

# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2005/2006

[www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk](http://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk)

## FARINGDON PEACE GROUP'S 25<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY: A DAY FOR PEACE, A MONTH FOR PEACE, A LIFETIME FOR PEACE

Many local people joined with FPG members past and present and other local peace groups to celebrate Faringdon Peace Group's 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday in October. The Town Mayor and local clergy were among more than 150 in the Corn Exchange for the "Day for Peace" and 80 stayed on for the delicious L.O.A.F. (local, organic, animal friendly, Fair Trade) supper in the evening. Many thanks to Gemma and her helpers for that. Hopefully many more visited the displays of peace group memorabilia and children's art work in the library and Friends Meeting House. What an amazing archive of photos, press cuttings, leaflets, posters etc Jennie has – it brought back many happy memories. Bruce Kent and Alma Nettleton, wife of Dick who was a founder member, cut the birthday cake and we all signed a large "Get Well" card for Tony Benn featuring the beautiful 25<sup>th</sup> birthday banner which Marge had made for the occasion. He was very sorry he could not be with us and sent a very appreciative letter in reply.

Speakers on the day all provided food for thought: Bruce Kent, a tireless peace campaigner, spoke of his conviction and the growing public opinion that war solves nothing but creates new problems; Felicity Arbuthnot spoke very movingly of her experiences of the disintegration of life in Iraq under 13 years of UN sanctions and the even more tragic situation ordinary people find themselves in today under occupation; Juliet McBride and Ippy from the Aldermaston Peace Camp gave a peace activists view of their campaign of non-violent direct action to bring to public knowledge the development of new nuclear weapons at Aldermaston and the dangers of transporting nuclear weapons around the country on public roads; John McDonnell MP described his efforts to set up a "Ministry for Peace", to place at the heart of government a minister and a structure which



would promote peaceful ways to conflict resolution and which would scrutinise all government departments in terms of how far they take peace and avoidance of conflict into consideration when making decisions.

To commemorate 25 years of working for peace, an oak tree was planted near the pond in Folly Park. After a short ceremony with readings and sharing of thoughts and hopes we shared a picnic. The first of many, hopefully warmer, peace picnics to come in that beautiful spot.

Milan Rai, founder of "Justice not Vengeance" and our speaker on United Nations Day, sought the group's support in promoting a third way out of the conflict in Iraq which is not even on the discussion table at the moment. Opinion is divided over whether troops should come home now or stay indefinitely. But if coalition troops move out, handing over power to UN forces, this could be the least damaging and the most acceptable solution to the majority, most importantly to the Iraqis themselves. His organisation is raising £10,000 to conduct a credible poll of Iraqis to assess what *they* really want and then act on the results. FPG agreed to support their campaign.

To round off a very busy month around 60 people danced the night away to the folk band "Between the Acts" at the Grand Barn Dance: a joyful celebration after all our hard work! Jennie Chesterton was presented with a bouquet of flowers for her inspiration and leadership in making the Month for Peace such a success. Many thanks to all who were involved or supported us in any way.

Al Cane took lots of great photos at all of the above events – have a look at them on the FPG website, address at top.

## **OCTOBER MEETING – FPG AGM**

Much of the evening was taken up with finalising arrangements for the Month for Peace, but not before we had elected officers and listened to financial and other reports. Most officers were re-elected but Steve Braithwaite replaced Marcus Laphorn as Treasurer and Dave Watson replaced him as one of the revolving chairs. Marcus was thanked for all his contributions to the Peace Group. Thanks also went to the other officers, to the Friends for use of the Meeting House, to Adam for storing stuff in his barn and to Denny for hosting the Fete .

Meetings over the year covered the following topics: Guantanamo Bay, direct action at Fairford, “Issues of War and Peace with all the Parliamentary candidates, Healing and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, “Make Poverty History”, new nuclear weapons at Aldermaston, and the accountability of American bases. We have been represented at major demos in Brize Norton and London against war in Iraq and for a free Palestine and more locally at RAF Croughton against weapons in space. We took part in the Faringdon Madd May Fest carnival, Levellers Day, held our own “Naming the Dead” vigil and NVDA workshop and had another very successful Fete. We attended Oxon Peace Campaign and Southern Region CND meetings and had a theatre trip to “Talking to Terrorists”.

## **FPG NOVEMBER MEETING – CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE .**

The Bristol branch of Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) was relaunched last year and one of its members, Anna Stavrianakis came to speak about the UK’s involvement in international arms trade. CAAT works for the reduction and ultimate abolition of international arms trade together with progressing demilitarisation within arms exporting countries

Anna showed a video made by children whose school stands opposite one of the biggest arms fairs in the country at London Docklands. Their direct questioning of officials and tenacity in insisting on

direct answers was impressive and brought up the main themes of the evening’s discussion: How can the UK say it promotes peace and yet be the second biggest arms exporter in the world, not always very discriminating in who it sells to; why is there such a close relationship between the arms industry and government with advisers, subsidies and commissions; is heavy policing of protests at arms fairs justified, especially with increased use of new anti-terrorist laws? Who is protecting who from what?

## **FPG DECEMBER MEETING – OXFORDSHIRE STUDENTS VISIT HIROSHIMA**

Two Oxford 6<sup>th</sup> formers, Frances Peto and Naomi Powell, gave a moving account of their visit in the summer first to the death railway in Burma and then to Hiroshima for the 60th anniversary commemorations of the dropping of the first atomic bomb in 1945. They were welcomed with great generosity by their Japanese hosts and the trip affected them deeply. They said, “ *It has helped us put things into perspective and broadened our horizons enormously. It has also helped us to realize how lucky we are that we are at peace, and how important it is to do everything we can to protect that peace through better understanding of other countries. In spite of the language barriers, it was wonderful to realize that when we were with Japanese students of our own age, we all shared the same common aims and aspirations.* ”

## **FPG VISIONING DAY – SATURDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**

This is an important initiative that FPG have been considering since we began preparations for our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. It came from a need to take stock not only of where we are and where we’ve been but also of where we’re going. It was felt that it would be too much to include within the “Month for Peace” with everything else going on and holding it later would give people time to reflect on the past and consider our future aims and directions.

## Details For Visioning Day:

10.30am. till 4.00pm.

At “Root and Branch”, Westmill Farm, on the B4058 off the A420 on the Shrivenham by-pass. Facilitators: Phil Prichard – long-term peace and environmental activist, and Kathryn Tulip who did an NVDA workshop with us last year. Please bring food to share for lunch.

Anyone who is interested in coming to the “Visioning Day” is asked to think about the following questions:

1. What has Faringdon Peace Group achieved so far?
2. What does FPG hope to achieve in the next 2 – 5 years and 5 – 10 years?

Would also be useful to know what strengths & weaknesses have helped/hindered us over the years and how we can build on/address those.

If you are unable to come but would like to add your thoughts to the discussions, please send them to me by email, phone or letter – all details at end of newsletter.

## ON THE DEATH OF THE 100TH BRITISH SOLDIER IN IRAQ

The day the 100th British soldier's death is reported, members of Military Families Against the War (<http://www.mfaw.org.uk/>) will lead a vigil in Parliament Square and the names of these 100 soldiers and of 100 Iraqi dead will be read out. The next day there will be similar protests in towns across the country. Faringdon Peace Group will meet for a candlelit vigil in the Market Place at 6.00 pm. on the day after the announcement. Bring candles/lanterns and appropriate placards. Check details with me (241707) or Jennie (710308) if necessary. There will also be a vigil in Oxford: 6.30 PM at the HSVC Bank in Cornmarket. See also [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)

## NAMING THE DEAD – ANNIVERSARY OF FALLUJAH SIEGE

*Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 12 Noon, Parliament Square, Westminster*

This is a mass civil disobedience against the occupation of Iraq on the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the siege of Fallujah. Names of 1,000 Iraqis who have died as a result of the invasion and occupation will be read out. The demands are:

- ? An immediate end to the US/UK military occupation of Iraq
- ? Massive reparations and debt cancellation so that Iraqis can rebuild their country free from foreign interference
- ? Prosecution of those responsible for war crimes

If you wish to join this demonstration you must be aware that under the new Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (April 05) you will be committing a criminal offence and could be arrested and fined up to £1,000. For more information see [www.voicesuk.org](http://www.voicesuk.org) or call 0845 458 2564.

## BLOCK THE BUILDERS – ALDERMASTON BLOCKADE 30<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY

At a meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, the West Berkshire District Council Eastern Area Planning Committee gave the go-ahead for the building of the new ORION laser facility at Aldermaston. All procedural ways to stop the building have now been tried and failed, so direct action is the only option. The first mass public blockade will be on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January. For details of this and other future actions see [www.blockthebuilders.org.uk](http://www.blockthebuilders.org.uk) Juliet McBride and Ippy spoke about the Block the Builders campaign at our Day for Peace. It is a campaign which aims to nonviolently prevent the building of the new laser facility at AWE Aldermaston, the first stage of a series of proposed developments there which would enable the building of the next generation of nuclear weapons. New weapons would mean that the UK would continue to break its international obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – to make progress, in good faith, towards disarmament. The new facilities at AWE would also undermine the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (signed and ratified by the UK, but not yet in force), as they would enable research on nuclear weapons to continue without underground testing.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> February

FPG Monthly meeting: "The Ethical Dimension of Armed Force" with a speaker from the armed forces

**Saturday 25th February:** Dayschool on: 'Trident Replacement? What does theology say?' at St John's College, Oxford. With Gerry W. Hughes S.J., Peter Hunter O.P., Canon Professor Marilyn McCord Adams, Regius Professor of Divinity, Oxford. Chair Revd. David Platt. Afternoon Campaigning Panel Dr Sian Jones: Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp(aign), New developments at Aldermaston AWE; Legality of Trident Replacement; Environment & work in parliament; Angie Zelter: Trident Ploughshares. £5 suggested donation; lunch approx £8; please book early. Contact : Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 162 Holloway Rd., LONDON N7 8DQ tel.: 020 7700 4200 fax: 020 7700 2357 email: [christians@cnduk.org](mailto:christians@cnduk.org) web: <http://ccnd.gn.apc.org>

### Wednesday 1 March

FPG Monthly Meeting with speaker Margaret Jones, "The War, The Law Lords and Direct Action"

**COUNTRYWIDE.** Ash Wednesday 2006 Annual liturgy and witness of Repentance and Resistance to nuclear war preparations at the Ministry of Defence, London and other military sites.  
<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/map.html>

### Saturday 4th March

CND Southern Region AGM and public meeting, 1.30-5.00pm. St. Columba's Church Hall, Alfred St. Oxford. 1.30 - refreshments, 2.00 -.AGM, 3.00 - Gawain Little (CND National Council) an illustrated talk "NATO and European Militarisation", 4.00 - Catherine Robertson (Youth and Student CND) an illustrated talk about her visit to Hiroshima "Ground Zero: 60 years on". FPG are active S.R.CND members - do try and get along as it's almost on our doorstep. All welcome

### 8 March

International Women's Day.

<http://www.internationalwomensday.com/default.asp>  
[www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm](http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm)

### 5th – 16th March

Fairtrade Fortnight – "Make Fairtrade your Habit"  
Look out for the new Faringdon Fairtrade Guide and see Mustard Seed window for local events.  
[www.faringdonfairtrade.org.uk](http://www.faringdonfairtrade.org.uk)

### Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> March

FPG Visioning Day, Westmill Farm, 10.30-4.00pm. See above for more info.

### Saturday 18 March

**INTERNATIONAL.** Day of Action to mark the third anniversary of the war and invasion, calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops and an end to the occupation. March in London, Basra, Washington, Baghdad, and around the world.  
<http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.htm>

### Saturday, 29th April

**OXFORD.** Hiroshima and Nagasaki - Never again. A one day festival in South Parks, Oxford from 12 to 7pm. Music, art, performance and discussion. For more information: 07868 845 878.

### Saturday, July 1<sup>st</sup>

Advance warning for Grand Peace Fete! 2-5pm, Clock House, Coleshill. Start collecting things and thinking of how you can help.

FPG meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 8.00pm in the Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Road, Faringdon unless otherwise stated.

Editor: Karen Vogt, 7, Leamington Drive, Faringdon, Oxon. SN7 7JZ

Tel: 01367-241707, [karen@vogt.org.uk](mailto:karen@vogt.org.uk)

Alternative contact: Jennie Chesterton, Tel: 01367-710308

[www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk](http://www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk)