoon of talks in the Corn Exchange, Faringdon on Saturday 11th May 2-5.30pm. Details on their website here: [https://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk/35\\_Newsletter.pdf](https://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk/35_Newsletter.pdf)

**Levellers' Day Saturday 18th May in Burford.** Free coach from Oxford (courtesy of Oxford & District TUC). Departing Oxford train station at 09.15, arriving back at the station at 17.15. Booking essential – book your coach seat here: <https://www.wegottickets.com/event/614964>

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**This month's meeting would have been:  
Tuesday 21st May 8pm online  
Winchester University's  
Centre for Religion,  
Reconciliation &  
Peace**

We are sorry not to be welcoming Dr Andrei Gomez-Suarez and Professor Mark Owen, both of the Centre for Religion, Recon-



ciliation and Peace at Winchester University.

Mark is the Director of the Centre and also Secretary General for the European Council of Religious Leaders, established in 2002 to enhance communication and cooperation between senior religious leaders of different faiths across Europe.

Andrei is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre, a Colombian writer, international relations scholar, and peace practitioner, specialising in conflict resolution, peace negotiations, transitional justice, reconciliation and dialogue.


The Centre focusses on the links between theory and practice in religious peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, and how each informs, challenges and enhances the other.

Hopefully they will be able to come at a later date!

Read about it instead at <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/research/our-impactful-research/research-in-humanities-and-social-sciences/research-centres-groups-and-networks/centre-for-religion-reconciliation-and-peace/index.php>



Prof Andy Stirling's talk was as enlightening and informative as always. You can watch the whole talk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cs0zhZ1RAvM> His final slide sums it all up:

**The bottom line: a hidden UK military nuclear subsidy** 

- Costs of UK **nuclear submarine capabilities are insupportable** without civil nuclear infrastructures
- Strong UK Government support for civil nuclear power at least partly reflects **military interests**
- **Similar picture is visible worldwide and officially acknowledged in France & USA** where less pressure
- But UK energy policy documents (and wider debates) have left these pressures **effectively hidden**
- **Accelerating competitiveness of renewable energy** is now making this **impossible to conceal**
- **Military interests drive energy: outside defence budget, off public books, away from due scrutiny**
- Hidden **military subsidy from UK electricity consumers** of order of at least **£ 5 billion per year**
- **Evidence clearly aired and never refuted** (eg: Guardian, Independent, BBC, Telegraph, parliamentary select committees PAC, BEIS, DESNZ) – **all can ask** why UK energy debates so inattentive to this issue?
- In the end, the most serious implications of this continued neglect are for the **health of democracy**

And from the excellent newsletter of Renew (do check it out if you are not familiar with it!) a really good article on the same theme: <https://renewextraweekly.blogspot.com/2024/04/civil-and-military-nuclear-mutuality.html>

It concludes with a quote from Sir Michael Atiyah, when retiring as President of the Royal Society *'I believe history will show that insistence on a UK nuclear capability [weapons and energy] was fundamentally misguided, a total waste of resources and a significant factor in our relative economic decline over the past 50 years'*.

.....

**Close to Despair at age 95:** Frank Jackson, Former co-chair, World Disarmament Campaign, had a desperate letter in The Guardian last month: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/apr/30/in-1945-i-shared-labours-goal-of-world-peace-now-aged-95-im-closer-to-despair>

**So now for some good news: Peace Studies in Oxford!** We have heard the lovely news from OxPeace founder Liz Carmichael that Dr Melanie Sauter, Levin Junior Research Fellow in Peace Studies, is the first person to hold a post dedicated to Peace Studies in Oxford University. Hopefully she will not be the last!

**Lantern Floating Friday 9th August evening.**

We have had a reply from Hideko in Japan: *"Thank you for planning an event to hold a lantern float using lanterns from Hiroshima and displaying atomic bomb posters at the same time. We are very honoured that the lanterns made by the young people of Hiroshima are used at your events. The lanterns to be sent to Abingdon this time will be made by students from Seishikan Senior High School, where Emiko Urata teaches."*

Emiko joined our Hiroshima Day vigil nearly 20 years ago when she was staying with Anne and Peter Dodd. She retires next year and is so looking forward to coming to UK and Abingdon then. What a lovely link!

Anne Dodd



**Peace Pole ceremony.** Over 50 of our members and friends joined us for the unveiling. Councillor Gwyneth Lewis said that the Peace Pole had the full support of the Town Council, as "Abingdon is a town of peace, represented by a Mayor of Peace". She had seen many Peace Poles in other countries during her work for the United Nations, and was delighted to hear that there are now Peace Poles in over 200 countries; the Peace Pole movement is an NGO recognised by the United Nations. There was music played by some people who value the peace they find in St Ethelwold's garden.

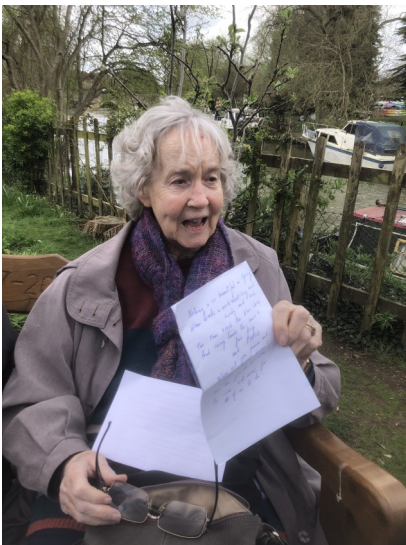
The simple but moving ceremony was concluded with a reading of a poem, after which everyone present spoke together a Community Affirmation which starts, "We who stand here in sorrow for the victims of all violence today declare our hope in the future."



Mavis & family at the ceremony (above).



Roger leads the affirmation (right).  
Oonagh reading a poem (below).



Anne introducing the happy occasion in St Ethelwold's garden, addressed by Mayor Gwyneth Lewis. If you haven't seen the Peace Pole, do call in one day!



**Simon Love RIP:** Correction/clarification.

In our March newsletter we said that Simon "was largely responsible ... for the creation of the open-to-all garden at St Ethelwold's House" ... a "garden he had given so much of his time, energy and horticultural knowledge to". We did not mean to suggest it was his creation alone, and are happy to acknowledge all the wonderful volunteer gardeners who also give and have given their time and energy over the years, and who welcomed so generously the installation of the Peace Pole there. Huge thanks to all!



## Page 4 **Lakenheath action!**

The US is preparing to site nuclear weapons in the UK, specifically at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk. This is bad news for at least 2 reasons: it makes the UK a target; and there is a history of nuclear accidents at the base (see <https://cnduk.org/resources/raf-lakenheath-us-nuclear-weapons-return-to-britain/>)

CND is calling for a day of action on 11th May. Meanwhile a group of Greenham Women are planning an international peace camp from 13 to 25th July 2024. Ali Lochhead says:

*Good news! The Lakenheath Alliance for Peace (LAP) was successfully launched on Tuesday 26th March 2024 when 12 of us put up our banners at the main gate of USAF (RAF) Lakenheath. We now have a good group of local people based in Norfolk and Suffolk working together with members of 14 plus organisations who have agreed to support LAP.*

*Our summer peace camp will start on Saturday 13th July in the centre of Norwich at the Town Hall and begin a walk/bike over 4 days to USAF Lakenheath and start the camp when we arrive on Tuesday 16th July. There will be inside accommodation as well as camping nearby and a continuous presence at the base throughout until the end of the camp on 25th July. Please contact us and let us know if you can come along and support in any way possible on the walk and/or camp. You can sign up at <https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/2024/03/16/sign-up/> or email LAP at [lap@gn.apc.org](mailto:lap@gn.apc.org)*



Don't put Britain on the nuclear front line!

## **Have you missed the recent CND webinars?**

CND has been running an extraordinary series of informative webinars recently. They are available to watch on CND's website, see <https://cnduk.org/cnds-lockdown-seminars/> or on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4x2EPhE7wDCAnLcpJSdM\\_-4R45uKG7Rk](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4x2EPhE7wDCAnLcpJSdM_-4R45uKG7Rk)

All posted in the last 2 months:

- Nuclear exploitation: how uranium mining harms communities
- The human and environmental cost of Britain's nuclear weapons testing
- Lakenheath: its role in the US war machine
- 'Ukraine: how to stop this war' – international online rally hosted by CND and Stop the War
- 'Exposed! the secret US/UK nuclear weapons agreement' – CND and Declassified UK

## **Supporting Peacemakers.**



Yurii Sheliazhenko has been formally charged by the Ukrainian government with the crime of justifying Russian aggression (he doesn't!). Yurii is executive secretary of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, and is a winner of the International Peace Bureau's 2022 Sean MacBride Peace Prize. You can help him by signing this petition:

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-the-ukrainian-government-to-drop-prosecution-of-peace-activist-yurii-sheliazhenko/>

12 April - 17 May 2024

Read more at

<https://demilitarize.org.uk/>



New data on global military spending published on April 22 shows that last year it grew by 6.8% above inflation to a massive \$2.44 trillion – the highest level since the end of the Cold War.

Military spending by NATO states still continues to dwarf Russian expenditure. Despite the large increase in the latter, total NATO spending is still over 12 times the size. Even NATO minus the USA still spends nearly 4 times as much.

Europe saw the largest year-on-year increase in spending in the post-Cold War period, with spending increasing by 16%. The figure was even higher in Eastern Europe, driven in large part by a 75% increase in Poland. Elsewhere spending in the Middle East rose by 9.0% and in Africa the increase was 22%.

GCOMS-UK say that the UK Spring Budget in March showed that core military spending had reached £54.2 billion for the previous year. That’s

- 4.8 times the budget for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- 7.2 times the budget of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero – which is responsible for government spending on climate action.

Dr Stuart Parkinson, Co-Chair of GCOMS-UK, said “It is very likely this money will be found by cutting existing budgets for tackling poverty in the UK and abroad, and for climate spending – which is already far below the level that scientists say is needed. It will most likely accelerate international arms races – and hence undermine international security, not improve it.”

**Stop Rwanda Flights!** The cruel and probably unworkable Rwanda Bill was approved in parliament on 22 April and people are already being detained ahead of their removal, although even the “Illegal Migration Minister” expects legal challenges.



There is an active campaign in Oxford to challenge the Bill. Please sign the open letter here: <https://tinyurl.com/oxfordstoprwanda>

Please share in your networks: and contact Sally if you would like to be kept informed of actions taking place in Oxford.

As the poster says, This is not a migrant crisis. This is a crisis of inequality, war and climate change.



A message from CAAT : Stop Arming Israel! *“In these dark times it is the actions of ordinary people that bring hope of a peaceful and just future; taking to the streets in cities and communities across the length and breadth of the UK, challenging arms companies at your doorstep, and holding your elected representatives to account. You have shown our government what humanity looks like. Please use our updated action to write to your MP again and keep up the pressure!”*

Click here: [\*\*WRITE TO YOUR MP\*\*](#)

We wrote to Layla Moran MP and received a heartfelt reply which says in part: *“The Liberal Democrats have been calling for an immediate bilateral ceasefire since November 2023. .... We have also called for the resumption of funding to UNRWA.”* Falling short of calling for an end to arming Israel?

Palestinian academic & author Mazin Qumsiyeh writes: *“PLEASE ACT immediately in any way you can (lobby politicians, engage civil disobedience, media work etc.). Please act.”*

### **National Ceremony - International Conscientious Objectors' Day**

**Wednesday 15 May 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm** in Tavistock Square: speeches and music in front of the conscientious objectors' commemorative stone. This year the ceremony will pay tribute to the struggles of COs in Israel, as well as in Russia, Ukraine and many other countries around the world. Open to all in person, or you can watch online by visiting this page at the time of the event: <https://www.ppu.org.uk/international-conscientious-objectors-day-may-15th>

**DIARY.** For more events see CND Salisbury's website <https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/events>

**Every Monday except Bank Holidays 8.15-8.45am.** APG Vigil by War Memorial, Abingdon.

**Every Saturday, 2-3pm, Martyrs' Memorial, St Giles, Oxford.** Women in Black vigil.

**Friday 10th May 7pm MAW zoom.** “From COP28 to COP29 - what we hope for in 2024”.

**Saturday 11 May 2-5.30pm in Corn Exchange, Faringdon.** “Building A Fairer World” (see p1).

**Saturday 11th May Lakenheath & elsewhere.** CND day of protest against US nuclear weapons.

**Wednesday 15th May London & elsewhere.** Conscientious Objectors' Day (see above).

**Saturday 18 May 9am-6pm St John's College OX1 3JP.** OxPeace Day-Conference, “New Actors and the Changing Field of Peacemaking and Peacebuilding”.

**Saturday 18 May 11am-4.30pm Burford.** Levellers' Day. Full Programme: <https://levellersday.wordpress.com/whats-happening-2024/> See front page for coach details.

**Tuesday 21st May 8pm on zoom.** Abingdon Peace Group Meeting (see front page)

**Friday 9 August 8pm St Ethelwold's garden.** Candle floating for Hiroshima/Nagasaki days.

**Sat 14 September 10.30am-4pm, Sands Studio, Rotherhithe, and online.** MAW conference “Alternatives to War”.

Corrections and contributions to this newsletter are very welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group now meets 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.

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