

A Load of Pugwash!

The first thing Faringdon Peace Group learnt at their February meeting was that Pugwash is a town in Nova Scotia, Canada, which gave its name to a series of conferences of world scientists with the aim of reducing the danger of armed conflict and nuclear war in particular.

Christopher Watson, a retired theoretical physicist and Chair of British Pugwash, told us more about the origins and the work of the movement. The first Pugwash conference, organised by Bertrand Russell and Joseph Rotblat in 1957, took as its charter the 1955 Russell-Einstein manifesto which highlighted the danger of nuclear weapons and called on world leaders to seek peaceful resolutions to international conflict – ‘Remember your humanity and forget the rest.’

Throughout the Cold War Pugwash fulfilled a vital role in mediating between East and West and maintaining unofficial communication between scientists on both sides who then advised their own governments on nuclear policy. It assisted in the development of major nuclear and chemical weapons treaties

With some 4000 members and 50 national groups including an active British group, Pugwash has become more active in regional disputes – Iran, N. Korea, India/Pakistan, Gaza and Ukraine – and in global issues where science plays a key role – climate change, energy, population and resources. In the UK they are promoting discussion about the renewal of Trident, our own nuclear weapons system, and ethical issues such as whistle-blowing and drones.

The main focus of Pugwash’s activities however remains nuclear disarmament and it’s work is as essential today as when it first began, nearly 60 years ago. Although the number of nuclear weapons has reduced, states which possess them have increased from 5 to at least 8 and there is an increasing danger that terrorist groups may acquire and use them. There is no evidence that it is the possession of nuclear weapons that has prevented nuclear war since 1945 and that because they haven’t been used in that time they never will be.

Faringdon Peace Group meets on the first Wednesday of the month, 7.30, Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Road. All welcome.

On 4th March Hazel Townsend will talk about Conscientious Objectors of World War 1. More details from Karen: 01367-241707, karen@vogt.org.uk or Jennie: 01367-710308.

Also don’t miss the General Election Hustings in the Corn Exchange on Fri. 10th April at 7.30. All candidates will be there!