

ACTION FOR PEACE

Autumn 2025 | Issue 124



YCND

FEATURING...

- Local news
- What's happened nationally & internationally since summer
- Sheffield's peace movement through the Thatcher years
- Upcoming events

LATEST NEWS

From our Peace & Crafts fair in Saltaire, to momentum building in Bradford for the Lakenheath Peace Camp, we've had a busy Autumn!

REGIONAL UPDATES

Over the past few months, we've been helping activists in Bradford and Sheffield re-ignite the energy behind their local peace movement. This included helping to organise a meeting in Sheffield about the formation of a 'Demilitarise South Yorkshire' group, whose goal would be to raise awareness about, and protest against, the development at the AMRC and the wider strategies of Oliver Coppard that are tied up in the military-industrial complex. In Bradford, we've supported the formation of a new LAP (Lakenheath Alliance for Peace) group that will be focusing on webinars and community meals to build momentum ahead of the Marham and Lakenheath protests in 2026.

On Remembrance Sunday we helped to organise Songs For Peace in Bradford, with the Commoners Choir leading the songs. For this event, peace campaigners met at the Bradford Cenotaph to remember the lives lost in war. White poppy wreaths were also laid by numerous different groups and individuals.

In November, we held our annual Peace & Crafts Fair in Saltaire. We were delighted to have raised around £4500 and are grateful to all the support we had from the local community on this day. **The next Peace & Crafts Fair will take place on 28th November** at the same venue, with stall sales going live in May/June.

We are also thankful to all the local groups who have organised public events. We were particularly impressed by Calder Valley CND's event with Caroline Lucas and Steve Barwick. This event was held to mark the release of the **Nuclear Education Trust's (NET) report 'Stepping Back From The Brink- – The Myths of Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Limited Nuclear War'**, which we thoroughly recommend reading. The event explored the growing dangers posed by tactical nuclear weapons, the erosion of the nuclear taboo, and how the UK could play a critical role in reducing global nuclear risks.

NATIONAL UPDATES

We remain deeply concerned about the F-35 jet investment plans of the UK government. Since our last AfP newsletter, the chair of the Govern-

ment's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, has described the MoD's cost forecast for the F-35 fighter jet programme as "unrealistic". Combined with the immoral nature of these investments, at the expense of other cost-cutting measures in the recent budget, we strongly encourage you to attend the **demo at RAF Marham on 28th February** and say no to nuclear fighter jets!



In the budget, the government has confirmed that it will publish a new report on the nuclear industry in the coming three months, which is expected to make recommendations on the UK's civil and defence nuclear future. Alongside this, the government plans to "cut red tape" to accelerate the construction of new nuclear power stations, effectively fast-tracking new projects.

From 1st - 6th April, there will be a peace camp at Lakenheath. We are planning on organising some transport to get there. At this stage, it would be useful for us to gather some rough numbers on who might be interested. Additionally, what days are most practical for Yorkshire-based CND supporters to attend.

INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

The Ukraine peace negotiations have remained difficult. Following criticism of the pro-Russian points in the original plan (especially over the amount of territory that would be handed to Russia), there hasn't been any progression on a ceasefire or end to the war. These recent negotiations followed the successful testing of Russia's 9M730 Burevestnik nuclear-powered, nuclear-capable intercontinental cruise missile. Furthermore, there are concerning talks of the U.S. and Russia restarting nuclear tests.

On a more positive note, **we were thrilled to see the popular petitions in support of the TPNW in both Japan and Switzerland.** Thanks to over 100,000 signatures, a national political process has been triggered that asks Switzerland to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, ensuring that the country aligns its foreign policy with its long-standing humanitarian tradition. If the government refuses to sign the treaty, the Swiss people will have the last word in a public referendum. Likewise, the Japanese petition gained over 3.5 million signatures! The scale and moral clarity of this action should make it clear that it is unacceptable that the Japanese government still refuses to engage with the TPNW. This petition was submitted at the time of domestic unease over Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who may consider revisiting Japan's longstanding non-nuclear policy.



The Rise and Fall of Nuclear Protest in Sheffield: part 2

(The Thatcher Years, the Demise of BANG and the formation of Stop the War Coalition, 1985-2003)

Margaret Thatcher's landslide victory in the June 1983 general election led to increasing political change, and as Sheffield was home to the NUM headquarters there was a general anti-Thatcher feeling in the city which strove to preserve its reputation as the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' by the then left-wing Labour Council who openly challenged the Tory government's policies. Although the years 1981-1984 were productive for my local CND group in Sheffield 'BANG' (Broomhall Anti-Nuclear Group - see Part I in the last issue of AfP), this change in national politics took its toll.

BANG consisted of just six active members, but we were well connected to the Broomhall community and other local CND groups within South Yorkshire. Our banner creator, a female art student, graduated and took up teacher training elsewhere. Steve from Canada, who worked for the Anti-Nuclear Campaign, left to work for Friends of the Earth when the ANC ran out of funds. Russ, originally from New York, thought there were too few of us left and decided to concentrate on his jewellery art, gaining a post at Hallam University. I moved from Broomhall to live in Broomhill and lost contact with the only remaining member who swore to "go down fighting". Then there was Lesley who decided to help with the miners' cause, but she became embroiled in the 'Battle of Orgreave' on 18 June 1984, and witnessed police brutality, "a policeman took a full swipe at my head" she said. The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, who succeeded in obtaining a public inquiry, used the press photograph of Lesley to promote their cause.

During the following years Sheffield CND groups ambled along, with occasional visits to RAF Fylingdales and RAF/USAF Menwith Hill to celebrate Independence from America Day on July 4. The country was irreversibly changing from the socialism of the Labour and Trade Union movement into the Conservatism of individual liberty and the privatisation of state-owned industries. When Margaret Thatcher's popularity became less than her party's and she was replaced by John Major as PM in 1990, the Tories' majority in the House of Commons was narrowing. Eventually in the May 1997 general election the Tories were defeated by New Labour led by Tony Blair, with a 179-seat majority, ending their eighteen years in opposition. Although there was now a Labour government in power, nothing much happened to change what Sheffield CND groups were doing until one fateful day in 2001.

The attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York on 9/11 were regarded as terrorism against the United States instigated by al-Qaeda. On visiting the site, which became known as 'Ground Zero', President George W Bush declared a "global war on terror" and later defined "rogue nations" as those practicing such acts of terrorism of which Afghanistan was one. Not long after 9/11, on 21 September 2001, Stop the War Coalition (StWC) was formed in London to campaign against the impending war in Afghanistan.

Around this time in Sheffield there was the idea that we could form our own Stop the War Coalition group, so to initiate this there was a meeting in the Central Quaker Meeting House to reform Sheffield CND. Professor Paul Rogers of Bradford Peace Studies Department was invited to speak, and he appealed to the audience that nuclear



weapons are not just a prestige game of power politics, but they could be used in practice and this would be a disaster for the world. I can remember being impressed by his speech as I, and I guess many others, had become used to the principle of mutual assured destruction (MAD) based on the theory of rational deterrence. Thus Sheffield CND was reborn and we had our monthly meetings in the QMH. The next step was for me to attend Sheffield StWC meetings, so we formed an alliance of those from Stop the War, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and CND.

In 2003 Bush and Blair were preoccupied with the idea that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction, and thus it came under the definition of a rogue nation. Therefore they needed to extend their global war on terror, and as StWC became aware of this, they planned the 'Don't Attack Iraq' demonstration for 15 February in London. In Sheffield we organised scores of coaches to go to London to join in the protest which, according to the police, was the UK's biggest ever demonstration with at least 750,000 taking part, although organisers put the figure closer to two million! During the protest it was heartening to see people look out of their windows and wave banners and cheer in support, and so many different people were represented with one message: "stop the killing, stop the hate!"

On 20 March the US Air Force began its overwhelming airstrikes on Baghdad named 'Shock and Awe' marking the beginning of the US-led invasion known as Operation Iraqi Freedom. Later on in 2003, as we protested at Menwith Hill on July 4, I could feel the air buzzing with radio communications emerging from the Middle East. In the summer some of us in Sheffield StWC organised 'Peace in the Park' in Devonshire Green, a one-day festival of political debate, stalls, music and food to raise money for an Iraqi medical charity, and as the war now raged grateful Iraqi men would come up to me and hug me with tears in their eyes.

Written by Richard Bakewell (Sheffield CND)



UPCOMING EVENTS

**Yorkshire CND's AGM (featuring a public talk
by Green Party Deputy Leader - Mothin Ali)**

24th January, 11:30am-2pm @ Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, LS1 5EB

National CND Demo at RAF Marham

28th February 2026 from midday

Lakenheath Peace Camp

1st - 6th April 2026

Weekly evening demos at Menwith Hill

Every Tuesday @ 6-7:30pm

**For more information, please contact: info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk
Or subscribe to our calendar for more: yorkshirecnd.org.uk/events**

LOCAL CONTACTS

Youth & Student CND (Yorkshire Region) – sam@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

Huddersfield Peace Group - fairbankcharles@gmail.com

Leeds CND – leedscnd@gmail.com / dave@space4peace.org

Keighley – tridentsylvia@gmail.com

MHAC (Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign) – mail@themhac.uk

Grassington & District Peace Group – strand@hawkswick.net

Sheffield CND – richardbakewell@yahoo.co.uk

Sheffield Creative Action for Peace – rachelrow@yahoo.co.uk

Calder Valley CND – kathypitt725@hotmail.com or Catherine on 07980 291478



NO NEW BRITISH NUKES!

SAY NO TO NUCLEAR FIGHTER JETS

DEMONSTRATE AT RAF MARHAM SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY



CND

