

Women's International League for PEACE AND FREEDOM Peace and Freedom Update

Autumn 2014



WILPF 2015 Conference April 27-29, The Hague Uniting a Global Movement of Women's Power to Stop War This is the place to be if you want to be a peacemaker in the 21st century

Hundreds of peacemakers from all over the world will come together to establish a new peace agenda for the 21st century at the WILPF 2015 Conference.

One hundred years after WILPF's founding women first came together in The Hague to offer peaceful solutions to the First World War, we still live in a world where women's voices and experiences are excluded. The result is endless violence and war.

We know now, what we knew then, that only when we analyse conflict from a gender perspective, integrating disarmament, human rights, the environment, social justice, and the women, peace and security agenda holistically, will we be

able to eradicate the root causes of conflict.

In 2015, at our International Conference, by connecting, strengthening and celebrating the work of all women peacemakers across the world, WILPF will provide a progressive security analysis and attempt to establish new and radical approaches to stopping and preventing wars and establishing the principles of permanent peace.

See you in The Hague!

Open to all! Members, non-members, women and men.

Further details on the Women's Power to Stop War website <http://www.womenstopwar.org/conference-home>

Sexual violence in conflict – From global to local actions

This is the subject of our Autumn Seminar on Saturday 29th November at the WILPF building in London.

See the enclosed flyer for the detailed programme of this interesting day.

We look forward to seeing you all there.

Housman's Peace Diary 2015

"A century of women resisting war" is the introductory article in next year's peace diary. Following a very good piece about The Hague Conference and the beginning of WILPF, the article covers a variety of women's actions over the following 100 years. You can get your Peace Diary for £8.95 at our Autumn Seminar, from your branch or directly from the office. It helps WILPF if you buy the diary from us!!

New cards and bag

We are also selling cards of the pioneer women packaged individually for £2 each, or as postcards for 50p

each. New bright red cotton bags with our centenary logo "Women's Power to Stop War" are on sale for £7 each. Contact the office or come to the Autumn seminar.



Help us celebrate ‘these dangerous women’

“These Dangerous Women” is an exciting opportunity for WILPF members and friends to get involved in celebrating and commemorating the first WILPF women who gathered in The Hague in 1915 to try and stop the First World War. The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is being run by WILPF and



In Kingsway, London, Lydia Meryll declaims a 1914 speech by Margaret Ashton, Manchester Councillor and WILF founding member

the Clapham Film Unit. We aim to create an exhibition, documentary film and booklet in time for the centenary, and we need your help.

WILPF members are being invited to train in archive skills with the LSE to enable them to research the early WILPF members and contribute to the booklet and exhibition. The archive research training date is 14th November, and some travel expenses will be paid.

Oral history training will run on 31st October and 6th December, enabling WILPF members to record the memories of the oldest members of WILPF, summarise their recordings and put them in the archive.

Re-enactment and costume training will take place in November enabling members and non-members to embody their WILPF counterparts in 1915 and take part in the documentary. Dates for this training will be announced soon.

We hope women will come from all WILPF branches so we can tell the whole of our story.

Please contact office@WILPF.org.uk or claphamfilmunit@live.com for more information or to book a place.

Developing our UK history project

Since the AGM there have been several activities and exciting developments. First was WILPF's participation in 15 May International Conscientious Objectors (CO) Ceremony held in Tavistock Square at the site of the Conscientious Objectors memorial. To mark the anniversary of 1914 this was an extended Ceremony with special input from the First World War Peace Forum, of which WILPF is a member. Relatives of First World War COs made moving tributes to their family members. Of particular interest was my opportunity to meet a distant relative of Catherine Marshall, a founder member of WILPF, who dedicated herself to working tirelessly for COs as the Secretary of the No Conscription Fellowship.

In July we had confirmation that the Heritage Lottery Fund bid had been successful (*see Charlotte Bill's report above*). Throughout the year Helen Kay and Katrina Gass have taken part in the monthly meetings of the International History Working Group preparing for the Centenary Conference Exhibition.

The images of Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall, Chrystal Macmillan and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence designed and produced for the 4th August Re-enactment have been made available to us by the artist to make into attractive greetings cards and postcards. These are available from Branches and the office to raise much needed funds. Don't forget to buy some soon.

Work on putting together the history of our Section contin-

ues. The research from the archive training, which is part of the Heritage Lottery Project, will add to this.

Stella Hermiston is working on creating mini-biogs of significant early members to put on-line in the near future and Katrina and Keely Khoury are working on making a Centenary History Section on the main website.

We had a stall at the Peace History Conference and displayed our life-size images. Speaking in Tongues Theatre Group gave a very powerful dramatic presentation of events pre and post the April 1915 Congress.

Katrina Gass



Elizabeth Bourne and Valerie Flessati at the Peace History Conference

August 4 peace actions around the UK

Kingsway re-enactment, London

WILPF organised the re-enactment of the original protest by women against the declaration of war in Kingsway, London on 4th August 1914. It was a very positive experience for about thirty women many arriving in period costumes to stand beside the four large banners of women who made the original protest. Plenty of leaflets and placards made a big impact on the onlookers and gave an opportunity for dialogue. A lot of hard work went into getting so many women there on the day.

As a result of good press work, media interest from local and national newspapers was positive. This resulted in a photograph of Glen Lee in *the Guardian* holding her well used ribbon piece embroidered with **“I dream of giving birth to a child who will ask ‘mother what was war?’**

There was an article about the re-enactment in the Guardian on line, and the whole event was filmed by Charlotte Bill for the centennial project.

Nearing the end of the time spent in Kingsway we were treated to an inspirational re-enactment of a speech given in 1914 by Margaret Ashton. Lydia Meryll, dressed in costume, stood on steps and drew quite a crowd with her portrayal of Margaret Ashton (*see photo p.2*). Much of the speech is poignantly relevant today.



Following the action we went to Downing Street where Pat Pleasance. Lydia Meryll, Sheila Triggs, Katrina Gass, and Holly Ahom handed in a letter to the Prime Minister. This was also filmed by Charlotte. Several of us escorted our delivery agents and stood with our banners outside the gates at Downing Street giving us another wonderful opportunity to speak with tourists who were intrigued with the demonstration. An opportunity to spread the word about WILPF.

Brighton and Hove vigil

On the 4th August We held a vigil in Brighton at lunch time at the clocktower with a banner that stated ‘4th August the Slaughter Began, Stop War, Challenge Militarism’, and our name, as well as our original banner.

Some UNA members joined us with their banner and together we handed out all the copies of a letter created for the day by WILPF exec members, the conscientious objectors booklet and membership forms to some who showed inter-



est in finding out more about us. This included one woman who was passing and wanted to hold the banner and said she thinks she will join WILPF. She then came to the Hiroshima ceremony on the 6th August.

There were about 18 of us throughout the hour and 15 minutes that we were there, and dozens of people came to talk to us and we had no negative comments.

Whilst we were there some young Palestinians asked us what we were up to and we told them about a women only vigil to be held later that day in support of Gaza. Two of the young women were near to tears during the conversation to think that people around the world felt so angry about the plight of their country and of course they expressed their fears for their families, friends and country.

Penzance silent protest

Some thirty members, friends and supporters of the West Cornwall Group gathered for one hour at the Penzance war memorial on August 4th.

We had our WILPF banner, posters and an enlargement of the flyers produced by WILPF for the day. The flyers we gave to people who passed by and some of them stopped to join the circle for a while. Comments of those who attended were that it was a moving, powerful experience and we also felt connected to all those who gathered in different places in the country especially to WILPF women.

The Silent Vigil was covered in the local paper *The Cornishman* with an impressive picture.



Scottish branch in action

August 4th saw members attending the Anti-Glorification of War vigil organised by Scottish Peace Network, (SPN) to protest at the very militaristic closing ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games in George Square Glasgow. There was no press interest shown in us, however, one of the SPN banners commissioned especially for the event featured widely in TV coverage.

Trident still has to go *now*

Following the result of the “No” vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum, which means the retention of armed nuclear submarines in Scotland, the Scrap Trident Scotland Coalition of which the Scottish Branch is a member, is organising a series of actions prior to

the May 2015 Westminster Election.

The first of these is on November 30th with a Demonstration at Faslane Naval Base, Helensburgh 12 noon-2pm. You are urged to bring banners, bring placards, wear campaigning T-shirts and bring something to make a noise. We shall walk from South

Gate to North Gate, for music and a picnic. Buses will be organised from Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Check Scrap Trident website <http://scraptrident.org/> for details of buses.

See Scottish Branch facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/wilpfscotland?fref=ts>

Letters sent by WILPF to government

Events in the Middle East have prompted the UK Section of WILPF to write letters to Government.

On 12 September we sent a letter to Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pointing out that at the beginning of 2014, the Syrian Women Initiative for Peace and Democracy, a cross section of Syrian women, had developed a Charter for Peace but had been prevented from presenting it or attending the Geneva II peace talks about their country.

We reminded the Foreign Secretary that Syrian women spoke at The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, in London in June.

We called upon Mr Hammond to continue with the leadership shown by William Hague, to press for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions so that the women of Syria are acknowledged as legitimate participants in peace talks and are, in future, invited and permitted full participation in the peace-building process.

On 25 September a letter was sent to each of David Cameron, Ed Miliband, Nick Clegg and Michael Fallon in relation to the bombing of the Islamic State in Iraq.

The text can be read on our website www.wilpf.org.uk Branches were invited to adapt the letter to send to whoever they considered appropriate,

New UK WILPF website launched

With Twitter now such a powerful campaigning tool, we are using new online resources to build awareness of UK WILPF and our work. We are doing this through our new website www.wilpf.org.uk our UK WILPF's Twitter account [@UKWILPF](https://twitter.com/UKWILPF) and also via Facebook www.facebook.com/UKWILPF.

Our new website is now up and running www.wilpf.org.uk. We are working to improve and add to the content, particularly in the news, resources and events sections. Each branch has a page which can be updated quite quickly as needed.

We are also working on a history section of the website and have space on the

home page for a blog. We'd love to hear from you about any events you attended or actions you took part in as a WILPF member and your thoughts on various topics relevant to WILPF, so please get writing! It doesn't have to be long (350 words or less). Your voice is important in making WILPF relevant and approachable to an outside audience.

We can now accept online donations and membership renewals using Paypal.

If you have any material that you think would be a useful addition to the website, including branch events, photos, leaflets, letters and peace publications, please email Stella and Keely at office@ukwilpf.org.uk.



Wilpf banner, here on 18 October demo, now has website details

This year UK WILPF launched Peace and Freedom e-news, a digital newsletter sent to your email address with news from branch, national, and international WILPF. The first issue was a 'special' devoted to the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, hosted by William Hague with significant WILPF participation.

Since then we have had three further issues. A popular feature is the 'Suggested Reading' that brings together, as a list, articles by UK or International WILPF members – complete with digital links to the full articles.

If we have your email address you will have received

this publication – look for the subject line 'UK WILPF Peace & Freedom e-news' followed by the issue number. If you are concerned that you have not received this, have changed your email address or are now on email but haven't yet updated your details, please contact us at office@ukwilpf.org.uk and we'll update our records.

Peace & Freedom e-news is a publication for you and by you. If you would like to share your experiences, send us a couple of paragraphs (about 350 words) and a couple of photos if you have them, to office@ukwilpf.org.uk We look forward to hearing from you.