



Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum - Annual Report to the AGM 21 September 2017

Key Achievements in the Year

- Successful mayoral year of Oldham's first Mayor of Peace, Councillor Derek Heffernan, raised profile of peace and the work of the Forum.
- 48 local and national organisations have signed the Pledge to Peace and have full or associated membership of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum.
- 25 of these are academies, colleges and schools in Oldham.
- Peace book section for children and young people launched at Oldham Library.
- Peace poles installed at Alexandra, Dunwood and Tandle Hill Country Parks, and at St Chad's Gardens, Uppermill.
- International links are in development with Rickelrath / Wegberg in Germany; Wahat al Salam / Neve Shalom (Oasis of Peace) in Israel/Palestine; Berat and Shkroder in Albania, and Hiroshima and Toshima in Japan.
- Efforts to sign the Pledge being supported in Todmorden and Warrington.

Highlights (Sept. 2016-Present)

September 2016 - Oldham Peace Week hosted.

Highlights included hosting the first Forum AGM, the Peace Day celebration event, a visit to The Peace Museum in Bradford, and an event hosted by Oldham's Mayor of Peace, Cllr Derek Heffernan, with Mayors from Greater Manchester local authorities.

October 2016 -

Maria Ellis and Richard Outram attended the Peace Boat event hosted by Mayors for Peace at the Friends Meeting House in London.

Maria participated as an extra in the making of a film about the Women's Peace Crusade in Alexandra Park.

The Oldham Peace Garden on George Street is re-signed using Maria's designs and re-opened by the Mayor of Peace.

A special peace poem for the Mayor of Peace is delivered to the Mayor's Parlour by Serena, the 8-year old daughter of the former Mayor and Mayoress.

St Martins CE Primary school signs the Pledge.

November 2016 -

Alexandra Park Junior, Kingfisher Special and St Mary's CE Primary Schools all sign the Pledge.

Two hours after the signing St. Mary's is flooded after a day of appalling weather.

Shaw and Crompton Parish Council becomes only the second local authority in the UK to sign the Pledge on Armistice Day, after the observance of 2 minutes silence at 11am.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the launch of the Pledge to Peace, a special meeting is held in the Council Chamber where Maria signs the application form for the Forum to become a signatory to the Pledge in its own right.

January 2017 -

Saddleworth School, our first secondary school, signs the Pledge.

South Failsworth Community and St Edwards RC Primary Schools sign the Pledge.

The Mayor of Peace visits Burnley Brow Community School, the second signatory school in Oldham.

Saddleworth Peace Group hosts a Holocaust Memorial Day event in Uppermill Square. Oldham Youth Council visits Auschwitz and meets the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who was on retreat there.

February 2017 -

Ss Aidan and Oswalds RC and St Matthew's CE Primary Schools sign the Pledge.

At Ss Aidan and Oswalds, a special peace song, composed by parent and music teacher Angela Preen, is performed by the children.

Maria describes the special assembly held at St Matthew's as the "most beautiful and moving".

Oldham Sixth Form College hosts the 'Playing for Peace' exhibition loaned from The Peace Museum, Bradford. The Mayor of Peace is able to visit this before the signing.

The Mayor of Peace visits St Chad's Primary School, the third signatory school in Oldham.

March 2017 -

The Mayor, Maria and Richard make a presentation on the Pledge to Peace to Oldham head-teachers at their annual conference; this leads to several enquiries from heads wishing to sign the Pledge.

Saddleworth Peace Group hosts an event at Uppermill Library on conscientious objection with David Boulton, author of the book *Objection Overruled*. The venue is bursting at the seams such is the attendance!

On International Women's Day, the Women's Peace Crusade film is shown at Oldham Library. Ali Ronan and Hazel Roy, the latter in Edwardian dress, spoke about the women crusaders and the making of the film. Dorothy Bintley spoke about the research being conducted at the local studies centre into the conscientious objectors from Oldham.

On the anniversary of the start of the Syrian civil war, children at Knowsley Junior and St Matthews CE Primary Schools make handprints in solidarity as part of the Reach Out to Syria project.

Roamer the Robot visits St Matthew's CE Primary School.

April 2017 -

A very special package arrives in the office of the Editor of the Oldham Peace Times - seeds sent by the Mayor of Hiroshima, but these are no ordinary seeds - they are seeds harvested from trees that survived the August 1945 atomic bombing.

Konnichiwa - special visitors from Japan come to Oldham. In a very moving, and a surely unique, ceremony, two Hibakusha (Japanese A-bomb survivors), originally from Hiroshima, come to Alexandra Park to help plant these seeds. (Once grown they will be distributed to public parks and to schools that have signed the Pledge for re-planting.)

The Mayor of Peace describes this as the 'best event and highlight of his Mayoralty'.

The Blessed John Henry Newman RC College signs the Pledge, as do St Annes and St Thomas's CE Primary Schools.

The Saddleworth Independent and Mossley Correspondent becomes the first newspaper group in Europe to sign the Pledge to Peace!

Cllr Angie Farrell, Chair of the Shaw and Crompton Parish Council, waved off the participants in her Chairman's Peace Walk. Starting out from Dunwood Park, the walkers made a circular of the parish before arriving back in the park to be rewarded with certificates of participation.

The Mayor of Berat in Albania, one of the World's oldest inhabited cities, and a signatory of the Pledge, writes back to the Mayor of Peace seeking friendship.

The Council Parks' Department receives a consignment of peace poles from the World Peace Prayer Society in Scotland. These will be installed in public parks over coming months.

Maria launches the 303 Words for Peace writing competition.

May 2017 -

World Labyrinth Day is marked with a walk at the labyrinth at Dunwood Park. Chair Cllr Angie Farrell representing Shaw and Crompton Parish Council joins the Mayor of Peace at the event.

St Joseph's RC, Limehurst and Holy Rosary RC Primary Schools all sign the Pledge to Peace in the final fortnight of the Mayor of Peace's term of office.

Seventeen schools and colleges have signed the Pledge in the year from May 2016 or approximately one every two weeks in the academic year - quite an achievement.

Following the tragedy of the Manchester Arena bombing, Maria organises a deeply-moving vigil event at the peace pole recently installed at Alexandra Park.

And more happily presents the outgoing Mayor of Peace with a montage of photos from peace events he attended in his Mayoral year. This was a special piece of art Maria created herself.

The President of Shkoder Regional Council in Albania, also a signatory of the Pledge, writes to the Mayor of Peace seeking friendship.

June 2017 -

Maria and Richard visit Rickelrath in Germany. Here four organisations, the first in Germany, sign the Pledge and a specially-commissioned peace pole is unveiled by our hosts, the Schreders, at Kleine Farm.

The association was formed in January when on a visit to Salzburg, Austria, Maria and Richard struck up a conversation in a brewery about peace with Martin and Christiane!

We are now working to build further formal links between Oldham and Germany.

Richard attended the International World Peace Festival hosted by the World Peace Prayer Society in Allanton, Dumfries.

Crompton House Comprehensive School signs the Pledge to Peace. Richard is called upon to address an assembly of 750 pupils and teachers - and handily has upon him a book from Dr Martin Luther King loaned from our peace book section to quote from!

The second Oldham Peace Week is held with the majority of activities in signatory schools.

Both Oasis Academies and Lyndhurst Primary School sign the Pledge to Peace during peace week.

A high profile event is held in Oldham Library addressed by CND General Secretary Dr Kate Hudson where the film Threads, showing the impact of a nuclear strike on Sheffield, is screened.

A Super Saturday event hosted by library staff sees Oldham children make paper peace cranes for Hiroshima. At four primary schools in Oldham - Limehurst, Lyndhurst, St Paul's CE, and St Joseph's RC - children also make paper peace cranes.

August 2017 -

Paper peace cranes made by the children of Hiroshima are delivered in person to the City's Mayor by Sean Morris from Mayors for Peace. Sean is accompanying the Lord Mayor of Manchester to a conference of Mayors for Peace in Nagasaki.

Richard is invited to address members of Todmorden Town Council about signing the Pledge.

September 2017 -

The UN International Day of Peace starts with the symbolic raising of the Peace and Respect Flag at the Civic Centre, before a visit to Crompton House School where a peace pole is unveiled, then onto Hulme Grammar School where the Pledge to Peace is signed, finally the Annual General Meeting of the Oldham Pledge to Peace Forum is held with a guest speaker Vijay Mehta who as our inaugural Peace Day lecturer signs the Pledge for Uniting for Peace.

Meanwhile, Maria holds a Peace Writing, Arts and Crafts Workshop with 31 children at St Josephs RC Primary School in Shaw.

On 23rd Sept the fourth Oldham Peace Day Celebration Event is being held at Gallery Oldham / Oldham Library.