



ABINGDON PEACE GROUP

Newsletter

January 2023

Is this job for you? New editor sought

Please go to page 2, where Sally has written a generous piece calling for a new editor. Please give it your urgent consideration!

Yes, this is my final edition of the Abingdon Peace Group newsletter. I've truly enjoyed being allowed to produce the newsletter all these years. My only regret is that only very rarely have people objected to anything in it. Shame. Perhaps you will make a better provocateur. (Mike Bloom)

And very many thanks to Helen for removing typos, misspellings and general verbiage.

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Next meeting: Tuesday, 17 January

at the Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road
Abingdon at 8pm

The CAAT Campaign on the Yemen War

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade is pursuing a legal case challenging the government over the supply of UK weapons for the war in Yemen. The High Court has agreed to hear the case, which is now listed for hearing on 31st January – 2nd February 2023.

It's surely time we returned to this awful war, largely forgotten by the media (guess why); so, in support of this good news, we are screening the following videos at our meeting:

1 "Solidarity with Yemen - impact of UK arms trade" (2 mins)
<https://youtu.be/nPZtUxEGpW4>

CAAT background on the challenge: <https://caat.org.uk/homepage/stop-arming-saudi-arabia/caats-legal-challenge/legal-challenge/>

2 "Since the Arab Spring: Yemen" (3 min)
https://youtu.be/r4VUXwe3d_8

3 "Saudi Arabia, Human Rights & the Arms Trade" (16min extract from talk by Andrew Feinstein on the involvement of the UK:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_8imX2k6cE)

Also recommended "Warton's war on Yemen" about a nondescript village in Lancashire where arms exporter BAE Systems has a factory supplying the Saudi Arabian war machine. <https://declassifieduk.org/the-english-village-thats-key-to-bombing-yemen/>

Annual General Meeting

At the meeting this month we will also hold our AGM, electing chairpersons, secretary, treasurer and others. All these will be members of the forward planning group, which in any case is far from an exclusive body. We will hear the Treasurer's report and accounts of our activity over the last year.

Please offer to stand for election – we always need new people and new ideas.

Our social event in December

2022 was a mixture of some depressing events what with chaos in our politics, pandemics, Putin and the war in Ukraine. But December should be a time for festivities so, as a positive gesture, we the Peace Group decided to have our Christmas party to drive away the prevailing gloom. "Tis the season to be jolly !" So we had our party.

The occasion was well attended although some regulars were unable to attend because of illness but we were delighted that so many could come. As was the custom, folks were able to raid their kitchens to bring along party food which included sausage rolls, cakes, biscuits, fruit and vegan choices which could be washed down with juices and a mulled wine made by Sally . We were not going to starve or feel thirsty !

Being Christmas, the evening began with friendly chat and the exchange of greeting cards and then we moved on to the serious stuff such as games and quizzes. One word game was new to me and was at first very difficult, but through the superior intelligence of the guests, we soon got the hang of it and it was a success.

Then followed a not too demanding quiz based on anagrams from the APG newsletter and a news quiz on peace and current events. All this time we continued with our feast and the mulled wine. Towards the end we sang carols whose words were modified to cover peace issues and the Palestinian situation. Luckily many people had good singing voices and the music sounded lovely. The evening passed quickly and happily until we had to say our goodbyes.

It was a memorable evening and lifted our spirits. If you missed this party, there is hopefully another on next December 2023 .Happy New year! (Tony Godfrey)

NEW EDITOR URGENTLY SOUGHT! Could this be you?

Do you have editorial skills or experience, or is it something you have always fancied having a go at?

Mike Bloom has edited this newsletter for the last 25+ years, steering it from the days of paper & glue into the electronic age. Every month it has got to the printer in good order and on time: no mean feat! Now, due to personal circumstances, he needs to stop. This is his last issue.

We offer Mike heartfelt thanks for his superb wordsmithing skills and salute his persistence in chasing stories and in pulling it all together. Helen, his wife and faithful proof-reader, also deserves our gratitude.

The new editor will inevitably have a new style and focus. The experience might be useful for someone looking to fill out their CV or find a new direction in their career, so do pass this message on to someone of any age you know in that situation! Whoever accepts the challenge will have the support of a friendly group (the "Forward Planning Group") which meets monthly to offer topics and volunteer reports. Mike is in this group and is very willing to offer mentoring to the incoming editor should they need it.

We are sure that there is someone in our large circulation group who would welcome this chance to get into print and to serve the wider cause of peace. But don't be shy! For further info or to volunteer, ring Mike on 07773 201174 or Sally on 07786 055195, or email abingdonpeace@gmail.com. (Sally)

Opportunity to support CND advert in major regional newspapers

The advert will demand that 'public funds will not be squandered on increasing the UK's arsenal of nuclear warheads during a cost-of-living crisis'. If you support this appeal by February 10 your name will appear in the advert.

Go to: <https://cnduk.org/donate/addmyname/> and pay online or by phone etc.

An important annual event this month. We've received this call to participate in the Holocaust Memorial Day event from Daniel Scharf and are very glad to support it. We in the peace movement have readily used the expression 'nuclear holocaust' for very many years now. But have we in our minds truly made the connection between the actual and the all too potential holocaust? If not, it's strange given that the actual extermination camps were opened at the end of WW2 just before Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It's not really the point that many loud and powerful voices condemn (rightly) the concentration camps, but at most regret the nuclear attacks on Japan. (Mike Bloom)

The Path of MADness 2023

An annual event held on Holocaust Memorial Day (Sunday) to reflect on genocide and other crimes against humanity, and other threats to life on earth amounting to Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). The event is held at a place that once had the capability of contributing to and thereby seeking to prevent nuclear war. The opportunity to walk the Path of MADness is open to all those wanting to remember and reflect on atrocities carried out in the past and to consider ways to prevent occurrence in the future.

There is no charge but donations to Amnesty International or Medecins sans Frontieres/Doctors without Borders would be welcome.

The HMD Trust theme this year is "Ordinary People": those people who let genocide happen, the ordinary people who actively perpetrated genocide, and the ordinary people who were persecuted. This theme will also prompt us to consider how ordinary people, such as ourselves, can perhaps play a bigger part than we might imagine in challenging prejudice today.

Where: Upper Heyford Heritage Centre, Building 103, West Castle Street, Heyford Park, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX25 5BX

When: 11.30am on Sunday 29th January 2023

Programme:

- Drive (in convoy) from building 103 to the Quick Reaction Alert to hold a service in a Hardened Aircraft Shelter to include reflections, readings, prose, poems and songs appropriate to HMD and the chosen 'theme'(30mins)
- walk in thoughtful contemplation the length of the Nato runway, designed for use by nuclear armed aircraft (45 mins)
- reassemble near QRA (10mins)
- leave site around 1.30pm

There is a number 250 bus from Bicester that arrives at Heyford Park at 11.15am but lifts will be required onto the base.

Warning: The flying field at Upper Heyford can be very cold in January and people should dress up accordingly and be prepared if necessary to cut their visit short.

Event arranged by permission of site owners Dorchester Group.

Please send email to confirm attendance to pause.forthought@gmail.com enquiries 07949159430

Greenham anniversary report

Just before Christmas the celebration of the Greenham women's entry into the base forty years ago duly took place with some forty women involved reported to have had a jolly time. For more info: <https://twitter.com/GreenhamWomen>. The latest tweet says "On New Year's Day 1983, 44 Greenham Women propped ladders against the fence, laid strips of carpet over the top, climbed into the base, and danced on the missile silos in one of their many creative, anarchic, peaceful and funny protests. Read more at <https://buff.ly/3PAVCpO>"

Recommended US website: Truthout

Truthout (<https://truthout.org/>) is a radical publication which covers a wide range of areas including war and peace. For example, you can read the article [Chomsky: Advanced US Weaponry in Ukraine](#). “Advanced US Weaponry in Ukraine is sustaining battlefield stalemate”, he argues. Certainly not what we want, but is it in fact what Washington wants? What truly are its motives? Massive economic damage in Europe and Russia? See also: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/russia-ukraine-war-europe-biggest-loser-why>

Diary

Sat Dec 10 – Jun 11 June, 2023: [Dia Azzawi: Painting Poetry](#) free exhibition at the Ashmolean, Oxford. It includes a “monumental ten-metre tapestry immortalising the impact of war on the city of Mosul and displayed in public for the first time.” Dia al-Azzawi is an internationally recognised Iraqi painter and sculptor who has been living and working in London since the late 1970s. Best known for monumental and colourful canvasses, his work spans many genres, including a type of artist books known in Arabic as 'dafatir'. A combination of painting and text, dafatir take various forms – accordions, square and oblong booklets, cigar boxes or other sculptural assemblages – but are not meant to be read or viewed in a traditional way. Rather than illustrating the poetry within, which is usually drawn from the pre-Islamic traditions or based on collaborations with contemporary poets, the paintings are free and emotive responses to it.

For further info (and some beautiful images), go to <https://www.ashmolean.org/exhibition/dia-al-azzawi-painting-poetry>

until Sun May 28, 2023: [War Games: Real Conflicts | Virtual Worlds | Extreme Entertainment](#) Imperial War Museum (Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road London SE1) exhibition which will delve into one of today's most popular storytelling mediums and seeks to challenge perceptions of how video games interpret stories about war and conflict through a series of titles which, over the last forty years, have reflected events from the First World War to the present. <https://tinyurl.com/2ph3gruo>

Mon Jan 9: zoom event [War in Ukraine-making sense of a senseless conflict](#) with Codepink's Medea Benjamin, at 7pm. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/peacenevs-Medea>. Noam Chomsky describes Medea Benjamin & Nicolas Davies new book 'War in Ukraine' as 'careful, informed, judicious ... an invaluable guide to understanding Russia's criminal invasion of Ukraine, and most crucially, how we can act to help bring this terrible tragedy to an end.' Joint CND./Peace News event.

Sun Jan 15: [Peace Sunday \(all day\)](#) organised by paxchristi <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk> .

*Sun Jan 15: [When can unpopular protest be effective?](#) Online event with the *Peace News* reviews editor Gabriel Carlyle (at 7pm). Peace News zoom event Register at <https://tinyurl.com/unpopularPN>*

Sun Jan 29: [The Path of Madness](#) at Upper Heyford at 11.30am see page 3 for full details

Tue Jan 31 – Sat Feb 4: [The Mistake by Michael Mears](#) Direct from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, an urgent new play by actor/playwright/pacifist Michael Mears exploring the events surrounding the catastrophic 'mistake' that launched our nuclear age. Performed by Emiko Ishii and Michael Mears. Matinee on Sat. 4th, at 3pm and a Q and A on Thursday 2nd Feb. after the performance. (With Kate Hudson, CND chair, taking part). Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, London, E8 3DL. 020 7503 1646 boxoffice@arcolatheatre.com <https://www.arcolatheatre.com/>

Fri Apr 31: [Extinction Rebellion event: surround Westminster with demands for a sustainable future](#). ER are seeking a turnout of 100,000. For Angie Zelter's invitation to be part of this historic action on: <https://tinyurl.com/xrinvitation> (Peace News blog)

Corrections and contributions to this newsletter are very welcome.

Abingdon Peace Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month except August. 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.