

Women in Black UK Newsletter

Fall/Winter, November 2019

An event to commemorate and celebrate Cynthia Cockburn, beloved friend, sister, mother, grandmother and a pillar of Women in Black, will be held on 4 January 2020 in London. It'll be an afternoon of reminiscences, readings from some of Cynthia's books, and songs she loved writing and singing, led by Raised Voices choir. Please RSVP to CelebratingCynthia@acronym.org.uk

To read an eloquent tribute to Cynthia, please follow this link:

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/24/cynthia-cockburn-obituary?CMP=share_btn_link

Excellent news from Leeds! In August of this year, a new Women in Black group was formed in this city and they are holding vigils focusing on Israel/Palestine. Around 15 women gather in silence at Dortmund Square from 1 until 2 pm with large banners that say: End the Occupation and Free Palestine. If you know any women in the Leeds area, please invite them to join this new group. Their next vigils will be on 3 and 17 December and you can get in touch with them via their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/womeninblackleeds/> or email address:
leedswomeninblack@gmail.com

Borth and Aberystwyth Women in Black held a vigil for peace and laid a white poppy wreath at Aberystwyth's war memorial as part of the Remembrance Sunday ceremony. This group held their first vigil in 2009 when the Royal Welsh regiment were given the freedom of the town and marched through Aberystwyth with fixed bayonets. There were only three women and they attended the ceremony dressed in black, in silence and with two placards saying: Imagine Peace. Since then they have had numerous vigils in response to events, rather than regular happenings. They are organising a "Cofiwch Gaza / Remember Gaza" vigil on 30 November with a young Palestinian woman living locally. Pat Richards from WiB Borth and Aberystwyth says that it would be great to have contact with other Women in Black vigils and share materials.

In January 2020, Women in Black Portsmouth will have maintained the vigil for 15 years. Congratulations! The group meets the first Saturday of the month between 11 am and 12 noon, facing the naval base in Portsmouth. Sarah Coote from WiB Portsmouth says: "we are a small group but are pleased to continue this witness." After the vigil on 4th January, the women shall have lunch together and WiBs from other cities would be welcome.

Women in Black Edinburgh had a baking, jams and bric a brac stall at the annual fundraising day for Scottish Medical Aid for Palestine on 28 October. During the event, some objects were auctioned and that helped raise the total to well over £5,000. Dr Andy Ferguson, Director of Programmes with MAP, was an excellent speaker. To see photos of this day and of the group's weekly vigils, please go to
<https://www.facebook.com/womeninblackedinburgh>

Pat Gafney recently retired from Pax Christi and since then she has been standing with Women in Black London. In this podcast, Pat and Liz Khan, also from WiB London, talk about their experiences within the pacifist movement in the UK, and explore the relationship between feminism, pacifism and non-violence.
<https://www.history.ac.uk/podcasts/staff-podcasts/women-and-peace-activism>

Last month Pat visited Israel/Palestine to renew contact with Pax Christi partners and to be in solidarity with peacemakers in the region. In Jerusalem, Pat stood with Women in Black during their hour-long silent vigil held every Friday. At the end of the vigil they were all verbally attacked at by a group who protests regularly against WiB. Pat adds: "Jerusalem Women in Black's witness is inspiring against the insult and opposition they face. One delight of the visit was passing on a card from WiB London with messages of love, admiration and solidarity." You can read a detailed report of this particular vigil written by a member of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel:

<https://eyewitnessblogs.com/2019/10/31/i-have-few-positive-feelings-for-the-future/>

The Network of Oxford Women (NOW) is planning an alternative carols and collection in aid of Medical Aid for Palestinians on Thursday 19 December. They will meet outside Fair Trade shop (St Michael's at the Northgate church), Cornmarket, Oxford, at 5:30 pm and will sing for one hour. Women in Black Oxford will be supporting this event in silent vigil.

The dates of the next international WiB gathering have now been confirmed. The conference will take place in Yerevan, Armenia on 22, 23 and 24 of May 2020 and it is being organised by WiB Armenia, a group formed by young and energetic Armenian activists. They very much hope that many UK WiBs can attend the gathering and they are grateful for any advice you can give them regarding funding. More information about the gathering will be shared via the WiB International Mail List, which is managed by Lieve Snellings from WiB Leuven. If you want to be added to this list, please contact her at: lieve.snellings@telenet.be

Filmmaker Sue Crockford stood with WiB London for many years. She was essential to the early women's liberation movement and a courageous, committed and kind sister in our struggle. She will be greatly missed.

https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/aug/12/sue-crockford-obituary?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Women in Black member Rebecca Johnson writes about the demise of the INF, women's activism at Greenham and the importance of the UN's new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/02/trump-putin-nuclear-treaty-greenham-common>

Women in Black London signed up to this letter to the Guardian, initiated by the Network for Police Monitoring (NetPol) and concerned with the police's use of domestic extremists as a means of stigmatising protest and individual campaigners. Although WiB London has not been directly affected by this, many of the campaigns we are associated with (anti-nuclear weapons, anti-arms trade), and several individuals, (for example some women involved in Aldermaston) have been so labelled. The letter was signed by 152 campaigners, lawyers, academics and journalists.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/17/domestic-extremism-is-no-way-to-describe-peaceful-protest>

We found a post on Twitter about a vigil held by Women in Black Cambridge in early November, but unfortunately we do not have the contact details of this group. We are attaching a photo of the vigil and if you recognise any of the women, please ask them to get in touch with the editors of the Newsletter at: wibinfo@gn.apc.org

Remember to visit <http://womeninblack.org> where you can find information about the vigils around the world. If your group is not listed on the UK page <http://womeninblack.org/vigils-around-the-world/europa/united-kingdom/> or the details are not up to date, please contact wibinfo@gn.apc.org and details can be added or amended. If you're looking for materials for your vigils, please take a look at the page of the London group <http://london.womeninblack.org>, where you can find the leaflets/petitions that the group hands out each week.