

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 2nd October 2019

PRESENT

Phil and Jennie Chesterton, Karen and Sjoerd Vogt (chair), Steve Braithwaite, Geoff Nettleton, Penny Wixey, Hazel Townesend, Pete Stone, Sand Cooper, Ian and Josephine Wright, Charles Wickham, Bruce Garfield, Evelyne Godfrey

1) AGENDA

Adopted

2) APOLOGIES

John and Janie Cottis, Helen Harris, Jenny Braithwaite

3) 2018 AGM MINUTES

These were read and date corrected from 7th October to 7th November 2018

4) MATTERS ARISING

None that were not covered elsewhere

5) CORRESPONDENCE/DATES FOR DIARY

Jennie talked us through some upcoming events and meetings:

- Sat 5th October - OPC annual rally at RAF/USAF Croughton
- Mon, 7th Oct – ‘Shared Humanity’ discussion with Howard Grace and Letlapa Mphahlele, producer and protagonist of the film ‘Beyond Forgiving’, the subject of a FPG meeting 3 years ago.
- Thurs 17th Oct – ‘Gaza: Beyond International Law’ lecture at Brookes, 6.00pm.
- Mon 7th Oct for 2 weeks – Extinction Rebellion international action on climate change
- Weds 6th Nov – FPG monthly meeting with speaker from ‘Reprieve’ about human rights in Yemen
- Sat 9th Nov – One World Fair, Oxford Town Hall
- Sun 16th Nov – ‘Poems at the Meeting House’ with Fiona Sampson at FMH, St. Giles, Oxford, 6.30 for 7
- Weds 27th Nov – ‘Israel and the Problem of Jewish Identity’ lecture at Brookes, 6.00pm.
- Weds 4th Dec – FPG monthly meeting on Venezuela with Calvin Tucker

6) REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

a) Meetings – Jennie

As usual Jennie, with a little help from others, organised an interesting variety of speaker meetings every month except January and August.

We learnt about the Hebrew idea of Peace from Baptist Minister Lee Reddyhoff. The increasing presence of the military in schools and everyday life was covered by Emma Sangster of ‘Forces Watch’ and County Councillor Judith Heathcoat who explained the purpose of the ‘Armed Forces Covenant’. Chris Cole brought us up to date with advances in drone technology and the increasing use of drones in warfare. International affairs were also covered in ‘NATO: Peacemaker or Warmonger’ with CND GenSec Kate Hudson, ‘What should we think of Trump?’ with Larry Saunders (brother of Bernie), and ‘Climate Change and what to do about it’ with Larch Maxey of Extinction Rebellion. Climate Change was also a recurring theme in presentations by students from FCC on the subject of young peoples’ view of conflict. In January we enjoyed the New Year’s social at Karen and Sjoerd’s.

Other Activities and Events – Jennie

Oxfordshire Peace Campaign.

We were represented at meetings by Jennie, Phil and Helen. Our thanks are due to Nigel Day and Chris Brennan for shouldering most of the work of OPC, which mainly centres round the annual March and Rally at R.A.F. Croughton (really a U.S. base) just south of Brackley. See report on the 2018 rally at bottom of page.

Memories of Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp – Faringdon Historical Society

FPG were invited to talk about 'Greenham', so on 21 November, Jennie and John talked about the Camp and Cruisewatch, with lots of photos (thanks, John). It was gratifying to be able to take the message to people unlikely to be interested in campaigning for peace i.e. a 'new' audience.

Remembrance Day. The British Legion again (3rd time) agreed to let us lay a wreath on the war memorial with all the others. Many thanks to Karen for carrying out this duty.

Women in Black (W.I.B.) Vigil for Peace in Palestine was held on 11 December. This time we had excellent support from Sand, Rosalind, Karen, Jennie, Gloria, Jill H., Marina R., and Helen. It was very encouraging to be supported by Phil, Pete, Dave H., Dave P, and Al Cane giving out leaflets explaining why we were there. A petition with 20 signatures was sent to Ed Vaizey.

The Social Evening on 2nd January the usual very happy occasion, and it was good to see so many people (21) Many thanks to our hosts, Karen and Sjoerd.

The Greenham Common Cold War Experience

This was an 'immersive theatre' event on 19th May and five of us went off to see what it was all about. There were different scenes, including being in the Control Tower when a plane was due to land on the 'longest runway in Europe', and being brave enough to go through the 'Decontamination Suite'.

The 38th Grand Peace Fete on 6th July was another great success very much enjoyed by our special guest, Bruce Kent and feedback was very appreciative.

U.S. (RAF) Croughton. 6th October 2018.

This base, on the Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire border, alongside the A 43, is 'home' to an evil war-making machine that has tentacles over all the Earth. It is destined to be a key link in the chain controlling U.S. surveillance, drones and special forces across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Oxfordshire Peace Campaign organises a march and rally there every year. This year, on one of the wettest October days, three of us (and about 50 others) took part, and heard excellent speeches from Paul Mobbs and Peter Burt (both of whom have spoken at FPG) and also Maya Evans, who is unstinting in her work for peace in Afghanistan.

b) Faringdon Folly and posters round town – Karen

Karen's monthly meeting reports have all been published in the 'Folly' newspaper. Meetings have been advertised with posters round the town and more widely where appropriate.

c) Treasurer – Steve

Steve presented the Income and Expenditure account for the year ending 31st August 2019, which showed another good year with an increased balance of £3859, partly due to giving away less in donations. Thanks to John Cecil for examining the accounts.

d) Grand Peace Fete – Sjoerd

The fete made a good profit of £1716.32, but most people agreed that as long as we make enough to fund our year's activities, money is much less important than bringing kindred spirits together for a 'peace'ful afternoon in beautiful surroundings. A great team effort and many thanks as always to Denny and the other residents of Clock House. Bruce Kent did a very good write up in Peace News and has already booked his place for next year! Was good to have student stall from FCC – ask them if they have any ideas for fete activities next year. Putting on a short drama for example?

e) Resources – Pete, Phil, Karen

All equipment is now back at Colleymore Farm. Not sure what will happen when Adam and Liz move.

f) Artistic Projects – Karen

No progress on Peace Plaque project. Jennie/Karen will try to get an answer from Sue about whether she wants to go ahead and if she does, make sure it's completed for unveiling at our 40th anniversary celebrations.

g) Monthly Meetings

i) Help needed – Once Jennie has booked a speaker, useful to have someone else sort out transport etc.

ii) Speaker transport – Usually from Didcot or Swindon train station. Charles offered, others on Jennie's list

iii) Hospitality – Sorting out a meal beforehand for those coming from afar and putting up speakers overnight. Jenny B no longer available, Penny still willing

h) Press Reports – Sand

Sand sent press releases out for WIB vigil and the fete – challenging when news websites are different every year! For the first time Highworth Link asked for a fete write-up.

i) Any other reports

Rosalind sent a report about links with FCC after the meeting. See below*

7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

All officers were willing to stand again but extra help was welcomed with different tasks.

All were thanked for their hard work during the past year.

Chairs: Sjoerd, Phil, Dave H, Adam, Pete, only needed once or twice a year

Secretary for meetings and activities – Jennie, but with help

Secretary for minutes, Faringdon Folly Reports and posters – Karen

Treasurer – Steve

Artistic Co-ordinator – Karen with help from Marge

Fete Organiser – Sjoerd (with Jennie and Marge and over 70 helpers!)

Website/computer lists – Sjoerd (active list) and Dave/Jennie (very active list)

Resources – Pete, Phil, Karen

Publicity, Fete and press releases – Sand

Syria Link – Sjoerd

8) FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Remembrance Day, 10th November

Wreath ordered from British Legion. Karen will add white poppies. Who will lay it?

10th Nov, 4.00, Friends Meeting House - A time for Remembrance for people of all faiths and none

FPG Vigil on Monday 11th in Market Place.

Women in Black Vigil for Bethlehem

Suggested date 10th December, TBC. Men welcome in support

40th Anniversary Celebrations

FPG has kept going continually since the first meeting on Oct 7th 1980, so next year is our 40th Anniversary!

Suggestions for how to mark/celebrate the occasion:

- ‘Day for Peace’ in Corn Exchange
- Unveiling of Peace Plaque on side of Corn Exchange
- Peace Plaque installed in ground at Clock House
- Host a ‘Pugwash’ conference
- Link with XR for a day of celebration

Organise a sub-committee to discuss all suggestions

General Election Hustings

If/when a General Election is called we plan to organise a Hustings for the town. Difficult to arrange anything in advance, but as soon as we have a date we will book Corn Exchange and find a chair. Mike Wise, the Mayor?

9) DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

We agreed to ring-fence £1000 for the Peace Plaque, £500 for potential XR expenses and £500 for 40th Anniversary celebrations. That left roughly £1000 to give away to suitable causes. The following was agreed:

Donations

£100 to Peace Pledge Union

£100 to Campaign against Arms Trade

£100 to Movement for the Abolition of War

£100 to Medical Aid for Palestine

£100 to Drone Wars UK

£100 to the Harbour Project

£100 to CND

£100 to Nukewatch
£100 to Medecins sans Frontieres
£25 to Southern Region CND

Subscriptions

£27 Network for Peace
£50 Peace News

10) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ian thought we should all be worried by a European Union resolution on Sept 18th, on the 80th anniversary of the start of the Second World, blaming the start of the war on the non-aggression pact between the Nazis and the Communists. He felt this was rewriting history and a move against the Communist Party.

See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-0098_EN.html for more info.

The meeting ended at 9.00 with drinks and 39th Birthday cake.

*** Links with FCC – Rosalind (see 6)i) above)**

Having been asked by the Peace Group to make contact with FCC, earlier this year I held an assembly for their sixth form to tell them something about our work and invite them to come to speak to us.

I later visited a lower school group, The Burnet News Club, with the same message. When I saw them I had just heard properly about Extinction Rebellion at a Peace Group meeting and I passed on the news. This struck a chord with the young people; when they visited us and gave their presentations, almost all were about their research into the climate emergency. Since then some have been on school strikes to protest the lack of action to mitigate climate change. Last month I joined them at the big march in Oxford.

The same group had a stall at our Peace Fete, where they were excited and inspired by their meeting with Bruce Kent. I am still in contact with the school and am hopeful that more of their students will come to speak to the Peace Group next year.