

# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 4th October 2023

## PRESENT

Phil and Jennie Chesterton, Karen and Sjoerd Vogt (chair), Steve and Jenny Braithwaite, Dave Headey, Ian and Josephine Wright, Sand Cooper, Al Cane, Kevin Owen, Hazel Townesend, Adam Twine

1) **AGENDA** - Adopted

## 2) APOLOGIES

Marge Crosby, Helen Harris, Janie and John Cottis, Jane Ross, Julian Pollard, Hugo Kerr, Jill Headey

3) **2022 AGM MINUTES** - Read and approved.

## 4) MATTERS ARISING

### Item 8, Future Activities

*'40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet (carried over from 2021, not discussed in 2022)*

*Jennie and Phil suggested publishing a little booklet and asking all to contribute. 40 pages? Chris suggested asking all to contribute memories in various forms to create a miscellany rather than a year by year account.*

*Dave happy to put it together, Sand happy to co-ordinate content. Should we pursue it or have we missed chance now?'*

Chestertons have a treasure trove of FPG related material in their garage – what to do with it? Huge amount of work! This item already carried over from AGM 2021, so we have definitely missed the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary now – go for 45<sup>th</sup>? Would it be a fund-raiser? How would it be distributed? Would a display in the Old Town Hall be better? All sent off to think about it.

## 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:

- **Sat. 7<sup>th</sup> October** - Annual Rally at RAF (USAF) Croughton to mark 'Keep Space for Peace' week. organised by our local Oxfordshire Peace Campaign. Important that people know what goes on there. Meet at 12.00 noon. Speakers inc. Tom Unterrainer, Chair CND; Peter Burt from Nukewatch; John Gittings, former foreign editor for the Guardian; Lindis Percy invited. Disabled toilet. Bring own lunch.
- **Wed 18 October** - Scientists for Global Responsibility Conference (and then AGM). 'Responsible Science and the Polycrisis: New Hope versus False Solutions'. 4.0-7.0pm. Non-members welcome. Online [www.sgr.org.uk/events](http://www.sgr.org.uk/events) 5 speakers including Prof.Paul Rogers.
- **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November - Remembrance Sunday** - FPG will lay its wreath containing white poppies as usual. See item 8 below
- **December (5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> ?)** Women in Black vigil for Bethlehem in Market Place. TBC. See item 8 below

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

- **Weds 1st Nov** - Speaker meeting with Chris Cole, founder of 'Drones UK'. 'The Coming of AI Attack Drones'. Friends Meeting House or zoom TBC.

- **Weds. 6th December** – Speaker meeting with Richard Benwell ‘Our 2050 Net-Zero Commitment: Now Pie in the Sky?’
- **Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024, 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 have been:

**Nuclear weapons** – Rae Street’s life as an anti-nuclear activist; Tom Unterrainer (Chair CND) talking about the possibility of nuclear war and Peter Burt talking about the work of Nukewatch.

**Palestine** – Jacqui Greenfield and the successful campaign to get Elbit (Israeli arms manufacturer) out of Oldham, and Anne Street with an eye-witness report from Palestine where she was an E.A.P.P.I. volunteer.

**Militarism** – Symon Hill of the PPU linked militarism and monarchy on the eve of the coronation

**NATO** – Kate Hudson (Gen Sec CND)

**Sewage pollution and unaccountable privatised water companies** - Ashley Smith from ‘Windrush Against Sewage Pollution’ spoke about the terrible state of our rivers and what the water companies should do about it

**Spanish Civil War** - Bjorn Watson, leader of the Military History group of U3A gave an in depth account of this war

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

#### October

War and Climate Emergency Day School in Oxford for Climate and Peace campaigners. 4 attended.

#### November

Zero Hour Oxon campaign by XR Wantage in Wantage Mkt Place 4 of us attended. Open Letter to our MP David Johnson. 4 attended

13<sup>th</sup>, Remembrance Sunday - Janet Deane laid a wreath on behalf of FPG at the ceremony at the War Memorial

#### December

On 6<sup>th</sup> we held our usual Women in Black vigil for Peace in Bethlehem. 15 took part

#### January

Blue Plaque Event organised by Wantage Extinction Rebellion outside the Pump House in Faringdon Market Place. 12 took part

#### February

On the anniversary of the war in Ukraine we held a ‘Gathering for Peace in Ukraine’ in the Market Place. Well supported by people in Faringdon, and some Ukrainians too.

27<sup>th</sup>, Funeral of our much-missed Peace Group supporter of many years, Penny Wixey.

#### July

1<sup>st</sup>, Peace Picnic at 19 Coxwell Road. Many thanks to Jenny and Steve

Jennie, Phil and Helen also attended Oxfordshire Peace Campaign Meetings on Zoom

### 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 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, which showed a balance of £1911.73, around £600 less than last year.

Our Peace Picnic in July raised £196, compared to £514 in 2022.

We had 6 'live' speakers who were each given £50 for themselves or the good causes they represented. Friends Meeting House hire costs are £15 an evening, extra if we use the newly refurbished back room. Still have £1000 ring-fenced for the Peace Plaque (seems a lot – check with Sue Drew) If that amount is not available, we will find ourselves very short of funds. Thanks to Steve for doing the finances and to John Cecil for auditing the accounts.

**d) Peace Picnic – Jenny**

Many thanks to Braithwaites for offering their garden for a bring and share lunch, teas and musical entertainment. Very enjoyable, but numbers and consequently donations were down, despite all the fete email list being contacted. Ideas: begin planning in April; invite someone special eg Valerie Flessati, Bruce Kent's wife; encourage donations for attending, not just for tea/cake; try not to clash with Party in the Park!

**e) Resources – Ian, Karen**

FPG gazebos and other equipment still being stored in NT barn in Coleshill, but need to move it - hopefully back to Colleymore. Sj in discussions with NT and Andy Cato. Ask for help with the move. Time to get rid of some of it.

**f) Artistic Projects – Karen**

**Peace Plaque**

Karen met the Town Clerk and Vale Arts Officer to talk about planning etc. Unfortunately, Rosalind was refused permission for a pink plaque on Corn Exchange so very unlikely they would approve the Peace Plaque. Alternative sites suggested – new planters not suitable and next to Town Council noticeboard in Southampton St. considered too out of the way. Karen to investigate All Saints wall and installation in paving

**g) Monthly Meetings**

**Help** - Jennie, as always, would welcome suggestions for meetings – topics and speakers.

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! Contact Jennie with suggestions/help. She has a set of helpful guidelines for organising meetings.

Peter Foot has offered to speak about Red Cross. Karen to organise – possibly February.

Helen and Jill helped with organising vigils.

**Transport/hospitality** – Helen has picked up from Swindon on a few occasions. Not often needed now that zoom is an option for those coming from further away.

**h) Press Reports – Sand None**

**i) Refugee Link - Sjoerd**

Approx 80 Ukrainians have been hosted in Faringdon. Most now moved into rented or social housing. Children settled in schools. They have been very well supported by local people and local government under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Most expected to be going back to Ukraine in a few months but now think they are here for the longer term. Faringdon held up as a good example in the local area.

**j) Newsletter - Jenny**

Jenny started a monthly newsletter during lockdown. Now every 2 months. Struggles to get content from contributors. Is it worth it? Yes, was answer from AGM, who all enjoyed reading it! Please send items of interest to Jenny in a ready to print form.

**7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

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

**Chairs:** Sjoerd, Dave H. Others can be asked when necessary/appropriate.

**Secretary for meetings and activities** – Jennie, but with help from Helen, Jill et al

**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, 12<sup>th</sup> November**

**Procession and wreath laying** at the War Memorial in Faringdon Market Place.

Red poppy wreath ordered from British Legion. Karen to add white poppies. Email to be sent round group asking for someone to lay it.

**The Friends** are holding a reflective Remembrance service on 12<sup>th</sup> for all faiths and none in the Meeting House at 4.00pm. All welcome.

### **Women in Black Vigil for Bethlehem**

Traditionally on a Tuesday in December. TBC. Women stand in silence with placards, men hand out leaflets/talk to people in support. Phil thought people were much less interested last year. Do we carry on as usual or think of something different?

*(Have events in Israel/Palestine since the AGM forced a change in approach?)*

### **Nukewatch**

Peter Burt, who spoke to FPG about Nukewatch in September, has offered anyone interested a guided tour of the perimeter of Brize Norton airbase, explaining what Nukewatch does there. More local volunteers welcome to monitor activity and report back.

## **9) DONATIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions were agreed to Network for Peace, Peace News and CND, through which we get our insurance. Donations of £50 each were agreed for Medical Aid for Palestine, Stop the War Coalition, Movement for the Abolition of War and the Peace Pledge Union.

## **10) NEWS OF PEACE GROUP FRIENDS**

Jennie began by remembering Penny Wixey, who died in January. She was a lifelong fearless peace campaigner and is greatly missed both as an active member of the Peace Group and as a friend.

Denny is doing well at home and has a very whizzy stairlift!

Pete Stone continues to do well in Kent and can now see an end to his treatment.

Jill Cecil remains in poor health.

Dave Watson, Julie and Teana visited Jennie and Phil – all is well with them in West Wales.

Anne-Marie and Ian Beckwith manage well enough in Shropshire where Ian has a motorised wheelchair.

Gloria's sight is not good, but has a lot of help from the grandchildren in London

Riddles – Hazel reported that Jo, maker of the FPG banner decades ago!, is married and has moved to south-west France, Steve is in New Zealand.

The death was reported recently of Pat Arrowsmith, a tireless peace campaigner, who we would see locally at Fairford protests.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Hazel expressed gratitude to the FPG founders – Gail Norton, Dick Nettleton and Jennie, the only surviving founder – and admiration that the group is still going after 43 years! Sadly we are needed now more than ever.

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

Thanks to all who attended and to Sjoerd for facilitating.