

KEEP SPACE FOR PEACE!



Below are some extracts from Lindis and Anni's report on the Menwith Hill demo:

"It was a beautiful warm Autumn day. The Yorkshire Dales looked stunning - but rudely interrupted by the perimeter fence, coils of barbed wire, CCTV cameras, radomes and an excess of police and police horses. Welcome to Menwith Hill - the reality of the US militarism of the Dales. People of all ages came dressed in the theme of a 'celestial body' - wonderful costumes. Sheffield Samba Band arrived with energy, colour and fantastic rhythms..."

"Christine Dean (Treasurer of CAAB) introduced Dave Webb (Convenor of GN) and Chris Davies (North West England MEP) who spoke about the weaponisation of space and the fact that the UK gave away sovereignty to the US authorities many years ago. Steve Hill facilitated a brilliant drumming workshop. Veggies of Nottingham provided the yummy food."

Lindis Percy (Joint Co-ordinator of CAAB) and Dave Webb (GN Convenor) took people on a guided walk round the base. This time we actually managed to get round the whole base (over policing prevented the walk on 4 July). We stopped at various points... The two Space Based Infra Red System radomes which will be crucial to AMD were pointed out. There was a heavy police presence blocking access all round the base."

For me, the most moving moment was when Christine invited us to turn our backs on the base for a minute's silence - remembering all those killed and injured because of the continuing violence in Iraq, especially the innocent civilians and all the children caught up in the conflict. As we adults all stood silently with our heads bowed and a WPC even switched off her radio, the happy chatter and giggling of our children continued, which just served to remind me of all the children in Iraq who died and all those survivors who have little reason to laugh.

The police stopped the traffic on the main A59 while we toured the base, even though it would have been quite possible to continue to use one lane of the road. We wanted people to know that a demonstration was happening, so some of us stayed for a while on the A59 with the Fairford "Independence from America" banner after the main demo had passed on. At first the police said that the road would stay closed for as long as we remained there, which was ridiculous as we were standing on the grass verge, but we didn't budge and eventually the road was re-opened. Reaction to the banner was excellent, with approximately half the passing motorists waving and giving us thumbs-up signs, not bad considering they'd probably been sitting in a traffic jam for half an hour or so on our account.

I had been doubtful about going to Menwith Hill on my own, but I'm so glad that I did. It was great to meet up with Brenda and Kate from Fairford again, to make new friends like Patricia from Yorkshire CND who so kindly offered me a bed for the night, and Joe who is conducting a one-man campaign in North Yorkshire to get policemen to display their numbers (we photographed some who weren't and who refused to do so), and to meet Anni and Lindis who are an inspiration to all activists. Oh, and the drumming workshop was brilliant too. I hope that next time there's a demo at Menwith, we can fill a minibus from Wrexham!

The last word goes to Anni and Lindis, who said after the demo:

"We are even more determined than ever to stop the American Missile Defense System from becoming a reality."



For more information, have a look at these web sites:

www.caab.org.uk

www.takethepeace.org

www.space4peace.org

www.freeflyingdalesnetwork.co.uk

CAAB desperately needs funds to continue its vital work. Donations to Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases, 8 Park Row, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 1HQ.

Photographs: Opposite page: Radomes at Menwith Hill.

Above: Samba band at the main gate. Above right: The Fairford Independence Banner on the A59.