MAW’s summer of action for peace – and there’s plenty more to come!

MAW members have been busy: top centre and right: a re-enactment of a 1914 anti-war protest meeting in North London, organised by Valerie Flessati; above: annual Hiroshima Day Vigil in Abingdon with Sally Reynolds; left middle: US peace activist David Swanson and son on a visit to the UK which included two MAW events; top left: MAW member Tim Devereux protests at Menwith Hill. Centre: Sue Gilmurray helps lead some of the singing at August’s Wool Against Weapons rally at Aldermaston. Bottom left: Bruce Kent and Gill Hurle for MAW at a demonstration against war in Gaza; far left: Durham’s Vigil for Peace with MAW’s Heather Speight.

Movement for the Abolition of War - Annual General Meeting

Including: chair’s report, election of committee members and officers and open discussion forum. Details of those standing in the elections will be available on the MAW website from early September: www.abolishwar.org.uk

If you would like to nominate someone to stand for the committee (nominees must be MAW members) or if you cannot attend the AGM but have any suggestions or concerns you would like raised, contact us by Friday, September 26 via our website or in writing to 11 Venetia Rd, London N4 1EJ.

Friday, 10 October 5.30pm, St Aloysius Church, 20 Phoenix Rd, London, NW1 1TB
Diary Dates

- York Quakers will host a series of talks on peace issues at the Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York. They will take place on Thursday evenings at 7.30pm, as follows:
  - October 2: Love the soldier – hate the war, by David Gee of Forceswatch.
  - October 30: Ending the business of war, by Rafeef Ziadah (from War on Want).

For further details, email peacenetwork@yorkquakers.org.uk or phone Joyce Pickard, 01904 621179.

- October 11, London – MAW’s Peace History Conference (see article on this page).
- A Peace Rally will be held on October 18 at the Trinity Methodist Church, Dereham. Bruce Kent of MAW will be the speaker.

Abolish War
The next edition of Abolish War will be published on Wednesday, December 3 – send your news and views to helenriley@abolishwar.org.uk

Truce – learning new lessons from history

Working with local museums, heritage experts and artists, Mid Pennine Arts is engaging schools, sports teams, interfaith choirs, students, band members and veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder in an exciting partnership with Accrington Stanley FC.

The project will culminate in a commemorative musical performance, exhibition and football event at Christmas 2014. Truce takes the ceasefire of 1914 as its focus. On Christmas Eve 1914, British infantry noticed Christmas trees on enemy parapets. They sang carols and exchanged tentative communication, eventually exchanging gifts and retrieving bodies from No Man’s Land. Then they played football...

Local choir leader Janet Swan will lead the singing in Truce. She says: “Singing has the power to move us to tears very often. In this case it moved the men to want to know more about each other.”

Four MAW songs from our project 14 songs for 2014, including John McCutcheon’s Christmas in the trenches and committee member Sue Gilmurray’s Go down fighting will be used in the project.

If you would like to be part of the Truce choir or for more information visit the Mid Pennine Arts website: www.midpenninearts.org.uk/truce

Can’t wait until October? No problem - head to Manchester for the No Glory in War lecture on September 20.

Organiser Valerie Flessati says: “We are looking forward to meeting people who share an interest in understanding peace history and how it can shape our views today.”

 Courage to face the war of hostile opinion

MAW members are encouraged to sign up for this year’s prestigious MAW Peace History Conference with the theme Alternative Voices of World War One: The courage of their convictions.

Actor Sheila Hancock is due to open the day-long conference on Saturday, October 11, at the Imperial War Museum, London and she will be followed by a host of top speakers including Cyril Pearce (author of Comrades in Conscience) who will speak on Communities of Resistance.

The afternoon session will include a drama produced by the Speaking in Tongues Theatre Company with performances by young women from across Europe and based on original accounts by women who went to The Hague International Women’s Congress in 1915.

A flyer for the conference is included with this edition of Abolish War - reach for your pens and sign up! You can also register and pay for the conference via the MAW website at www.abolishwar.org.uk

Members of the MAW committee are pictured during a recent weekend get-together, where they were busy planning future events – watch this space!
FUNDRAISER: A leading Shropshire artist has created a beautiful image which will now be auctioned to raise funds for MAW. The artwork, pictured above, is an original piece by Clun artist Mellie Lane and is entitled ‘War Horse’. It is dedicated to the million horses that died in World War I and was created in loving memory of Mellie’s grandfather, Henry Smith, of the 10th Royal Hussars - a cavalry regiment of the British Army. Henry loved horses and fought at Ypres, happily returning home safely at the end of the war. The artwork – a handcut, concertina silhouette book measuring 9” by 54” when open - has been bought anonymously and offered to MAW. MAW member Linda Hurcombe says: “Sealed bids can be sent by post to 11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ. This is a powerful image which honours people - and animals - in war.”

Plan an action against military spending

Get out your diaries! Next year, the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) will take place in the w/c April 13. This might seem to be a long way ahead - but in fact it’s never too early to start some serious planning for a local event. For many people, the waste of money and resources (almost $2 trillion annually) on the world’s military is one of the most powerful reasons for opposing and ending war. MAW vice-president Bruce Kent says: “We need to get all the poverty and development organisations to work with us on this issue. I’m happy to say that War on Want and The World Development Movement are already active supporters.” GDAMS is an initiative of the International Peace Bureau with its network of 300 member organisations worldwide.

Take action: In 1978, the First Special Session of the UN on Disarmament said: "The hundreds of billions of dollars spent annually on weapons are in sombre and dramatic contrast with the want and poverty in which two-thirds of the world population live." That was thirty-six years ago. Time to take action! Let us know what you are planning in your area.

BACK TO SCHOOL? An ideal time to order our DVD and book: Conflict and Climate Change - which is linked to many areas of the National Curriculum and is full of thought-provoking interviews on this important topic. Christine Blower, a MAW vice-president and General Secretary of the NUT describes it as: “An extraordinarily good resource.” To buy the DVD and book, visit our website at http://www.abolishwar.org.uk and click on the image on the Home Page. Just £9, plus p&p.

Animals: The Hidden Victims of War

This excellent 24-page booklet of text and photos makes a connection too rarely made - how animals are used and abused in the name of war. Free copies of the booklet are available from Animal Aid via info@animalaid.org.uk

Read all about it

MAW members are encouraged to read a recent Newsweek article on ‘War in the age of the Smartphone.’ http://www.newsweek.com/war-and-peace-age-smartphone-258420
How Sarajevo proved to be the perfect place for a peace event

As an 18-year-old, I was born a year after the agreed ceasefire that ended the Bosnian conflict in 1995. Later, although I studied history for five years the genocide in this region was not on the syllabus. Therefore I left for June’s Peace Event in Sarajevo fairly oblivious to the extent of the pain that was inflicted on the Bosnian people just 20 years ago. However, my naivety meant that the trip turned out to be far richer than just attending a peace conference - it was an experience that brought into focus ideas of war and conflict.

At first glance Sarajevo seemed to be a classic Eastern European city with locals soaking up the sun while drinking coffee - but it didn’t take me long to spot bullet holes in many buildings and thousands of white crosses that make up the mass graves on the side of the city’s hills.

As a MAW representative, I was put into contact with Emma Stacey, an Englishwoman who previously lived and worked in Sarajevo and was full of knowledge. With Emma we visited an exhibition of photographs which documented the Bosnian War. This was a perfect introduction to the Peace Event and showed us how appropriate Sarajevo was to host the event. Particularly moving for me was a room completely covered with photographs of missing - and presumed dead - men and women.

Seeing the faces of people who had lost their lives as a result of racism, power hungry politicians and hatred was the biggest push I needed to enter the Peace Event with a huge will to learn how this pain can be prevented as soon as possible in the future.

Being in Sarajevo and talking to people whose lives had been disjointed by the war added a deeper layer to the experience. I found that people who have lived without peace can communicate with great authority just how important it is to all of us. The evidence of past pain and destruction around us on the streets of Sarajevo meant that when the intellectuals, politicians, activists and charity workers spoke of peace it was not spoken of as an idealistic ideal, but a necessity.

Maddy Riddley

The Movement for the Abolition 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.

MAW members and affiliated groups: unless you are a life member, or joined after March 2013, your membership subscription for 2014 was due in November 2013.

Send completed form (and cheque if applicable) to: Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Road, LONDON N4 1EJ

Membership application / renewal

Name .............................................
Address ..........................................................
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Postcode ..............................................
Tel no. ..........................
Email ..........................................................

Type of membership (please tick):
Life £100  Individual £15  Unwaged £5
Household (2 or more at same address) £20  Group or organisation £25

I enclose:  Membership £........
Donation £........
Total £........

Please make cheque payable to Movement for the Abolition of War
OR Please send me a standing order form

Abolish War is published by the Movement for the Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Road, London N4 1EJ.

Book review: Non-Combatants and Others

This is a novel by Rose Macaulay, first published in 1916. A recent edition was produced by Methuen in 1986. It will be of great interest to MAW-minded readers. It was written in 1915 just before conscription came in and gives a picture of many reactions to those first two years of awfulness. The banality of ordinary life ‘is in sharp contrast to the horrors that were taking place not many miles away across the Channel.

The central character, Alix, a shy reserved girl, has a bossy mother who is a do-gooder in every direction. Her main interest is the Society for Promoting Permanent Peace - shades of MAW.

The book tells the story of Alix - and of the fate of her brother.

This is a book well worth a library hunt. Those who have read Macaulay’s Towers of Trebizond will not need persuading.

Bruce Kent