

War began on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, and we gathered in Queens Square to hold a noisy vigil. At noon the following day, we organised a rally at which John Marek AM, Janet Ryder AM, and Brian Matthews of Trinity Church, spoke of their opposition to the attack and their disappointment in the government. That grim week ended with an All-Wales demonstration in Aberystwyth on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. WAW took a coach to this event, which showed the strength of feeling against the war here in Wales. It was a beautiful, sunny day and the streets of Aberystwyth were filled with colourful peace flags and music as we marched up to the castle to listen to inspiring speeches in English and Welsh.



We held a further "die-in" in Hope Street on the 27<sup>th</sup> with the casualties representing not only civilians but also soldiers. The 29<sup>th</sup> saw some light relief in the form of our benefit gig at the Memorial Hall. Several local bands played in support of the cause. We raised over £250 to fund our campaigning activities.

In April WAW's correspondence with Ian Lucas MP regarding his position on the war in Iraq finally reached its climax. On Friday 11<sup>th</sup> ten members of WAW visited Ian Lucas in his office to confront him about the contradictions in his position and to ask that he demand the immediate return of British troops from the Gulf. When he refused to enter into a discussion, we staged a sit-down protest refusing to leave until he would listen to our concerns. This occupation followed a demonstration for peace where over a thousand stick figures, representing the people who had died so far in Iraq, were drawn on paving slabs in the centre of town, starting with British soldiers outside the Army Recruitment Office and continuing with civilian casualties covering the pavement all the way to Queens Square.

Also in April, our banner-hanging protests over the Wrexham bypass began. During the morning rush hours we tied a 20 ft banner on the bridge over the bypass reminding people that although most of the shooting had stopped, the problems facing the Iraqi people were far from over.

*(Top: Aberystwyth Demo. Right: 2nd "Die-In")*

During the Easter period, we made two trips to Fairford USAF Base. Seven WAW members travelled down to Gloucestershire to support the peace camp, which had been there since the middle of February. The B-52 bombers that took off from the base to fly to Iraq carried illegal depleted uranium and cluster bombs, and the base was a threat both to innocent Iraqi people who were subjected to the bombing and local residents.

In May Wrexham Against War was relaunched as Wrexham Peace and Justice Forum at a packed public meeting with guest speaker Jo Wilding. Jo was a "witness for peace" in Iraq who movingly recalled her experiences in, and observations of, the country during the war. Local campaigners David McKnight and Owen Hardwicke added valuable contributions to the meeting.

May 29 was a national day of action against depleted uranium weapons. WPJF staged a street theatre event in the centre of Wrexham to demonstrate the evil effects of DU in an imaginative way. We have continued to campaign against illegal and immoral DU weapons by raising the issue with local MPs.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> June members of Wrexham Peace and Justice Forum joined the Mid-Wales Peace Group to stage a peace stall at Newtown Festival. In spite of being denied a pitch by festival organisers, we claimed a space right in front of three Army Recruitment trailers and remained there for the whole day, effectively preventing them from spreading their militarist propaganda at this family event.

June also saw the first issue of the Wrexham Peace and Justice News. This has become a regular publication communicating information and ideas about local, national and global issues of peace and justice to our friends and supporters. The newsletter is one way we hope to carry the campaigning spirit of our first year into the future. As you can see from the events mentioned in this article, we have achieved a lot in Wrexham by street events, raising awareness through regular articles and letters in the local media, putting pressure on our MPs and holding public meetings. Thank you all for your support. We look forward to being even more active in our second year.

