How Welsh Festival of Research was inspired by women past and present

Aberystwyth University's annual Festival of Research took The Pursuit of Peace as its theme in November 2023. The week-long event saw academics, peace campaigners and members of the public explore a wideranging programme of communityfriendly, free activities. These included themed panels, discussions and talks, poetry and art, film screenings, exhibits and interactive workshops. The programme celebrated the individuals, groups, and ideas that have shaped peace-making in the past and explored some of the ways that we can create a peaceful future. The keynote conversation was with Belfast-based peace activist, Eileen Weir, who has worked with the Shankill Women's Centre since the 1990s. She has built bridges across political, religious and other divides throughout the island of Ireland and campaigned for the rights of people to

live in peace and dignity. Eileen's inspirational talk reflected on a lifetime of personal experiences at the heart of the community activism that laid the foundations for political change in Northern Ireland. Another feature of the Festival of Research was the launch of Yr Apêl/ The Appeal 1923-24 at the National Library of Wales. Co-edited by Mererid Hopwood (MAW vicepresident) and Jenny Mathers, this book tells the extraordinary story of the Welsh Women's Peace Appeal when 100 years ago, women across Wales collected 390.296 signatures in an appeal addressed to the women of America to work together for a more peaceful world. The petition, in a specially-designed oak chest, was returned from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC last year and is now housed at the National Library.

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The movement for the Apontion of War	- Join us, or renew your membership

We aim to create a world where war is no longer seen as a way to solve a problem; where it has ceased to be an option; where conflict resolution means resolution. Working through education and dialogue, nationally and locally, we have the tools, skills and laws that we need, but we also need you - ordinary people can help us realise our goal, the abolition of war. To join MAW or renew your membership, complete this form or download the membership and standing order forms from or

website at http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/join.html. Send the completed form (and cheque if applicable) to: Movement for the Abolition of War, 1 Old Mill Place, Haslemere, GU27 1NE

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GCOMS spotlights military spending

The UK branch of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) - founded by the International Peace Bureau in 2011 - has published an analysis of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2023. It concludes that the previous Tory enthusiasm for expanding the defence budget (15% increase announced last year) appears to be slightly waning.

British military spending stands at roughly £50 billion per year. This works out at 6.6 times the budget of the Department of **Energy Security and Net** Zero, Stuart Parkinson's article can be found on the GCOMS-UK website: https://

demilitarize.org.uk/howdoes-the-autumn-statemnt-

affect-military-spending Meanwhile, the group has been able to appoint a new coordinator. Russell Whiting, thanks to grants from (mostly) Quaker trusts. Russell has a strong background in working for CND and other campaigns. russell@demilitarize.org.uk

CO Day 2024

International Conscientious Objectors' Day, cosponsored by MAW, will be observed on Wednesday, 15 May. Why not organise an event where you live: a short vigil in the town square perhaps, or plant a tree in a local park, or follow the national ceremony online? More details from co-day.org



Second chance to see Michael's talk

The MAW Remembrance Lecture 2023 was a great success with actor Michael Mears talking to an enthralled audience on The role of the Arts and Culture in Promoting Peace and Opposing War (see photo on page 2).

Michael described how the spoken word, songs, art and music have the potential to move the spirit towards peace. You can see a video of the event here: https://abolishwar.net/wpcontent/uploads/

vimeo embed.html

The illustrated text of his talk is available in this file: https:// abolishwar.net/wp-content/ uploads/MAW-LECTURE-by-Michael-Mears-November-2023v2.pdf

Michael has a rich and varied career in theatre, television and film - including seasons with the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Peter Hall Company. He has also worked in UK regional theatres and in London's West End. He is perhaps best known as an award-winning performer of his own original plays for theatre and radio. He has performed This Evil Thing (2016), an inspiring solo play about the men who said no to war, more than 100 times in the UK and in the USA. Last year, he toured with his play about Hiroshima - The Mistake.

For an electronic version of this newsletter email Gill Hurle at gill.hurle@abolishwar.org.uk The next edition of Abolish War will be published in May.



two events as part of the network resisting DSEI - the massive biennial arms fair held at the ExCeL Centre in East London. We also joined in many other protest activities. See page 3

MAW event will seek peaceful means for conflict resolution

and elsewhere.

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MAW is planning a day-long event focusing on peaceful means of armed conflict prevention and resolution. We believe this must be a crucial part of any agenda for the elimination of war.

A working group has been formed to develop ideas for a national gathering on this subject, to be held (probably in London) in autumn. Key speakers are already being lined up for what promises to be an important event.

Among the suggestions so far put forward are: inviting presentations from experts from NGOs and academic bodies operating in this field, examining working methods and success stories, evaluating the role of the UN and regional bodies and considering ways forward for MAW, its members and partners. At a time when the peace community is simultaneously both energised and depressed by events in Ukraine and the Middle East, we believe it is important to share positive news and insights into conflict transformation efforts in those regions

Can you help? If you have ideas to contribute please contact us via our website: https://abolishwar.net/support-us/contact-us/

Bid for bigger role for Court of Justice

LAW not War is a new civilsociety-led campaign working with like-minded countries to enhance the jurisdiction and use of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in order to help resolve international disputes peacefully rather than through recourse to the threat or use of force.

The principal objective of the campaign is to increase the number of States accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ, with the aspiration to achieve universal acceptance of jurisdiction by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the United Nations.

The campaign will work to enhance ICJ jurisdiction through other means. including encouraging more frequent use of the ICJ as a dispute resolution mechanism provided in international treaties and appealing to states to make use of ICJ jurisdiction through mutual agreement for specific disputes.

MAW representative calls for action on climate and militarism

Sponsored by MAW, Deborah Burton of Tipping Point North/South spoke at two official side events and actively participated in four more events as an accredited delegate at COP28 in the UAE.

MAW was one of the first peace organisations to launch a public campaign demanding that governments account for - and reduce - the vast emissions and expenditure of the military in both war and peace.

In November 2019, at the COP25 in Madrid, MAW picketed the entrance to the conference centre for ten days with its banner and leaflets which declared "War Causes Climate Change and Climate Change". Thus the idea and concept started to sink into the minds of the many 1,000s of delegates from all over the world.

This success was repeated by a much larger MAW team outside the gates of COP26 in Glasgow and, for the first time, military emissions were debated at several events outside the COP and incorporated into the huge marches and vigils around the city.

In 2022, COP27 was held in Sharm-El-Sheik, where it was no longer feasible to send a team with a banner, which is when we teamed up and sponsored Deborah, who took part in the first official side event on military emissions ever staged at a COP.

Finally, at COP28, the issue was accorded a prominent role in a whole series of events, with the further objective of forming a partnership with existing groups of nations such as "Small Island States" whose collective voice will be heard at international fora including COPs.

The scope of the debate on military emissions has broadened hugely to include climate damage caused in conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and the question of vast global military expenditure directly detracting from climate finance and loss and damage restitution.

We hope that these issues will feature on the main agenda of the next COP, which is predicted to be in Europe and accessible to us once again.

David Collins





The art of peace: Michael Mears (left) and Tim Devereux at the MAW Remembrance lecture.



Objecting to war: MAW was one of many peace organisations represented at the Alternative Remembrance ceremony in Tavistock Square, London, in November. **Committee members** laid a wreath at the Conscientious Objectors' stone.

MAW highlights absurdity of Net Zero against backdrop of UK arms

Highlighting the rampant iniquities of the arms trade which fans the flames of war worldwide is an important concern for MAW in its goal of abolishing war - so we willingly organised two events as part of the network resisting DSEI, the massive biennial arms fair held at the

ExCeL Centre in East London in September. Taking our message to central London for greater exposure, we leafleted and engaged with passers-by in Victoria Street outside the UK Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, asking how we can hope to be on course for net zero while promoting the arms trade with its associated immense

but barely acknowledged greenhouse gas emissions. On a second day, we stood with banners and placards at the edge of Trafalgar Square close to the UK Department for Business & Trade, whose Defence & Security Exports Unit is responsible for

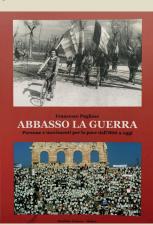


promoting the arms fair. Our leaflet this time drew attention to what has been described as "one of the most corrupt businesses in the world". facilitated by our government and subsidised by taxpayers. Both events were well supported by campaigners and aroused much public interest. MAW members also participated in a number of other activities including walking from Stratford Station to the ExCeL Centre leafleting enroute, the eve-of-fair vigil, and the No Faith in War day where our vice-president Diana Francis was arrested and detained for several hours for blocking the vehicle entrance at the Centre. Hilary Evans (pictured top)

Lessons to be learned from Italian activism

Francesco Pugliese is a veteran writer and activist with a deep understanding of Italy's peace and anti-war movements, whom MAW members will wish to know better. His travelling exhibition of

illustrated panels. Abbasso la Guerra (Down with War). has been shown on numerous occasions since 2003. His book with the same title is a



fascinating illustrated account of the history of peace activism in Italy from the 19th century to the present.

An educator with long experience, Pugliese stresses the need to communicate effectively. His latest book, Parole di Cittadinanza (Words of Citizenship) is an informative glossary of legal, economic and practical words and phrases relevant "for the rights of humanity and the world". While there is still much peace activity. Francesco tells me that unlike in past decades "one cannot talk of a real organised movement". However, there remains "a significant pacifism kept alive by many initiatives". I have translated part of an essay by him, together with a list of individuals, organisations and media in this field - see it on the MAW blog at https:// abolishwar.net/francescopugliese.

I can supply the full essay for any readers of Italian who would like it. John Gittings john@johngittings.com