

The Oldham Peace Times

Issue 13 – September 2017

News from the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum

Editorial

Welcome to this thirteenth 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 will reach you just after we have celebrated the UN International Day of Peace with a series of local events on both the 21 and 23 September. These included our twenty-fifth school signing at Hulme Grammar School; an Oldham Peace Day lecture; and our fourth Peace Day Celebration Event hosted by Oldham Library and Gallery Oldham, which included the launch of an exciting new peace book collection for children and teenagers.

Our distinguished guest speaker at our Peace Day lecture, Vijay Mehta, Chair of Uniting for Peace (<http://www.unitingforpeace.com/>) had some kind words to say about our work in Oldham so I will print them here: "Oldham...is...a town renowned for peace. Richard sends me the Oldham Peace Times and I must say how much good peace work is being done in this part of the world." Let's keep up the great work we are doing.

There has also been an exciting development too at the United Nations where 50 member states signed the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 20 September, making it almost certain it will soon become international law.

I hope this issue will inspire you to start, or continue, to work for peace. If you have any comments, contributions or ideas (or if your organisation wishes to sign the Pledge to Peace) please get in touch. We also have a Facebook page – please do 'like' us.

As I am now an undergraduate student reading Peace Studies at Bradford University, I will be looking to publish this magazine on a quarterly basis in future. Our next issue will be out in December at the close of another momentous year for peace in Oldham.

Yours in Peace,

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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 (**seated left**), the former President of the European Parliament Senator Emilio Colombo, and the Italian peace group, 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 (**speaking left**). 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, on 21st September each year.

In Oldham, we are now about to achieve our half-century of signatories with three organisations, Hulme Grammar School, Uniting for Peace, and the Older LGBT Out and About Group, joining us as an important part of our peace day celebrations. You will find more about these events in this issue.

More information about the Pledge can be found at:

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

Article and photo courtesy of the Percorsi Association

Locals gather in Uppermill to pay respects after Manchester terrorist attack

This article first appeared in the Saddleworth Independent, which was the first UK newspaper to sign the Pledge. The vigil is a further demonstration of the value of peace poles in parks and gardens as focal points for public expressions of peace.

By Aimee Belmore - May 25, 2017

MORE THAN 100 locals gathered in St Chad's Park, Uppermill for a one-minute's silence to remember those killed or injured in the Manchester terrorist attack.

At least 22 people were killed and 59 injured in the attack by a suicide bomber after a crowded pop concert at the Manchester Arena on Monday, May 22.

Vigils and silences have been held across the region, with thousands of locals gathering to pay their respects.

In Saddleworth, villagers gathered around the peace pole outside Uppermill Library, in St Chad's Park, where flowers were laid and candles lit.

Fr Bernard Bickers said a short prayer for the victims, and called for "solidarity and unity" in these difficult times.

Then he rang the bell to signal a minute's silence and the park fell into silent reflection.

Below: Fr Bickers, Sgt Neil Barker and Rev Canon Sharon Jones

Right: Flowers laid at the Peace Pole



Thanks to Aimee Belmore, Editor, for this article and photos



We Pledge for Peace

As part of the second Oldham Peace Week, on 29 June, Oasis Academy Limeside (<http://www.oasisacademylimeside.org/>) signed the Pledge to Peace.

The Academy's Principal Mrs. Helen Ayra takes up the story:

"On Thursday 29th June we had a very special visitor at Oasis Academy Limeside. The Worshipful the Mayor of Oldham Cllr Shadab Qumer joined us as part of the celebrations for Oldham Peace Week.

"He took part in an assembly with all the students where he learnt about our rights respecting team, our Oasis ethos of inclusion and our 9 habits which help us develop our character. We sang some great songs and got to hear about The Mayor, his interest in working for peace and the passion and pride he has in his town of Oldham.

"Some of our students then got to have a conversation with The Mayor to question him further on his role, and share how important making peace is for them.

"We ended the visit by officially opening the Oasis Academy Limeside Peace Garden and signing the Pledge for Peace.

"Signing the Pledge for Peace affirms our commitment at Oasis Academy Limeside to be a place of peace and inclusion."

Thanks to Oasis Academy Limeside for the article and photos.



We Pledge for Peace Two

An Oasis is always a welcome sight, but a very welcome sight for our Mayor was having the chance to visit a second Oasis Academy of peace on the same day.

Andrew Smyth from Oasis Academy Oldham (<http://www.oasisacademyoldham.org/>) kindly described the visit:

“Thursday 29 June was also a special day for Oasis Academy Oldham as The Worshipful Mayor of Oldham, Councillor Shadab Qumer, joined us as part of the celebrations for the second Oldham Peace Week.”

“The Mayor got to tour our facilities, seeing some great learning in action and spending time looking at the art department displays”.

“He then got to have a conversation with some of our new student leaders, including our new Head Boy and Girl, as well as meeting our Principal Mr. Nigel Whittle. It was a great conversation discussing our shared aspirations personally and for our town of Oldham.”

“The visit ended with an official signing of The Pledge to Peace affirming our commitment at Oasis to be a place of peace and inclusion.”



With thanks to Andrew Smyth and Tahajul Islam for this article and photographs.

CND Education visit to St Gregory's High School

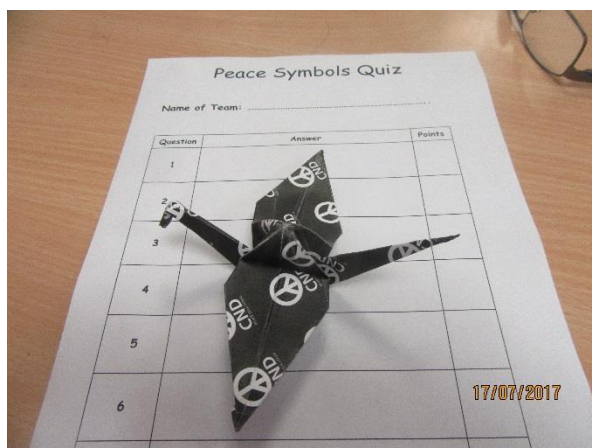
In February 2016, the then Mayor and Mayoress of Oldham, Cllr Ateeque ur Rehman and Cllr Yasmin Toor, visited the Warrington Peace Centre with a party from the Forum. There they met with the then Mayor of Warrington Cllr Geoff Settle and his wife.

Geoff has started a personal campaign to follow Oldham's lead and make Warrington a 'Pledge to Peace' Town. He was recently invited to join a locally based CND educational ambassador and see his presentation and subsequent at St Gregory's High School (<http://stgregorys.fluencycms.co.uk/>).

Mrs Sherrington, who arranged the visit, said that peace, the consequences of war, hate, and discrimination had all been studied in their recent community week. She said "Your visit is very timely and we look forward to an interesting morning. Peace is an integral part of the St Gregory's ethos in so many ways".

The assembly consisted of a presentation interspersed with a collection of videos and a quiz.

Geoff said he was very impressed by the structure and content: "I hadn't known quite what to expect. I remember the CND marches and protests of old but this wasn't a propaganda exercise it was simply an exchange of information and we all learnt a great deal from the experience."



The final activity of the morning was a workshop that included a team quiz, a video about a young Japanese girl called Sadako Sasaki and an exercise in making an origami crane. (More information about Sadako and paper cranes is featured later in this issue)

At the end of the workshop Geoff invited the school to become Warrington's first Pledge to Peace school.

As Geoff left he noticed a large dove on the wall next to the school entrance with the inscription "Peace begins with you and me - Our Peace Dove 2013." It was constructed out of small wooden plaques each with a message of peace written by a pupil.



Other Oldham schools wishing to book an educational speaker should contact the CND Peace Education contact co-ordinator, Owen Everett who handles all the bookings from schools and colleges within England email peaceeducation@cnduk.org or telephone 020 7700 2393.

With thanks to Geoff Settle for this article and photos.

Nagasaki Remembered

On 9 August, peace campaigners were joined by Oldham's Mayor Councillor Shadab Qumer in Uppermill Square for a vigil to mark the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan on that date in 1945. The Mayor was also joined by the Mayoress, the Oldham Youth Mayor, and by Parish Councillor Nikki Kirkham, Chair of Saddleworth Parish Council.

This annual event is organised by the Saddleworth Peace Group, a signatory of the Pledge to Peace. Steve Chick from the Group describes why it is important to remember Nagasaki:

"Nagasaki often gets forgotten as the world focuses on Hiroshima. The bombing of Nagasaki happened in part because scientists at Los Alamos were 'intrigued' as to which type of bomb was the 'better' – a uranium or plutonium based bomb. 'Little Boy' [uranium based] showed its effectiveness at Hiroshima but another bombing mission was 'needed' to see what damage a plutonium bomb could do. The bomb dropped on Nagasaki was made from plutonium and was even more powerful than was the Hiroshima Bomb."

"Either way the destructive power of atomic weapons is terrifying. About 30% of Nagasaki, including almost all the industrial district was destroyed by the bomb and nearly 74,000 people were killed and a similar number injured. The final death toll in Hiroshima is estimated as 135,000."





Thanks to Steve Chick and Saddleworth Peace Group for this article and photos

Learning a Few Tricks from the Origami Kids

In an unexpected surprise, Maria and Richard were shown the skills needed to make paper peace cranes by the school's origami champions when they visited St Joseph's RC Primary School in July.

We were there to exchange some peace cranes made by the children of Hiroshima for a box full of peace cranes made by the school's pupils; instead we were treated to a masterclass in making and decorating cranes first hand. And let us tell you it is a lot more difficult than you think!

Such is their love of the art of origami that four final-year pupils, Jack Finnegan, Alfie Hackworth, Job Needle and Daniel Wild, met as a group at break- and lunch-times to devote themselves to making paper peace cranes for Hiroshima.

Jack, Alfie, Job and Daniel proved to be enthusiastic and skilful teachers, and both Maria and Richard were able to make cranes that passed muster.





We were also assisted by school head-teacher, and Job's father, Garry Needle (**top right**).

Some of the pupils' cranes are now in Hiroshima and the rest were displayed at Gallery Oldham for Peace Day.

The four have now moved into senior schools, fortunately into schools which have also signed the Pledge to Peace - so no need to curb your enthusiasm boys!

Thanks to Maria Ellis and Gary Needle for the photos.

From Oldham to Hiroshima – Paper Peace Cranes Fly to Japan

During the spring and early summer of 2017, children at four schools in Oldham and at a special event in this library made paper peace cranes to send to the Mayor and People of Hiroshima, Japan for display in the Memorial Garden there.

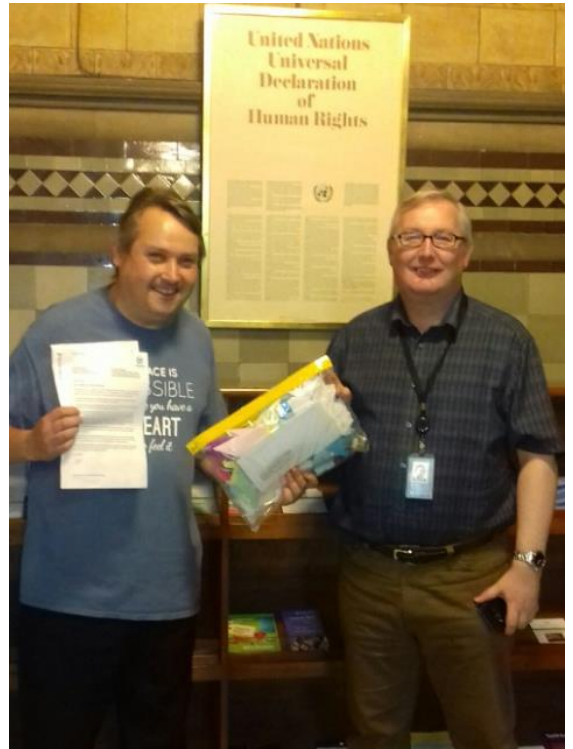
The four schools, all signatories to the Pledge to Peace were



On August 6 1945, Hiroshima was devastated by the first atomic bomb. Tens of thousands of its residents were killed. On this day every year, the Prime Minister of Japan joins the Mayor and People of Hiroshima to commemorate this terrible event.

Traditionally paper cranes made by children around the world are displayed for the commemoration event at the statue of Sadako Sasaki in the Memorial Park where the bomb fell. Sadako died when she was 12 as a result of cancer she contracted from the radiation released following the blast. At the time of her death she was endeavouring to make a thousand paper peace cranes as Japanese tradition dictates that a wish will then be granted to the person making them - Sadako wished to be well and to see peace in the world.

The cranes were taken by Richard Outram, Secretary of the Forum, to Sean Morris, Secretary of the UK Chapter of Mayors for Peace, at Manchester Town Hall (**below**).



A few days later, Sean accompanied the Lord Mayor of Manchester to Japan for a Mayors' for Peace conference in Nagasaki.

En-route they attended the Hiroshima memorial event, and Sean was able to present the Mayor of Hiroshima (**right**) with the cranes and a letter from Oldham Council's Champion of Peace, Councillor Derek Heffernan.

The paper peace cranes were then taken to the Sadako Sasaki statue in the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park (**shown below left**) and displayed in the glass cases at the site (**below right**) reflecting the hope of our children that peace will prevail on Earth.





At the foot of the statue is a plaque that reads: "This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace in the world." And another inscription reads: "I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world."

The journey of our peace cranes from Oldham to Hiroshima represented one part of this universal journey to peace.

Thanks to all those involved in making the cranes and to Sean Morris at Manchester City Council for the photos (and for delivering the cranes!)

Owls of a Feather Flock Together

The Mayor of Toshima City in Japan, Mr. Yukio Takano (**right**) has recently written back to Oldham's Mayor expressing his "great surprise and delight" at receiving our correspondence offering friendship in the furtherance of peace.

Toshima City, one of Tokyo's twenty-three special wards, has a population of approximately 286,000, of whom around one in ten are residents from overseas.

The city is also the location of Ikebukuro Station, used daily by 2.6 million commuters, and the more sedate Kishimojin Temple, dedicated to the god of childbearing (**below left and right respectively**). The Temple is an important national heritage asset.





In April, two residents of Toshima, one a direct survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, and the other the daughter of survivors, visited Oldham as part of a UK tour. During the visit, the Mayor of Peace Councillor Derek Heffernan presented the ladies with gifts, and a letter and a plaque bearing the Oldham coat of arms for the Mayor of Toshima.

Mrs. Reiko Yamada (**right**) was clearly delighted when she saw the coat of arms has an owl as amazingly Toshima also has an affinity with owls.



Toshima's Mayor explains the happy co-incidence.

"Owls unite our city and your borough. Although no owl appears on the official Toshima City crest, our citizens have a deep affinity for owls based on our city's history."

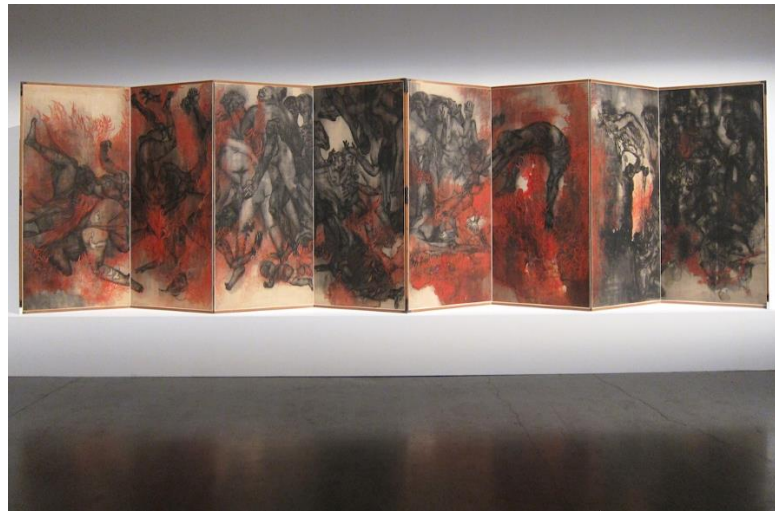
"A traditional folktale relating to Kishimojin Temple concerns a girl who devotedly worships at the temple, praying for her mother's recovery from illness. In recognition of her devotion, the god Kishimojin appears to the girl and tells her to make owl-shaped dolls out of Japanese pampas grass (susuki) to sell at the temple. The dolls are a hit with temple-goers, and the girl uses the money that she earns to buy food and medicine for her mother, who rapidly returns to health."

Like Oldham, Toshima City is a signatory to the international Mayors for Peace initiative (<http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/>). In his letter, Mayor Takano tells us more about the city's activities in promoting peace.

Thirty five years ago Toshima signed the Anti-Nuclear City Declaration. On the anniversary, citizens were encouraged to follow the example of the Mayor in signing the Declaration.

The Mayor has signed the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Hibakusha (A-bomb survivors) Appeal, calling for a nuclear weapons ban. (This petition was also signed by Oldham's Mayor of Peace and by CND General Secretary, Dr Kate Hudson, when she visited Oldham in June). Recently, the Mayor and City Councillors also joined Toshima City junior high school students at the Hiroshima memorial event.

Lastly, Toshima also hosted an exhibition of works referring to the preciousness of peace, including five replicas of artist and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Iri Maruki's *Hiroshima Panels* (right).



In his letter, Mayor Takano expresses his belief "that ties with Oldham would be a great opportunity" and that "our strong desire is to proceed towards peace hand in hand with you."

However he does ask for a temporary postponement because Toshima City is heavily committed at this time to several massive public construction projects in preparation for the summer 2020 Olympic Games.

Our German Friends celebrate Peace at Special Village Festival

News has been received from our German friends in Wegberg - Rickelrath about a recent festival held by the Village Association to celebrate peace.

In June, Maria and Richard visited the village and the association signed the Pledge to Peace, the fourth organisation to do so in Germany.

Sebastian Jackels, Secretary of the association, the Angersdorf Rickelrathe, describes what took place: "During our Angerfest event on September 3rd we put up a peace tree decorated with a lot of handcrafted peace symbols and messages in the centre of our small village.

"Before putting up the peace tree we invited all children and grown-ups of our village to craft their own unique peace symbol and to put it on the peace tree.



“The response of the whole community was absolutely amazing and we are very happy and satisfied that we have made the first steps to peace in our community.

“The whole event was a big success and in addition to the peace tree, all children were also able to attend several other activities like the bobby-car obstacle race, face-painting and painting

“For all the grown-ups we arranged a special event called „Rheinische Kaffeetafel“, with people drinking coffee and eating cake while some members of our organization did a little funny stage play disguised as some characteristic people of our community like our mayor and other people.”

“All in all it was a fun event.”



With thanks to Sebastian Jackels for this article and the photographs.

Marking the UN International Day of Peace the Oldham Way

This year, Peace Day was marked with a series of events on the day itself (21st September) and on the following Saturday (23rd September).

The 21st September programme had an early morning start as the Mayor of Oldham, Cllr Shadab Qumer, joined Maria and Richard from the Forum and Deputy Head John Dalziel and students from Hulme Grammar School to raise the Peace and Respect Flag at Civic Centre.



Despite the wind and the rain, the flag was soon aloft thanks to Eddie.



Off we then went to Crompton House School where Head-teacher Karl Newell and Deputy Jim Upton had invited the Mayor, Maria and Richard to join staff and pupils for the lunchtime unveiling of a new peace pole at the entrance to the school grounds. Again despite the Oldham rain the Mayor soon did the honours and the assembly posed for photographs. Aimee Belmore, Chief Editor, was also present to mark this event for the new Shaw and Crompton Correspondent newspaper.



Later Maria presented two books featuring the message of Mr. Prem Rawat, Ambassador to the Pledge to Peace, No Ordinary Box and Peace is Possible, for the school library to Jim Upton.



And the Mayor was also able to view the Playing for Peace exhibition, on loan from The Peace Museum in Bradford, with Head Karl Newell. This has been on display in the library since the beginning of September.



In the afternoon, Maria went off to deliver a peace writing and crafts workshop to 31 children from year 5 at St. Joseph's RC Primary School, Shaw. The children wrote a stream of consciousness to come up with a list of words that they associated with peace; these words were then written by the children on hearts, which were displayed in an overhead display at Gallery Oldham. Two of the children gave Maria a hug.

Richard joined the Mayor to meet with Head-teacher Craig Mairs and Deputy John Dalziel and to address the school council. The school then became the twenty-fifth in Oldham to sign the Pledge to Peace.



Outside Deputy Head John Dalziel's office are inspirational ceramic bees made by the school students to symbolise how they felt following the Manchester Arena bombing.



At the end of the day, in the Performance Space at Oldham Library we held the Annual General Meeting of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum.

This was followed by an inaugural Oldham Peace Day Lecture. Our distinguished speaker was Vijay Mehta, founder and Chair of the peace charity Uniting for Peace, who spoke on the subject that 'Peace is Possible' before signing the Pledge to Peace on behalf of that organisation.



In attendance were the Mayor of Oldham and Julie Ward, British Member of the European Parliament. Vijay presented a signed copy of his latest book 'Peace beyond Borders' to the Mayor of Oldham and other copies were available to buy.

Maria presented Vijay and his wife Shanti and the Mayor with copies of books about Mr Rawat, No Ordinary Box and Peace is Possible.



On Saturday 23 September, Maria and Richard hosted the Fourth Oldham Peace Day Celebration Event in the foyer at Gallery Oldham / Oldham Library.

This busy event was opened with a lively performance by Indian drummers from the Lee Street Temple, before the audience was addressed by the Mayor of Oldham.



Later we were treated to wonderful musical performances from the wonderful St. Joseph's RC Primary School Choir and Uke Too, a 25-member ukulele band based in the Oldham Music Centre.



We also launched our new children and young people's peace book section with a reading by Maria of Prem Rawat's new illustrated book *Pot with the Hole* and there were special poetry readings from the 'Cheetham Poet' Sarfraz Malik.



The event ended with the signing of the Pledge to Peace by Jean and Terrance from the Older LGBT Out and About Group, in the presence of Oldham Council Peace Champion and former Mayor of Peace, Cllr Derek Heffernan, and event organiser, Maria Ellis.

And all the while above us strung out on a wire across the entrance to the Gallery / Library were the peace cranes made by Oldham school students and the hearts made by the Year 5 pupils at St Joseph's School on Peace Day - a tangible reminder that peace exists in Oldham.

May peace exist too in your heart.

