

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 2nd October 2024

PRESENT

Phil and Jennie Chesterton, Karen and Sjoerd Vogt (chair), Steve Braithwaite, Sand Cooper, Helen Holly, Jane Youngs, David Couzens

1) AGENDA - Adopted

2) APOLOGIES

Dave and Jill Headey, Jenny Braithwaite, Al Cane

3) 2023 AGM MINUTES - Read and approved. Karen thanked for 'splendid' minutes!

4) MATTERS ARISING

None that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda

5) CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence

DATES FOR DIARY

All Dates for Diary on the FPG website <http://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk/>

Jennie brought our attention to the following in particular:

- **Thurs 3rd October** – Funeral of wise old friend and FPG stalwart John Cottis. *(About a dozen of us attended)*
- **Sat 5th October** – CND Conference pt. 1. Also 20th National March for Palestine, and now Lebanon.
- **Sat 12th October** - CND Conference pt. 2.
Also 'Common Grounds Day' climate issues discussion with Faringdon's new MP Charlie Maynard. 11.00 Winchester Room, St Mary's Church, Witney
Also Gathering at USAF Croughton as part of 'Keep Space for Peace' week. 12.00 for photo shoot.
- **Sat 2nd November** – National CND Rally at USAF Lakenheath. Stop nuclear weapons coming back to Lakenheath
- **Sunday 10th November - Remembrance Sunday** - FPG will lay its wreath containing white poppies as usual.
- **Tuesday 10th or 17th December** - Women in Black vigil for peace in Palestine in the Market Place

Every Saturday – Women in Black silent vigil for peace and justice, 2 – 3pm Martyrs' Memorial, St Giles, Oxford. oxfordwib@gmail.com

FPG Meetings – All 7.30 at Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Road unless otherwise stated

- **Weds 6th November** – FPG monthly meeting. Speaker: our own Steve Braithwaite talking about the modern slave trade
- **Weds 4th December** - TBA
- **Weds Jan 8th 2025, 7.00pm** - New Year's Social at Karen and Sjoerd's. Bring and share food and drink.

6) REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

a) FPG Meetings – Jennie

We have had 9 monthly speaker meetings - 4 zoomed and 5 in person - and our usual New Years social at Karen and Sjoerd's

Issues covered were:

- **Nuclear weapons** – Ginnie Herbert talked about the campaign to stop NW coming to Lakenheath and Kate Hudson of CND discussed 'World War or World Peace' on the eve of the election.
- **Palestine** – Bernard Reagan spoke about Gaza and Caroline and Avril came from Oxford to show us how we could get involved in campaigning for peace in Palestine through Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA)
- **Climate Change** – Richard Benwell spoke about our net-zero commitments and the chances of them being achieved and Hugo Kerr told us how to monitor our MPs on issues of climate change.
- **Drones** – Chris Cole gave us an update on the latest AI attack drones used in Gaza, Ukraine and beyond
- **Red Cross** – Peter Foot spoke about the origins of the Red Cross in Switzerland and the Franco-Prussian war.
- **World Order** – Dan Glazebrook talked about crumbling western democracy and the rise of Fascism

Thanks to Jennie for finding excellent speakers on such a wide range of peace-related topics.

It was agreed that we would continue to have a mixture of zoomed and in-person meetings for the foreseeable future.

Other Activities and Events – Jennie

Peace Group Events:

- In November we held a vigil for Gaza in the Market Place with good support from members and the public and laid a wreath with white poppies at the annual town Remembrance Service.
- We held our usual Women in Black (WIB) vigil for Palestine in December.
- In January we enjoyed our New Year's social at Karen and Sjoerd's.
- We had 5 planning meetings leading up to our biggest event of the year in May: a public meeting entitled '**Building a Fairer World**' with speakers Mollie Scott Cato (Green Party), Symon Hill (peace activist and old friend of FPG), Ashley Smith (Windrush against sewage pollution) and Mohinder Kainth (Rotary). Very interesting afternoon, but disappointing attendance from general public.
- In June we organised an Election Hustings in the Corn Exchange for the Wantage constituency, with help from Churches Together in Faringdon. Charlie Maynard, Lib Dem, was elected and Oxfordshire turned yellow!
- The 'Party in the Garden' took place in the Braithwaites garden in July. **Events organised by other groups and attended by FPG members:**
- In October there was the annual Rally and Demo at RAF Croughton, organised by OPC and a WIB demo and book launch in Oxford 'Women in Black – Against Violence, for Peace with Justice'.
- Leveller's Day in Burford took place in May.
- Hiroshima Day, 6th August was marked by a demonstration and act of remembrance by the Peace Plaque in Bonn Square, Oxford.
- Karen attended some of the National Marches for Palestine in London organised by Stop the War, CND, PSC amongst others.
- Jennie, Phil and Helen attended regular Oxfordshire Peace Campaign (OPC) meetings throughout the year.

b) Faringdon Advertiser and posters round town - Karen

Posters put up round town for in-person meetings.

Meeting reports submitted to the Advertiser – not always accepted.

c) Treasurer – Steve

Steve presented the Income and Expenditure account for the year ending 31st August 2024, which showed a balance of £2070.35, a little more than last year than last year.

Our Peace Picnic in July raised £220, compared to £196 in 2023.

We had 5 'live' speakers who were each given £50 for themselves or the good causes they represented.

Friends Meeting House hire costs were down - £42 instead of £123

The 'Building a Fairer World' meeting made a profit of about £100 including £30 donation from Rotary

Many thanks to Steve for doing the finances and to John Cecil for auditing the accounts.

d) Peace Picnic – Jenny B

Many thanks to Braithwaites for offering their garden for a bring and share lunch and teas. Damp start but all kept dry and were educated and entertained by Symon Hill, Ukes not Nukes and Dave's alter ego Rickety Nelson. Raised £220.

Discussed whether it was worth the effort and decided yes. Suggestions: Planned programme, speaker, Al Cane invaluable, early planning with lots of people involved.

e) Resources – Ian, Karen

FPG gazebos and other equipment are now stored mostly at the Braithwaites and Steve's storage in Highworth. Lent out to other individuals and organisations.

f) Artistic Projects – Karen

Planning was refused for a plaque on Corn Exchange.

g) Monthly Meetings – Jennie C

Help – Jennie needs help organising meetings – 10 a year is a difficult and time-consuming task. All suggestions welcome.

She would also like others to take responsibility for organising a speaker meeting, following her strict criteria that you have heard them speak, or someone whose opinion you value has Jennie has a set of helpful guidelines for organising meetings.

Possible alternative to speakers - discussion around an issue, possibly with DVD.

More zoom meetings would be good over the winter months.

Speaking offers: Steve Braithwaite 'Modern Slave Trade', Peter Foot – origins of the Red Cross, David Couzens – something to do with Tear Fund's peace-keeping work/rethinking security project, Simon Bell – young people in Gaza coming of age, doing parours.

Transport/hospitality – Very rarely needed now that zoom is an option for speakers who live further away.

h) Press Reports – Sand

Sand with help from Al did press releases for the 'Build a Better World' meeting.

i) Refugee Link - Sjoerd

Approx 80 Ukrainians have been hosted in Faringdon, most now settled and not so much support needed.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers now being housed in Brackendale, former residential home. Run by the Home Office with little communication with local councils. Support group called 'Sanctuary Faringdon'.

7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

No new candidates, so serving officers agreed to carry on for 2024/25. All were nominated and seconded.

Chairs: Sjoerd, Dave H.

Secretary for meetings and activities – Jennie, with help from Helen, Karen, Jill, Sand, David C.

Secretary for minutes, reports and posters – Karen

Treasurer – Steve

Artistic Co-ordinator – Karen with help from Marge

Picnic Organiser – Jenny/Sjoerd

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

Resources – Karen, Ian

Publicity and press releases – Sand

Refugee Link – Sjoerd

8) FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Remembrance Sunday, 13th November

Procession and wreath laying at the War Memorial in Faringdon Market Place. Karen to order wreath, attach white poppies and lay it as part of the official ceremony.

Women in Black Vigil for Bethlehem

Traditionally on a Tuesday in December – 10th or 17th? TBC. Women stand in silence with placards, men hand out leaflets/talk to people in support.

9) DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions were agreed to Network for Peace, Peace News, Stop the War Coalition and CND, through which we get our insurance. Donations of £50 each were agreed for Movement for the Abolition of War and CND, £100 for Medical Aid for Palestinians and £50 each to Oxford PSC and Drone Wars UK who came to speak to us.

10) NEWS OF PEACE GROUP FRIENDS

We were all saddened by the death of John Cottis in September – an old and dear friend and great supporter of the Peace Group and Faringdon Quaker meeting. Our deepest sympathies to Janie and family. A good number of us attended his funeral.

Charles Wickham, stepson of Denny and long-time supporter of the Peace Group also died suddenly recently. A great shock for us all but especially for his wife Ellie and son Sam. Some of us were able to go to his funeral at Westmill Burial Ground.

Dave Watson is not in the best of health but he and the family are happy in Wales and Teana is now at college.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

The meeting ended soon after 21.00, with drinks and 44th birthday cake.

Thanks to all who attended and to Sjoerd for facilitating.