

PEACEMAKING AND PERSONAL LIFE, PAST AND PRESENT

Many of us in Faringdon Peace Group often wonder whether all the demos, protests and meetings we attend really make a difference, but Virginia Moffat, who spoke about her own life as a peacemaker at our November meeting, reassured us that every little action counts, though we may not immediately see the results. She drew inspiration from women who had fought against war and injustice in the early 20th century such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Charlotte Despard, Emily Hobhouse and other women who suffered discrimination and ridicule in their lifetimes but have had a huge impact on the lives of future generations.

Virginia grew up during the Cold War, aware of issues of war and peace, initially through the poems of Wilfred Owen and the First World War poets. She began to question how these issues were presented through politicians and the media, but did not commit herself to peacemaking until she met her husband Chris Cole (who has been a guest speaker at the Peace Group on several occasions) who was very much involved in non-violent direct action for peace. This commitment has been challenging with the demands of a job, 3 children and family life, as peacemaking is not a 9 – 5 job and Chris's involvement in direct action has regularly led to arrests, court cases, imprisonment and even police raids on their house. The peace community has been very supportive during these times. Chris now runs his own charity 'Drone Wars'.

Virginia felt uncomfortable about challenging the status quo of support for the military and armed forces during her 20 years of working for the local authority in social and community services - It often requires more courage to challenge a colleague or neighbour rather than an impersonal institution. But the rise of social media has allowed her and others to be active and involved, albeit from an armchair. She sees Jesus as a prime example of a non-violent activist and now works for a Christian think-tank, Ekklesia, whose principles of welfare, peace and non-violence match her own. She also writes for 'Peace News' and has written a novel which she hopes to have published.

Virginia's story was inspiring in showing the value of ordinary people each doing their little bit for peace and collectively achieving a much greater impact. However difficult her life may sometimes be, she feels it is nothing compared to those peacemakers of the early 20th century and those in areas of conflict such as Palestine and Syria today. In the words of Vera Brittain she believes we must all 'move forward in hope'.

Karen Vogt

Faringdon Peace Group meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 in the Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Rd. At the meeting on 2nd December we will be showing the powerful film 'The Stones Cry Out' about the history of Palestinian Christians from 1948 to the present day. All welcome. Disabled access and facilities. Refreshments at 9.00. Contact Karen Vogt for more details: 01367-241707, karen@vogt.org.uk