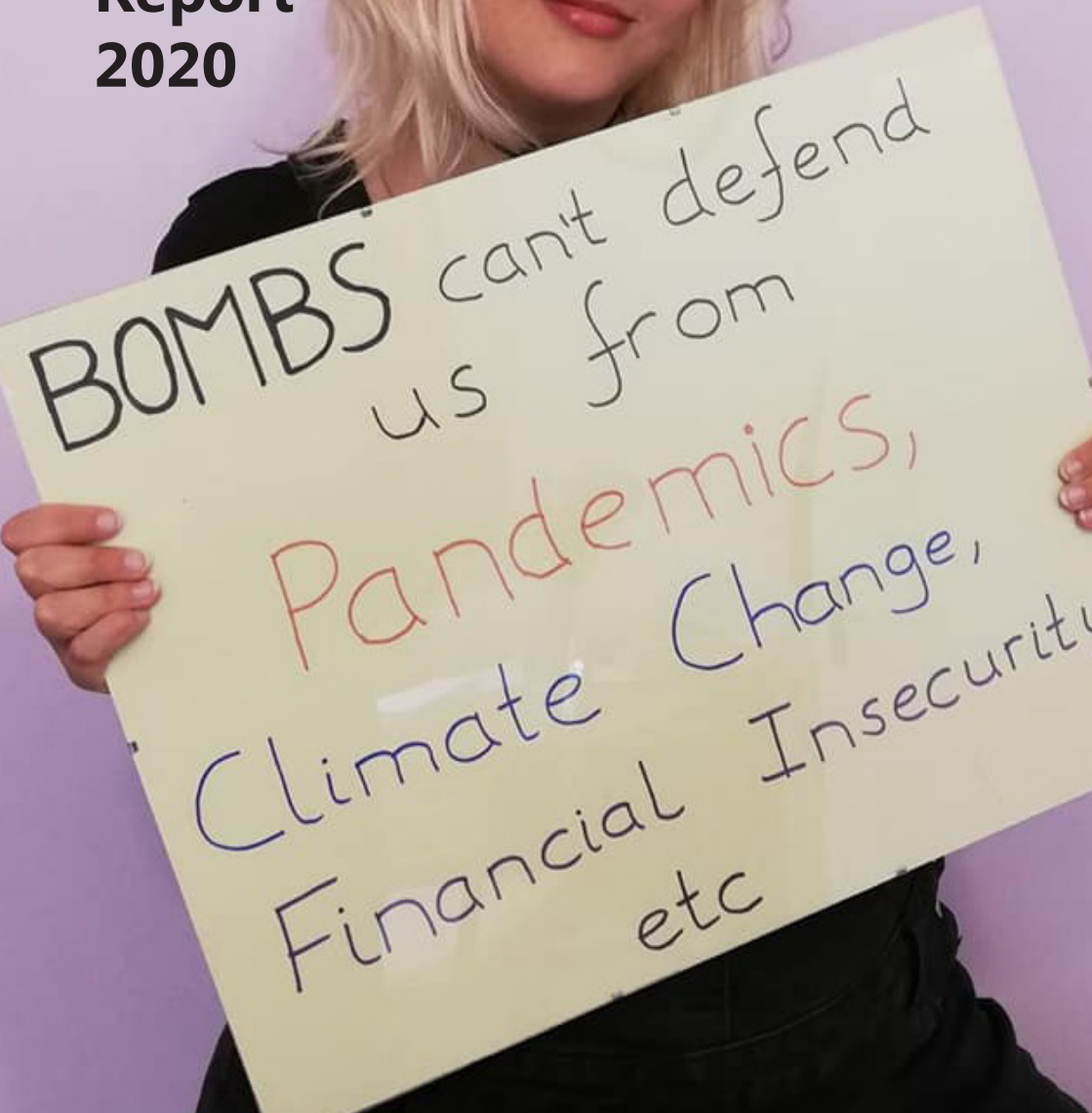


Peace Pledge Union

Annual
Report
2020



BOMBS cant defend
us from
Pandemics,
Climate Change,
Financial Insecurity
etc

Introduction

In 2020, the Covid pandemic came as a deadly reminder that bombs and bullets cannot make us safe. As the pandemic exposed the lies of military “security”, militarism was met with resistance – from a community defeating plans for a new RAF base in North Wales, to teenage pacifists resisting an arms industry event online to a sharp rise in the number of schools ordering our white poppy-based resources in the run-up to Remembrance Sunday.

Covid had practical implications for the PPU, with our small non-hierarchical staff team moving to home-working from March. Meetings of PPU Council have been held online as have public events such as our Alternative Remembrance Ceremony. The switch to remote working has thrown up practical and political questions, as we have sought to communicate in new ways while also seeking, for example, to find ethical options for online conferencing software.

The PPU welcomed the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the challenge to resist the structures and systems of racism. We have also been aware of the need to allow ourselves to be challenged, and our Diversity and Inclusion Working Group has sought to make sure that we will not settle for simplistic answers.

Due to Covid, we had to postpone plans for regional training events to support grassroots resistance to everyday militarism. This did not prevent several campaigning successes, as you will see in the following pages. We have seen a rise in membership and the creation of the PPU Youth Network. In the spring, we were able to learn from pacifists around the world through an online meeting of War Resisters’ International.

In the run-up to Remembrance Day, we were pleased to see an increase in white poppy orders from individuals, although the closure of shops and other outlets affected white poppy sales overall. The closure of schools affected our educational work but we adapted our online resources to make them suitable for home education and social distancing.

The speedy creation of vaccines against Covid has demonstrated what can be achieved when people work across borders for common ends. Let’s continue to campaign for a world in which co-operation is the norm, not the exception.

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Peacebuilding and Nonviolence

Education has featured strongly in the development of the Peacebuilding and Nonviolence stream of the PPU’s work over the past year. In January, Saffron Gallup was appointed as Education Service Manager.

Educational resources on the Peace Pledge Union website have been updated and expanded. New resources have been developed, including a worksheet for VJ Day, looking at the end of World War Two from a range of perspectives, and book-based activities for younger students. Other resources have been adjusted to ensure that they are suitable for home-learners and are Covid-appropriate (for example, co-operative games). Lesson plans and information have also been made available to download from the TES (Times Education Supplement) lesson resource website.

A refreshed Remembrance and White Poppies resource was developed and distributed as part of a new Taster Pack as well as with the existing Education Packs. Over 300 Education Remembrance packs were ordered this year, despite many schools and colleges being closed. This increased interest from schools and parents/ carers was reported in the Telegraph and a number of educators contacted the PPU to share videos and presentations they made for assemblies or remote teaching. A follow-up email that was sent to all those who ordered the resource resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback; comments centred on the clarity of the information provided and how helpful the resources were in starting conversations and offering alternative perspectives on remembrance.

The PPU continues to be an active contributing member of the Peace Education Network, for instance working with Quakers and Anti-Racism educators on a response

to updated curriculum recommendations for Relationships, Sex and Health. We are working with a collective of other organisations to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We have established more followers on the Facebook Education Network page and Instagram account. The PPU Education Network has expanded and now receives a quarterly Education e-newsletter.

Youth engagement has increased this year through participation in the International Week of Action Against the Militarisation of Youth. We are currently supporting a student to develop a Peace Society at her Sixth Form, which will act as a pilot for further student participation. Information for students is now available through the Education section of the PPU website.

We are grateful to Bill Hetherington who continues to add to the PPU's extensive database of British conscientious objectors and to Jan Melichar for his ongoing work on The Men Who Said No project.

Everyday Militarism

Amidst the pandemic and lockdowns of 2020, militarists found new ways of spreading their ideas and practices into everyday life – and we found new ways to resist them.

In January 2020, we joined with our allies in the Campaign Against Arms Trade and other groups to protest at an upmarket hotel in London that was hosting a networking dinner for arms dealers. Two PPU members blocked an entrance by lying down. Several attenders approaching the building turned away when they saw the protests.

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A major PPU plan for 2020 had been a series of regional training events to support people in making plans to challenge militarism in their own communities. We worked with local activists to plan such events in York and Cardiff for the spring, before the Covid pandemic led us to cancel them. Much of our energy went instead into the Healthcare Not Warfare campaign (see "Military Spending and Recruitment" below). We quickly challenged attempts by the military establishment to misuse the pandemic as an excuse to promote their own power, demonstrated by the presence of military leaders at government coronavirus briefings.

We welcomed the Black Lives Matter protests that took off in June. Azariah France-Williams, a Black Lives Matter campaigner as well as a peace activist, was among the speakers at an online PPU event about everyday militarism in September, making clear the links between racism, militarism and colonialism. Debate about how British history is remembered led to national media interest in the PPU's longstanding opposition to the statue of Arthur "Bomber" Harris in central London. The PPU acknowledged the need to allow ourselves to be challenged about our attitudes and practices as well as to challenge others.

The PPU was quoted in the media in August when the Ministry of "Defence" advertised for a new Director of Diversity and Inclusion - in the same week that it was revealed that the UK military are providing training to several of the world's most homophobic regimes.

In November, members of the PPU Youth Network drew attention to the reality of an online event run by World Skills UK, which was sponsored by the arms company BAE Systems and all three armed forces. Portrayed as a general careers event for young people, nearly half of

the sessions were about careers in the military or arms trade. The *Great British Bake Off* star Nadiya Hussain pulled out of speaking at the event, apparently in response to a letter from the PPU Youth Network pointing out the reality of BAE Systems. PPU members who attended the online sessions found their polite but challenging questions were deleted from the “chat” box – but not before at least some of the other young people present had chance to see something of the reality behind the facade.

The resistance to the World Skills UK event is a reminder that new situations require new tactics. It’s also an encouragement: wherever everyday militarism appears, there are people prepared to respond with everyday resistance.

Military Spending and Recruitment

The lies of military “security” were exposed by a pandemic that could not be defeated by weapons or military rhetoric. This was also the year in which the UK government announced the largest percentage increase in UK military spending since the Korean War.

In March, the Peace Pledge Union launched the Healthcare Not Warfare campaign, calling for the “defence” budget to be spent on defending us from real threats such as Covid and climate chaos.

Our open letter on this issue was signed by 19 organisations, including Medact, CND and Scientists for Global Responsibility. We suggested that as well as providing additional funding for the NHS and social care, military money could be diverted to support people losing their jobs in the pandemic and people whose mental health was affected by lockdown. In an online day of

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action on 17 April, hundreds of PPU members and allies posted on social media, with photographs of themselves holding up messages such as “PPE, not warplanes” and “You can’t nuke a virus”.

We expressed thanks to everyone tackling Covid, including individuals in the armed forces. We added that these people’s skills could be better used as part of well-funded civilian emergency services, rather than as a secondary function of an organisation whose core purpose is to engage in violence.

Throughout the year, the PPU spoke up about what else armed forces were doing: the RAF continued to bomb Daesh targets in Iraq, claiming that there were no civilian casualties despite evidence to the contrary. We backed calls by the Campaign Against Arms Trade for an end to arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and we pointed out that UK armed forces are supporting the Saudi regime through military training. When the RAF planned to turn Llanbedr Airfield in Gwynedd into a new training site, the PPU worked with local residents and Cymdeithas y Cymod to challenge them. The likelihood that Saudi pilots would be trained there – as they are at nearby RAF Valley – was one reason for the local outrage. In August, the RAF backed down and ditched the plan.

In the autumn, we campaigned against the Overseas Operations Bill, nicknamed the War Crimes Immunity Bill, which would make it even less likely that UK troops would be prosecuted for war-related crimes. We pointed out that UK troops are almost never prosecuted for such crimes as it is.

One of our biggest challenges came in November, when the Prime Minister announced an increase in military spending of more than £16bn over four years. This was shortly after MPs voted against extending free

school meals into school holidays in England. We pointed out that the military spending increase could have funded the school meals scheme for 53 years. The Leader of the Opposition welcomed the rise in military expenditure, but we challenged all politicians to have the courage to stand up to the militarist lobby.

Remembrance and White Poppies

Although the pandemic has prevented people gathering in person, this has not stopped pacifists marking important remembrance events in 2020. As Remembrance Sunday approached, white poppies started to appear in video calls and PPU members around the UK planned innovative ways to mark the day. The generosity of our volunteers, who offered to pack white poppies individually or at home, was overwhelming: one household broke the record with 1,000 packs in a week.

We began the white poppy campaign with a call to remember Yemen. The PPU has repeatedly condemned British complicity in the war, which has led to tens of thousands of deaths and left millions facing starvation.

There were many encouraging signs of widespread support for an alternative approach to remembrance. Our new educational resource for primary and secondary levels, designed to open up discussions around Remembrance Day, has led to a big increase in orders from schools and teachers. Welsh-language white poppies, with 'Hedd' written in the centre, became available for the first time in our online shop and were positively reported in Welsh media.

In spite of COVID-19 restrictions the number of people ordering white poppies increased in 2020. At the

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same time, many shops, places of worship and other outlets were closed, leading to a drop in the total number distributed to around 50,000.

The National Alternative Remembrance Ceremony happened online. Many people were sad not to be able to be in Tavistock Square where it is usually held, although the online format allowed more participation by PPU supporters outside London. Over 330 people joined the event and more than 2,000 had watched it online within the following 24 hours. The event featured videos and photos from around the UK showing socially distanced white poppy ceremonies and wreaths being laid, with moving performances by Yemeni-Scouse poet Amina Atiq and Scottish singer-songwriter Penny Stone.

International Conscientious Objectors’ Day on 15 May saw another collaboration, involving the PPU and 11 other organisations in the UK. At the livestreamed ceremony, Niat Chefena Hailemariam from the Network of Eritrean Women spoke about those resisting conscription in Eritrea. Actor Michael Mears presented a video performance based on testimonies of Second World War conscientious objectors.

On the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May, the government called for national celebration, while official commemorations of VJ Day in August made almost no mention of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On both occasions, we called for remembrance of all victims of war, of all nationalities, in a spirit of mourning and reflection. We shared again the PPU’s original VE Day statement from 1945, which welcomed the end of the war in Europe and reaffirmed a commitment to working for the “true victory” of “justice and lasting peace”.

Financial Report

	2020 (Unrestricted)	2020 (Restricted)*	2020 (Total)	2019
INCOME				
Membership subscriptions and donations	21,506		21,506	12,061
Sales of white poppies and publications	46,384		46,384	69,648
Donations and appeals	14,373		14,373	17,746
Grants – education programme		45,306	45,306	
Grants – other	10,676		10,676	8,500
Legacies and memorial donations	4,234		4,234	36,054
Other income				1,384
Total income	97,173	45,306	142,479	145,393
EXPENDITURE				
Staff costs	74,168	33,765	107,933	76,752
White poppy campaign	17,744		17,744	26,497
Education and research		1,641	1,641	
Publications, promotions and website	2,019		2,019	4,965
Conferences and travel	1,398		1,398	5,641
Office building, supplies, equipment, utilities	25,735	4,099	29,834	20,793
Legal and professional	4,856		4,856	12,658
Postage costs	4,722		4,722	9,624
Other expenditure	2,862		2,862	3,674
Total expenditure	133,504	39,505	173,009	160,604
Surplus/(deficit)	(36,331)	5,801	(30,530)	(15,211)
Cash at the end of 2020	76,401	5,801	82,202	

The Peace Pledge Union wishes to thank:

- Peace Research and Education Trust (PRET) for their funding of the PPU's educational and research work, including our Education Service Manager role.
- Voices for War and Peace, for supporting our education programme.
- All our members, supporters and those who bought white poppies in 2020.

The number of people ordering white poppies increased this year, but many outlets were closed due to the pandemic, leading to an overall reduction in income. This was partly counteracted by an increase in membership subscriptions and the additional donations that members often make when subscribing. We will be prioritising fundraising in 2021 to ensure the PPU's financial sustainability.

**The restricted income shown above was donated to fund the PPU's Education Service Manager role (salary and overheads) and other aspects of our education and research work.*

PPU Council 2019-2020

John Andrews, Albert Beale (Chair), Lucy Beck, Amy Clark-Bryan, Simon Cole, Peter Glasgow, Chris Henderson, Bill Hetherington (Treasurer)

PPU Council 2020-2021

John Andrews (Treasurer), Albert Beale, Ed Bridges, Bruce Cadbury, Amy Clark-Bryan, Peter Glasgow (Chair), Chris Henderson, Bill Hetherington

PPU Staff in 2020

Kathryn Busby (Operations Manager), Saffron Gallup (Education Service Manager), Symon Hill (Campaigns and Communications Manager), Geoff Tibbs (Remembrance Project Manager), Anya Nanning Ramamurthy (Remembrance Project Intern, October-November)

We are very grateful to PPU volunteers in the London office and around the UK, without whom our work would not be possible.



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