

## The Oldham Peace Times

Issue 10 – May 2017

News from the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum

### Editorial

Welcome to this tenth issue of the Oldham Peace Times, newsletter of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum. This is a regular publication to inform people and organisations with an interest in working for peace about the Forum and its work.

This issue highlights three more Pledge to Peace signings by local schools. By the time our current Mayor of Peace leaves office, we expect to have twenty schools signed up. In May 2016 we had three. Pleasingly we can also report another first for Oldham - and a first in the UK - the signing of the Pledge by the Saddleworth Independent / Mossley Correspondent newspaper group. Membership of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum is now fast approaching fifty organisations; soon we will have achieved our first half-century.

This month we have also made links of friendship with Berat and Tirana in Albania, both signatory Councils to the Pledge, and further links are in development with towns and cities in Germany, Israel, Japan and Portugal; further proof that Oldham is being increasingly seen as a dynamic Borough of Peace internationally. We intend to report on these developments in future issues soon.

I do hope that this issue will inspire you to do something for peace – you can join the Forum if you represent an organisation that has signed the Pledge to Peace or one that wishes to do so – please find more details about the Pledge on Page 2 of this newsletter.

Our next newsletter will be out in June 2017 so do please send stories and photos for inclusion in our next issue, as well as feedback, to [richardoutram35@gmail.com](mailto:richardoutram35@gmail.com) Please also like our Facebook Page at The Oldham Pledge To Peace Forum.

Yours in Peace, Richard Outram, Editor

### CONTENTS

- Page 2 - An Introduction to the Pledge to Peace
- Page 3 - St Matthew's C of E School Reaches out to Syria
- Page 4 - Roamer makes Friends at St Matthews
- Page 6 - Newman RC College 'delighted' to sign Pledge
- Page 8 - St Anne's C of E School pledges to 'drive Peace along'
- Page 9 - St Thomas's C of E School pupils are Mayor's 'Hope for the Future'
- Page 11 - Read all about it: Saddleworth 'Indy' becomes a Peace Paper
- Page 12 - Shaw and Crompton Walk a Step Forward for Peace
- Page 14 - Free CND Peace Education Workshops Offered to Oldham Schools
- Page 15 - Oldham makes Friends with Tirana
- Page 16 - Berat seeks 'Partnership' with Oldham
- Page 17 - Oldham is Poles Ahead for Peace

## **An Introduction to the Pledge to Peace**



The Pledge to Peace initiative, also called the Bruxelles Declaration, was established at the “Peace and Prosperity - Founding Values of the European Union” conference held on November 28, 2011 at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The initiative was the brainchild of then First Vice President of the European Parliament, Mr. Gianni Pittella MEP, the former President of the European Parliament Senator Emilio Colombo, and the Associazione Percorsi.

The Pledge to Peace was sponsored by Mr. Prem Rawat, an authoritative and international speaker on peace, who was the first signatory. Mr Rawat was later appointed ‘Ambassador to the Bruxelles Declaration - Pledge to Peace’.

Institutions and organisations are invited to sign the Pledge to help create a “culture of peace” across Europe by carrying out practical actions for peace in their communities.

Each signatory is asked to submit a report of these activities to the initiative’s secretariat, the Percorsi Association, by the UN International Day of Peace, observed on 21<sup>st</sup> September each year.

More information about the Pledge can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.pledgetopeace.eu/> and <http://www.associazionepercorsi.com>

More information about the Ambassador to the Bruxelles Declaration – Pledge to Peace, Mr. Prem Rawat, can be found at:

<http://www.premrawat.com> and <http://www.wopg.org>

**Article and photo courtesy of the Percorsi Association**

## St Matthew's C of E School Reaches out to Syria

St. Matthew's C of E Primary School, Chadderton held an assembly to mark the sixth anniversary of the civil war in Syria (15 March).

Our children spent time thinking about all the children in Syria. We talked about how most of the schools has been bombed and how scared and alone some of these children must be feeling.

To show that we are thinking about the people of Syria we decided as a school to support the Reach out to Syria campaign. The plan was to get enough hands printed so that if the hands could be laid out side by side, the hands would reach from the United Nations headquarters in Geneva to Aleppo in Syria.

We all drew round our hands and wrote messages of love, peace and hope. After sending pictures of our hands in to be counted to the organisers Postcards for Peace (see Oldham Peace Times Issue 9) we decided to display them through the school in a chain so we could think about the children of Syria and pray for peace.



**With thanks to Sara Akroyd from St Matthew's for this article and the photos**

## Roamer makes Friends at St Matthew's

On 21 September 2014 (UN International Peace Day) Roamer became the first robot to sign the European Pledge to Peace.

Roamer has visited schools in the UK and beyond, and engaged students in tasks aimed at getting them to think about the issue of peace.

Last September Roamer visited Oldham (the first UK Council to sign the pledge) and supported their Peace Week Activities.

On the 24 March, Red Nose Day, Dave Catlin and Kate Hudson from Valiant Technology came back to Oldham with Roamer to work with sixty Year 2 students at St. Matthew's C of E Primary School, Chadderton. The School has recently signed the Pledge to Peace.



After class teacher, Ms. Huby, has assembled the children and sat them all down, Kate, introduces the children to the robot and explains how to programme her.



After five minutes, the children have got to grips with the basics of programming the robot (that's children and technology for you...).

More Roamers appear and Kate charges the children with various tasks: Send Roamer to someone who likes the same food as you; to someone who makes you laugh; to someone with your hair colour. You've got a pet dog? Send Roamer to someone who has a dog.

In this way, the children explored the similarities between them, creating a network of lines across the mat which showed the children the many things they shared.



Kate talked to the children about finding what we have in common, not the differences between us. She gave the example of Martin McGuinness and the Rev. Ian Paisley.



Mr. McGuinness had been buried the day before the visit.

Mr. McGuinness and the Rev. Paisley had once been bitter enemies.

Yet when the Northern Ireland Peace process started, not only did they start to work together amicably, but, to everyone's amazement, they also became close friends.

Why? because they concentrated on their shared interests, not their disagreements.

A new film about the pair, *The Journey*, has just been released.



**With thanks to Dave Catlin and Kate Hudson for this article and photos**

### **Newman RC College 'delighted' to Sign Pledge**

The whole school community at the Blessed John Henry Newman RC College (<http://www.newmanrc.oldham.sch.uk/>) have professed themselves 'delighted' to have signed the Pledge to Peace.

On Thursday 6 April, Emily and Billy, the College's Head Girl and Head Boy, and the student council joined Oldham's Mayor of Peace, Cllr Derek Heffernan, Headteacher Mike McGhee, PHse Tutor Sarah Warburton, Parish Priest Canon Eugene Dolan, and Maria Ellis from Peace Talks Oldham and Richard Outram to sign the Pledge **below**.





Before the signing, the Mayor praised Pope Francis for recently inviting Imams to join him in an act of solidarity and spoke about the previous weekend's event in Oldham with the Hibakusha (Japanese A-bomb survivors) as "one of the highlights of his Mayoral year."

He also described the "immense power" of students in bringing about positive change in the world, citing the involvement of students in the Anti-Apartheid campaign and the struggle to bring down the Berlin Wall.

All of the almost 1,400 students at Newman College have signed the declaration which states they are committed to creating peace in school and beyond.

The College recognises that the Pledge helps promote a peaceful existence in the school and the wider community which is wholly in keeping with the core values of the College – Dignity and Excellence.

Headteacher Mike McGhee said: "We are immensely proud of our young people at Newman College and are delighted to support the Mayor's challenge for Oldham to ensure peace in our community and to promote peace across the world."

"We are looking forward to a broad range of activities planned to highlight this cause and to secure our students' commitment to making a difference beyond the school community."

After attending one of five Year assemblies where they were introduced to the Pledge, students have since spent time with their form tutors exploring ways in which they can promote peace.

On 28 April, there will be a whole day dedicated to the theme of peace where students will participate in a range of activities to enable them to better understand and commit to this valuable cause.

**With thanks to Sarah Warburton for this article and Konrad Zielinski for the main photo**



## St. Anne's C of E School Pledged to 'Drive Peace Along'

On April 18, St. Anne's Lydgate (<http://www.stannescelydgate.oldham.sch.uk/>) became the fifth school in Saddleworth to sign the Pledge to Peace. The ceremony at St Anne's saw 210 pupils gather in the school assembly hall for the special event, presented by Head-teacher Mrs Fraser who was accompanied by the Mayor of Oldham, Cllr Derek Heffernan.

The assembly began with a hymn called 'Peace, Perfect Peace' which was very relevant to the signing of the Pledge to Peace.

The Mayor spoke to the children about the importance of peace and stated: "Let us spread the word of peace. People only talk about war, but we want to talk about peace. Religion should be a weapon of peace, not war." The Mayor said that peace is not about always agreeing with one another, adding: "You can disagree but you don't have to fight. Especially with your mum!"

Maria Ellis from Peace Talks Oldham introduced a short DVD 'The Lion that thought he was a Sheep' which is a beautiful animated story narrated by the Ambassador of the Pledge to Peace, Mr. Prem Rawat. Maria talked to the children about the importance of self-worth and feeling peace and joy every day in their lives.

The children were then given the opportunity to ask the Mayor some questions and many of them, even from the youngest children, were very insightful and challenging.

Asked "What qualities do you have to have to be a mayor?" the Mayor replied: "you must be able to get along with everybody, enjoy meeting new people and be able to sell Oldham as the great town that it is." Another asked: "If everyone valued peace would the world be a better place?" to which the Mayor replied: "If everyone believes and spreads the word of peace the world will be a better place."

Three pupils from Year 5 read a poem about peace before the assembly was rounded off with a final hymn.



**Above: The Mayor counter-signing the Pledge with Pupils from the school and Maria and Richard present.**

In a first for Oldham, the actual Pledge to Peace was signed on top of a copy of the Holy Bible, lending the occasion greater solemnity.

Speaking after the event, Head-teacher Mrs Fraser explained why they decided to sign the Pledge and what their plans are for the future: "As we are a Christian school we thought this peace movement was very important to us and our faith. We are involved in other peace movements such as the International Peace Day and we have our own peace garden which the children were instrumental in designing."

She added: "Each pupil is going to do their own pledge and we have peace ambassadors throughout the year groups that will help drive the movement along."

**With thanks to Lily Chick and Aimee Belmore from the Saddleworth Independent for the article and photo. Lily, the daughter of Steve Chick of the Saddleworth Peace Group, is on work experience with the paper.**

### **St Thomas's C of E School pupils are Mayor's 'Hope for the Future'**

Over 500 pupils at St. Thomas's C of E Primary School, Werneth (<http://www.stthomaswernethprimary.co.uk/>) greeted Oldham's Mayor of Peace, Cllr Derek Heffernan, when he joined them to sign the Pledge to Peace on Wednesday 26 April.

Before the assembly, the Mayor first met members of teaching staff and governors in the Reception area, where there is a poignant timeline of the sacrifices of local people and the experiences of pupils at the school during the First World War



**Photo above (left to right) School governor Keith Pendlebury, teacher Estelle Duffy, Head-teacher Angela Knowles, Richard Outram and Chair of governors The Rev. Nick Andrewes meeting the Mayor**

St. Thomas's is the biggest primary and the seventeenth school in our Borough so far to sign the Pledge.

In response to the greeting from the pupils, the Mayor said it was "absolutely wonderful" to be in the school and that he was "absolutely thrilled" to be part of the ceremony.

Teacher Estelle Duffy led the assembly, reminding the children and staff about the significance of signing the Pledge to Peace. She talked about their recent work on creating a peace garden for the school and making crosses for the Manchester Passion which over Easter were publicly displayed in a window of the National Football Museum, Manchester facing out over the Cathedral as a visible symbol of the importance of giving hope to everyone.

The pupils then sang 'It's a Wonderful World' and signed the words. They had learned the song especially for the assembly and, when asked by Ms. Duffy if they knew the signs, one little girl said loudly, and with great pride, 'yeah!'

The Mayor spoke about how the world would be "so much more wonderful" if we stopped killing one another and that in signing the Pledge today "the children were saying stop the killing".

He also said that young people, and especially the pupils of St Thomas's and the other peace schools in Oldham, were his "hope for the future". He asked the pupils to "take the message of peace into your classrooms, your school yard, and your families and to your friends at other schools".

After prayers said by five pupils (see back page), the Pledge was signed by the Head teacher Mrs Angela Knowles and by the Mayor, before a group photo **below** with the whole assembly was taken, another first in Oldham.



After the assembly the Mayor met the School Council to answer some thought-provoking questions. When asked "What was the best decision you have ever made?", the Mayor sweetly said "asking his wife Di to marry him" and in answer to "Who is your role model?" he spoke about his father whom the Mayor described as a generous man.

Two of the School Council members, Fatima and Abid, then signed the Pledge to close the event **below**.



**With thanks to Estelle Duffy for the photographs.**

### **Read all about it: Saddleworth 'Indy' becomes Peace Paper**

On April 18, The Saddleworth Independent and Mossley Correspondent (<http://saddind.co.uk/>) has become the first newspaper group in the country to sign the Pledge to Peace. The two papers join just a handful of other Saddleworth-based groups to sign and create an action plan of peace.

Aimee Belmore, the papers' Editor, said: "We're delighted to sign the Pledge to Peace and join the campaign to help make Oldham a borough of peace.

"War and disruption fill the news daily on a local, national and global level but if each of us takes the time to bring peace into our own lives and community, we can help to build a better world."

On 1 June 2016, the Journalists' Association of Sicily and the Pledge to Peace Secretariat, the Percorsi Association, launched a new initiative, Media for Peace, to encourage media outlets to become signatories to the Pledge and to commit themselves to bringing the topic of peace to the attention of the public.

The event held at the University of Palermo was addressed by Mr. Prem Rawat, Ambassador of the Pledge to Peace and Maria and Richard were privileged to attend. Please see Oldham Peace Times Issue 3 for more information.

Commenting on the recent signing of the Pledge by the local newspapers, Richard said:

"It was especially pleasing to see the Saddleworth Independent and Mossley Correspondent become the first newspaper group in the UK to sign the Pledge and make the commitment to report favourably on peace in their communities. I must commend Aimee for being so keen and coming up with a peace plan before I had even asked her for one! We look forward to working with Aimee and her team to bring the good news about peace to the residents of Saddleworth and Mossley."



**Above: A delighted Mr. Mayor joins Aimee Belmore in signing the Pledge.**

**With thanks again to Aimee and Lily for the article and photo.**

### **Shaw and Crompton Walk a Step Forward for Peace**

Approximately 15 walkers who participated in The Shaw and Crompton Parish Council's Chairman's Walk on Sunday 9 April were rewarded with sunshine as they left Dunwood Park in Shaw.

This was designated a Peace Walk by the Chairman as one of the commitments of the Shaw and Crompton Parish Council as a signatory to the Pledge to Peace.

The Parish Council Chairperson Cllr Angie Farrell and her consort Wayne Cheeseman **below** waved off the walkers who embarked on an 11.5 mile walk around the district of Shaw and Crompton.



Maria and Richard did part of the walk accompanied by our peace bear.

The threatened rain held off and the walkers returned to Dunwood Park in the late afternoon to be greeted again by Angie, Wayne (and peace bear) who presented certificates **below**.



## Free CND Peace Education Workshops Offered to Oldham Schools

All Oldham secondary schools, academies and colleges will soon receive a surprise package containing free peace education resources from CND Peace Education.

The package included an introductory letter and an invitation to ask speakers from the organisation to speak to students.

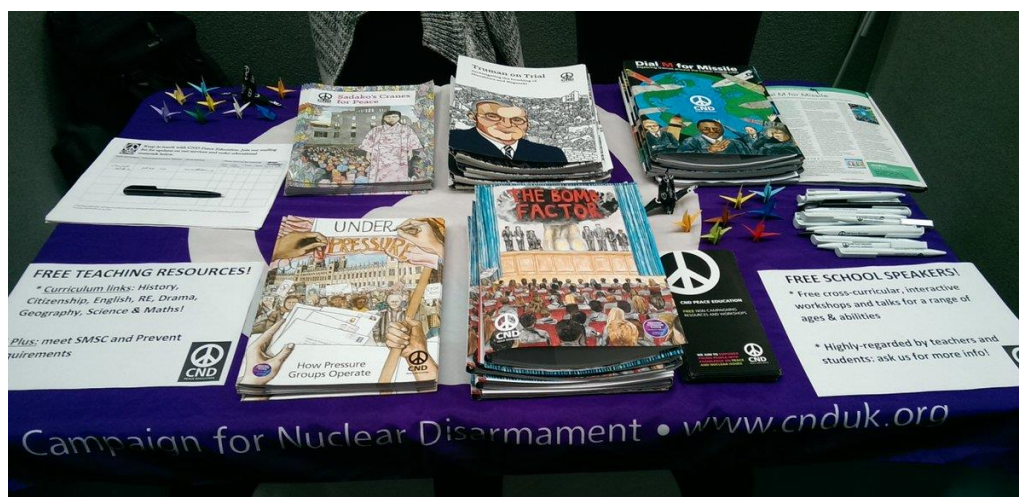
The CND Peace Education Programme is charitably funded by the Nuclear Education Trust.

It aims to empower young people with knowledge on peace and nuclear issues. Instead of campaigning in schools, it supports independent thinking and encourages debate, enabling young people to form their own opinions.

Owen Everett is the Peace Education Officer at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament responsible for overseeing the delivery of the highly-regarded workshops, talks and resources in schools and colleges across England.

Owen said: "The free education resources made available through the CND Peace Education Programme are thought-provoking and suitable for a wide range of age groups (from 9 to 18 years), ability levels and subject areas. Through interactive assembly talks and classroom workshops, students become more aware of peace and the many complex issues revolving around nuclear weapons."

### Photo below: The educational resources available from CND Peace Education



**Photo above: Owen at the recent NASUWT teachers' union conference in Manchester**

Owen and a network of volunteer School Speakers from the CND Peace Education Programme are also available to deliver free workshops and talks in primary and secondary schools.

The Programme can also offer training sessions for trainee teachers and qualified teachers on how to teach controversial issues such as war and peace.

More can be found out about the Programme at [www.cnduk.org/information/peace-education](http://www.cnduk.org/information/peace-education)

Owen can also be contacted by email to [peaceeducation@cnduk.org](mailto:peaceeducation@cnduk.org) or by telephone on 020 770 02393

**With thanks to Owen Everett for this article and the photos.**

## **Oldham makes Friends with Tirana**

In late January, Albania's capital city Tirana signed the Pledge to Peace.

The Mayor of Tirana Mr. Erion Veliaj wanted to make his city a signatory to the Pledge to Peace to make peace "a theme alive and present in the lives of citizens, because now more than ever the topic of peace must be central to every aspect of social life."



**Above: The signing in Tirana with the President of the Secretariat, the Associazione Percorsi, Piero Scutari (centre), City Mayor Erion Veliaj (right), and Deputy Mayor Brunilda Paskali (far right).**

After the Tirana signing, Richard sent a message of congratulations through Facebook to the Deputy Mayor, Ms. Brunilda Paskali, and suggested Oldham and Tirana might become friends to work together for peace. The Deputy Mayor sent a positive reply.



Oldham's Mayor of Peace, Cllr Derek Heffernan, has written to the Mayor of Tirana, and other Mayors in Albania who have signed the Pledge, suggesting we formalise our links of friendship.

In his letter our Mayor says that Oldham is "keen to establish links with other communities across the world working for peace. In this spirit, I would welcome a dialogue between us to explore how we might co-operate across continents to help build peace in our world."

The Mayor has suggested exploring links between the schools in Oldham that have signed the Pledge and those that are working for peace in Albania and he has also expressed his hope that at some point in the future there might be a visit by an Oldham delegation to Albania.

**With thanks to Percorsi for the photo.**

### **Berat seeks 'Partnership' with Oldham**



The Mayor of Berat, Mr. Petrit Sinaj, **above** has responded positively to the Mayor of Oldham's letter confirming his willingness to start a 'partnership' with Oldham, "especially to explore the twinning possibilities between our respective schools for the organization of joint events for building peace and multiculturalism." The Mayor has also suggested the "establishment of mutual institutional cooperation between our local governments."

Berat is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities; the old town being included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Located in south-central Albania, the population in 2011 was 60,000. The city is particularly renowned for its white-washed Turkish style houses and its castle.

**Photo sourced from the Baskia Berat city website. Data from Wikipedia.**

## Oldham is Poles Ahead for Peace

Thanks to funding from Oldham Council and the Shaw and Crompton District Executive, the Council's Parks Department recently received a very special delivery – a consignment of peace poles from the World Peace Prayer Society (<http://www.worldpeace-uk.org/>).

The poles represent a physical manifestation of the Council's desire and work for peace as a signatory to the Pledge to Peace. They will soon form new focal points for peace activities in public parks and gardens across the Borough.

The poles are lovingly created at the Allanton Peace Sanctuary, just outside of Dumfries in Scotland. Glenda Thornton, who works at the sanctuary, told us how: "We do not have a Peace Pole 'factory' there is just one person making the Poles - and this person (Uma) is also one of our chefs! We are quite small. Uma makes these Peace Poles in a small room."

Poles have been installed in the Borough's two Green Flag parks, Dunwood Park in Shaw and Alexandra Park in Glodwick, as well as in St. Chad's Gardens near Uppermill Library.

### Photo below left - Uma hard at work – and right – the pole at Dunwood Park



There are plans to install more poles at:

- Tandle Hill Park, Royton
- Chadderton Hall Park, Chadderton
- Failsworth Pole, Failsworth
- Werneth Park, Werneth
- High Crompton Park, High Crompton
- Memorial Gardens, Shaw

Each of the Oldham peace poles bears the words "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in English and seven other community languages. There is also a braille plate attached to each to make the words accessible to the sight impaired.

More than 100,000 peace poles have been placed around the world in over 180 countries, including at such notable locations as the North Magnetic Pole, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, and the site of the Egyptian Pyramids in Giza.

**With thanks to Glenda Thornton and Maria Dawn Ellis for the photos.**

## **Write for Peace: New Peace Project launched by Peace Talks Oldham**

Maria Dawn Ellis, Chairperson of Peace Talks Oldham, is about to launch a writing & Peace Poetry competition that any person in education, or living or working in Oldham can enter if aged from 7 - 107 years.

The title of the competition is '303 Words for Peace - What Does Peace Mean to You?' 303.66 is the Dewey Library classification for Peace Books. Can you describe what Peace means to you in poetry or prose in 303 words or less?

The Competition will be officially launched during Oldham's second Peace Week in the last week in June. School children and students in education can start working on this as a Peace Project in their classrooms, whenever they are ready.

Only one entry is permitted per person, please either a story/description or piece of poetry, in order to give everyone a fair chance and to make it easier to judge.

Entrants will be judged in their age category:

Primary schools - 7 - 9 year olds and 10 - 11 year olds.

Secondary schools - 11 - 13 year olds and 14 - 16 year olds.

6th Form & Colleges - 16 - 18 year olds.

Higher Education – 19 – 21 year olds.

Other residents and workers in the Borough – 21 years+

The closing date is FRIDAY 25th AUGUST 2017 - AT 11.59pm.

After judging, semi-finalists will be invited to read out their piece at the 4th Oldham Peace Day Celebration Event at Oldham Library on Saturday 23rd September 2017. Winners will then be announced and prizes awarded.

Once the competition is officially launched there will be a new email address publicised to which entries can be sent. Entrants will be asked to include their name, age, school, college, place of work, or district of Oldham where they live, as well as a telephone number or email so they can be contacted if their work is selected.

Permission is also sought to reproduce their work in the media, on Facebook and in The Oldham Peace Times, with credit to the author unless they wish to remain anonymous.

For queries relating to the competition please contact Maria Dawn Ellis by email to [peacetalksoldham@gmail.com](mailto:peacetalksoldham@gmail.com). Please do **not** send competition entries here.

**With thanks to Maria Dawn Ellis for this information.**

## Prayers for Peace at St Thomas's



Dear God,

We thank you for giving us your peace.

Help us to spread peace at home and at school  
by loving and caring for one another. – Ashraful Y6

Help us to spread peace by listening to one another,  
even when we don't agree. – Malaika Y3

Help us to spread peace by sharing our time  
with those who are lonely and who need a friend. – Immad Y3

Help us to spread peace by thinking and praying  
for children who have no food or  
who are frightened and live in fear. Rumaisa – Y3

Let us pray every day for peace  
for our families, for our friends  
and for ourselves.

Amen – Taslima Y4