

2016 Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemoration service 6th August 2016, Manchester University / Manchester Museum

Photos and explanation of the event:

Each year, Manchester City Council, as a Vice President and Lead City of Mayors for Peace, holds an annual commemoration service to remember those killed in the atomic weapon attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on the 6th and 9th August 1945.

Over 145,000 people were killed in the Hiroshima attack and around 75,000 people in the Nagasaki attack. Many more died later due to the effects of radiation, and more passed on genetic defects to children and grandchildren.

The Manchester commemoration was held to remember the innocent civilians who died in the attacks, the over 60 million civilians who have died in conflicts and terrorism since August 1945, and to also remember civilians who have died in recent terrorist attacks and conflicts in the likes of Turkey, France, Belgium, Germany, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Syria.

The event was hosted within the Old Quadrangle of the historic Whitworth Building, headquarters of Manchester University, who work closely with Hiroshima University. The university is known for being the location where the atom was split by Professor Ernest Rutherford and his team; the centenary of which takes place in 2017. Manchester City Council has also been closely working with Manchester Museum, part of the university, who host a Hiroshima 'Peace' exhibit in its Living Worlds Gallery, for the past few years.

In 2015, the Council and the Museum co-operated on 'Project G'. This celebrated the receipt of ten ginkgo tree seeds from Hiroshima that originate from a tree damaged in the August 1945 atomic bomb but which started sprouting again the following year. It is a pertinent symbol of peace in an era of climate change. A number of Manchester primary schools held an art and poetry competition to encourage their students to think about these incidents and the positive role nature can play in restoring equilibrium after a terrible disaster. A special reception with the children and the Mayor of Hiroshima and the Lord Mayor of Manchester was held in November 2015.

The 2016 ceremony noted that this project continues, with the seeds now being nurtured and grown at the Dunham Massey National Trust site close to the Airport. It is hoped that these trees can be planted soon at the participating schools, Manchester Children's Hospital and in selected city centre and other sites.

The 2016 ceremony:

An introduction to the ceremony was given by the Director of Manchester Museum, Dr Nick Merriman. He welcomed all participants to the university and the museum, and noted the warm cooperation between the University and Council to commemorate its long-standing ties with Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Principal Policy Officer of Manchester City Council, and Secretary of the UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace and NFLA groups, Sean Morris, outlined that the morning ceremony in Manchester replicated a similar ceremony that had been held in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki since 1946 – to remember those who had died in the two attacks and to call for a more peaceful world.

The Manchester ceremony included a series of readings, the laying of a memorial wreath and two minutes silence. The formal part of the ceremony was held by the University's war memorial. Close to the memorial is a blue plaque to Ellen Wilkinson, a leading member of the suffragette movement and one of the first elected women in British politics, who was also a minister in the post-war Labour Government. She was a former student of Manchester University and a reminder of Manchester's long tradition of radicalism.



Sean Morris explaining Manchester's Hiroshima
–Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony



Julie Ward MEP reading 'Why are we here today?'

The first reading was given by Julie Ward, MEP for North West England, which gave an overview of what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and August 9th 1945. The moving reading explained the sheer power of the nuclear bombs and their destructiveness.

This reading was followed by the Hiroshima Peace Declaration. At each annual Hiroshima Peace Ceremony, the Mayor of Hiroshima gives a declaration which reminds the world of the terrible suffering of the hibakuska (those who survived the atomic bombing) and makes comments on the current situation with the nuclear weapons debate. The Mayor also highlights the positive work of the Mayors for Peace, which is led by the Mayor of Hiroshima, and whose Vice Presidents include the Mayor of Nagasaki and the Lord Mayor of Manchester.

The Peace Declaration was read out by Afzal Khan, former Lord Mayor of Manchester and currently also a MEP for North West England. The 2016 Declaration focused on the recent visits to Hiroshima of President Obama, Prime Minister Abe and the Foreign Ministers of the G7. It called on all to redouble their efforts for a nuclear weapons free world.



Following the reading of the Peace Declaration, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Eddie Newman, laid a white flowered wreath to remember the civilians killed in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings and to all those killed in subsequent conflicts and terrorist attacks to the present day.

A period of two minutes silence was then held and observed all those present.



The ceremony continued with a short reading by the Deputy Lord Mayor. Councillor Newman noted that he was particularly pleased to be at the ceremony as he was one of the original councillors that had signed the motion that had declared Manchester a 'nuclear weapons free' city in November 1980. This declaration helped to pave the way for the creation of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities and Manchester's formal support for the Mayors for Peace, who were created in 1982.

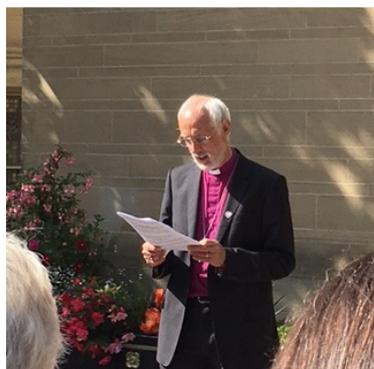


The Deputy Lord Mayor read from a book given to the city of Manchester by Hiroshima at the 2013 Mayors for Peace Executive Conference.

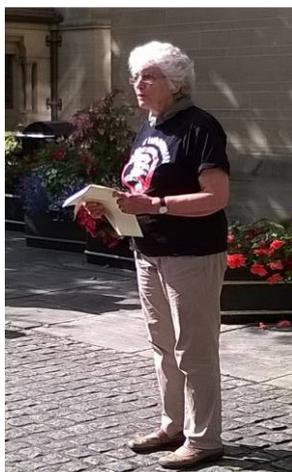
The book 'A bomb Mayor' is the biography of Mayor Shimso Hamai, who was elected Mayor of Hiroshima from 1947 – 55 and 1959 – 67. He was Deputy Mayor shortly after the atomic bombings. The book talks about his experience on August 6th and the post-war rebuilding of the shattered city.

The reading focused on the importance of leaves sprouting from gingko trees the spring after the bombing, as it had been feared nothing would be able to grow on the land for 75 years. The growth of the trees was essential in deciding to rebuild the city. The reading also noted that the first Hiroshima Peace ceremony took place on July 6th 1946, and has taken place on August 6th every year afterwards.

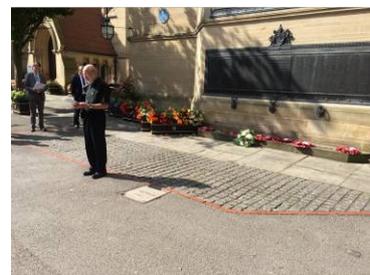
The ceremony continued with the reading of three poems relating to the Hiroshima bombings. They are contained in the book 'No More Hiroshimas' by the English poet James Kirkup, who was profoundly affected by the bombings. Kirkup visited both cities in the 1950s and 1960s, and also taught to schoolchildren in Japan.



Bishop David Walker reading the poem 'No More Hiroshimas'



Left: Rae Street reads 'Umeboshi'



Above: Steve Roman reads 'White Shadows'

The Bishop of Manchester, the Rt Revd David Walker, represented Manchester's diverse faith communities at the ceremony. He read the poem 'No More Hiroshimas' which was written by James Kirkup in 1960 reflecting on a visit to Hiroshima.

Rae Street, Vice Chair of Greater Manchester CND noted her time as a former student of Manchester University at the time of the creation of CND, and she had been privileged to visit the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She read the poem 'Umeboshi', which was translated from the poem by Michio Nakano and was a reflection of an old lady badly injured by the bombing, who was given a pickled plum or umeboshi, and recovered. The final poem was read by Steve Roman, representing the Friends of the Manchester Peace Garden Group. He read the poem 'White

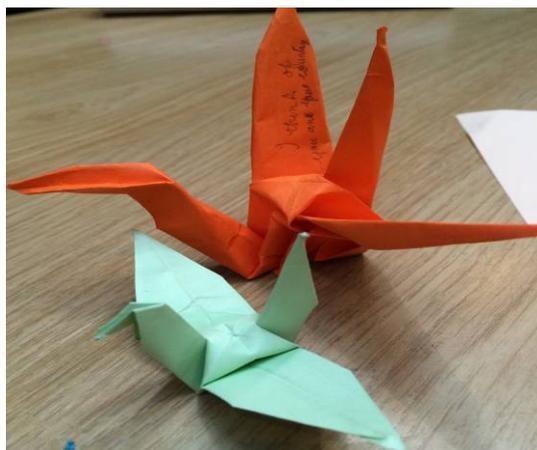
Shadows' by James Kirkup, which is a reflection of a photograph of the white shadow left by a man vaporised in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The ceremony continued with a short reading by Yuko Howes, representing the Japan Society North West. The Japan Society is the official group linked and supported by the Japanese Embassy which brings together Japanese people living in the country and those interested in Japan. Yuko noted how privileged she felt to be addressing this important ceremony and gave thanks that people all around the world were remembering the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and calling for peace. Yuko wore a traditional Japanese kimono to address the event.



The formal part of the ceremony then concluded with all reading the 1982 United Nations Peace Affirmation, which was the conference at which the Mayors for Peace was founded. This affirmation calls for all to work together to deliver a more peaceful, friendly and sustainable world.

All those who attended were then encouraged to go into the Manchester Museum to look at their Hiroshima 'Peace' cabinet and to learn how to fold paper cranes, the peace symbol of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Children and families who visited the exhibition were encouraged to fold the cranes and write messages of peace.



In 2017, all members of Mayors for Peace will be encouraged to attend the Executive and General Conference of the organisation taking place in Nagasaki on August 7th – 9th 2017. Manchester City Council plans to be represented at these meetings. Manchester City Council thanks all those who attended the 2016 memorial service, and those who attended other services held around the UK and Ireland.

Sean Morris, UK and Ireland Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary, 9th August 2016.
(Photos courtesy of Veronika Tesarova, Anna Bunney and Steve Roman.)