

NEWSLETTER NO 21
DECEMBER 1988

Catholic Peace Action

7 PUTNEY BRIDGE RD
LONDON SW18

Dear Friends

Greetings to you all during this Advent time. We hope that you, with your friends and families will be able to celebrate a hopeful and joyful Christmas.

As another calendar year comes to an end we look at our peacework and see that our time is more circular than linear. The pattern of actions and events flow into one another, never coming to a clean cut end but rather growing and creating a very different sense of time and place. As you read through this newsletter you will see invitations to join us once more in a

whole range of things which will have become 'traditions' for some and be new to others.

A quick look back at happenings

In October we had a very successful day with Christian CND, Pax Christi and FOR looking at the proposed Guidelines paper for Ash Wednesday 1989 (enclosed in the last mailing). About 35 people came to the day and through group work and discussion we were able to come to an overall agreement about the procedure for preparation and participation in Ash Wednesday. A leaflet inviting you to take part in Ash Wednesday is enclosed.

The CPA retreat also took place in October. Seven of us spent a very fruitful weekend together ,sharing on what had brought us into peacework, using Mark's gospel as a basis for our reflection and getting to know one another more closely. One positive outcome was a commitment to hold another retreat in the Spring. Please think about joining us .

At the recent Pax Christi annual meeting Ray, Carmel and David made presentations and ran a workshop on Catholic Peace Action and non-violence. Something from their input is included.

Now to the future

Ash Wednesday Affinity Group

CPA will be forming an affinity group for resisters who want to prepare for the day. If you would like to be a part of that group the first meeting will be on Sunday 18th December 7.30 at Pat's home (69c De Laune Street, Kennington SE17. Tel 735 4907)

Carol singing at the Ministry of Defence

This is one of the 'traditions' we have established at the MoD. We invite you to join us on Monday 19 December from 4.30 - 5.30 for carol singing at the MoD. A group will gather to sing Christmas greetings to workers and handout a Christmas leaflet to those in and around the building. This is always a joyful time and it would be good to see you there.

New Year Eve Party

Dan and Carmel extend an invitation to join us in celebrating the New Year. The party will be at their home (CPA address) from 8.00. To get into their house, ring the bell on the left hand wall of the main double door entrance to St Joseph's School. Please bring some food or drink to share at the party.

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Low week fast 1989

Another 'tradition' is the low week fast and vigil of prayer for peace. Last year we were able to maintain a presence at Westminster Cathedral, during the Bishops Low Week meeting and at the Ministry of Defence. The dates are from Monday 3 April to Thursday 6 April. The fast lasts for 72 hours. If you would like to join us at either fast please get in touch as soon as you can. If you are unable to come to London but support the fast and can join us from your own home area please let us know - support and solidarity are important elements in peacework.

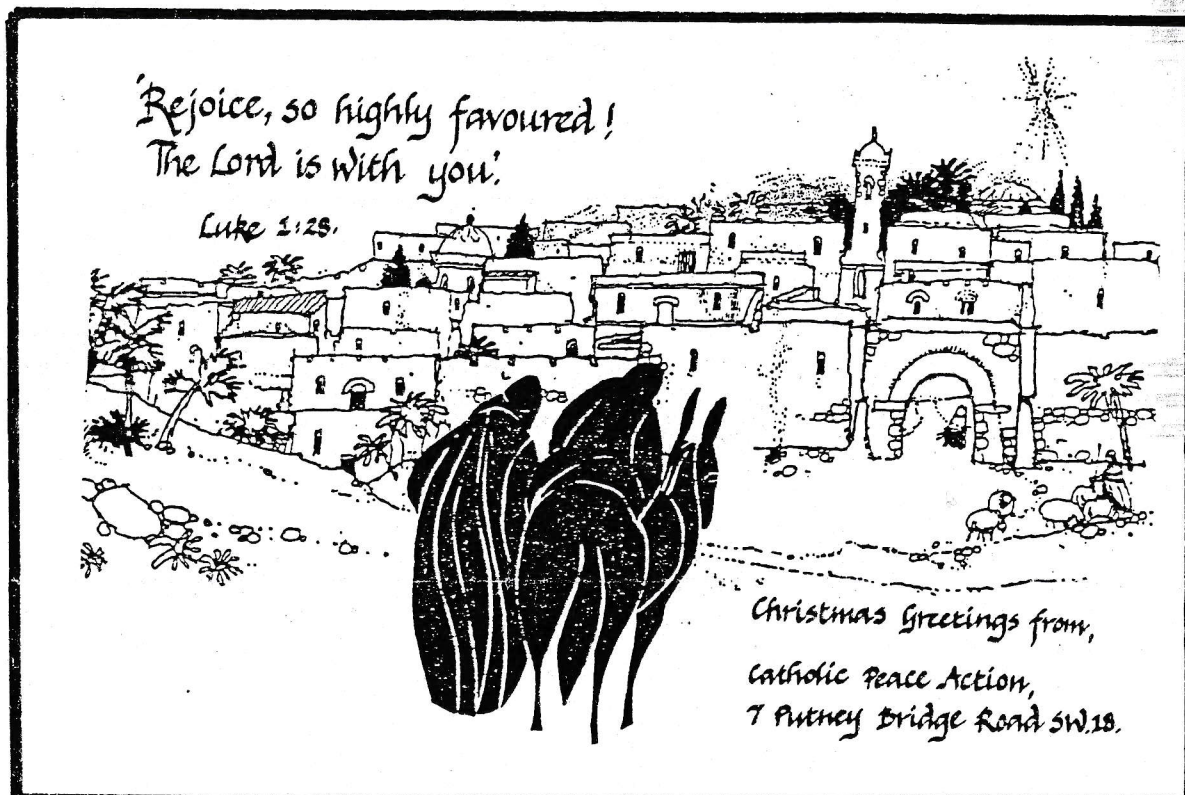
Once again, we thank you for your continued support. We love to hear from you so please feel free to put pen to paper and share with us your reactions and reflections to the newsletter so that we really can have a "dialogue" about peacework.

With our love and warm greetings for Christmas and the New Year ahead.

Catholic Peace Action *CPA*

Dan, Carmel, Daniel, Sean
and Clare Martin
Ray Towey

Sarah Hipperson
David Standley
Pat Gaffney



" Catholic Peace Action is a Christian community who believe that the policy of nuclear deterrence is incompatible with the will of God. In regards to nuclear war preparations, nonviolent civil disobedience is Divine obedience. Since 1983 we have engaged in periodic acts of civil disobedience at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, and have communicated our concerns to the MoD workers in a twice monthly leaflet."

Transcript from a session at the Maryknoll Summer School which Carmel attended in 1987. In this session Elizabeth McAllister and Philip Berrigan are responding to the necessity of civil disobedience in the life of Christians.

Elizabeth:....Now I don't want to sit here and say everyone must do C.D., that is not my place. I don't want to sit in judgement on people who have not done that. But I think we do have to sit here and look at the world we are living in and look at the kind of laws in this country that are oppressing the world we are living in and look at the problem which is civil disobedience. The fact that so many people are numb, silent and obedient lets this go on. that is the reality. Good decent people let it go on. What if we all said "no more". Not just all of us in this room, but all of us said "no more". Just imagine that and the strength of that level of disobedience to unjust laws. We might begin to imagine the kingdom taking root among us. So it is not in the spirit of accusation but in the spirit of hope that I think Mark is holding this up to us in his Gospel.

Philip:... Then you can go and check out the letter from Galatians. That's Paul's scrutiny of the law. this will be typical of Paul's appraisal of the law. He would say - this is the justness of the law, it crucified the only person who knew no sin. That's from Cor 2. In another quote from Galatians he would say - if you place your faith in the law you have fallen from grace. You have separated yourself from Christ. The reasoning behind a statement like that is simple. You are keeping the law of Caesar rather than the law of the Kingdom therefore, separating yourself from God's reign. You are divorcing yourself. Keeping in mind that the bible identifies the state with law. They are the same thing. So you cannot keep the law of God and the law of Caesar. You cannot and however hard a Christian might try it, we cannot.

To start with, a little allegory some of you may have heard. It seems that a Jewish prophet went to one of the market places. He saw the state of the city and he began to cry out against the crimes power and complicity of the people. Everyday he would come and scream at the top of his voice - murder, larceny, exploitation, the general kind of abuse of people against one another. Especially by the powerful. And the people would listen. Initially it was a novelty and then the novelty wore off. Still the holy person kept coming. Maybe after a while he was talking to noone. He kept crying out - this is what you are doing to one another. Finally a child came to him and said - why do you continue to come, noone is listening anymore. And he said - well, first I thought I could convert some of the people of Gomorrah, then I found I could not. What I am trying to do now is to stop the people of Gomorrah from converting me.

Now I don't liken our situation to Sodom and Gomorrah. Nonetheless, the prophets point is priceless (that is of what happens to us) when we stop agitating against criminality in high places. If we could keep in mind that we are corporate beings before we are individuals. That the corporate or the body side is far more important than the individual side. In fact, the individual side depends on the development of the corporate or

political side of us. We become only truly human, or in the eyes of the bible, God-like when we become corporate beings. We care for the body and protect it. So when we stop agitating against criminality which threatens the body, when we stop resisting it (our personal tendency to criminalise) the mainstream has us. The establishment has us and we have sold out to the highest or lowest bidder.

The story is told of Hitler being interviewed by a group of journalists before he invaded Poland in the late 30's. One asked him "how do you manage the unanimity of support you get from the German people?" Hitler reflected and said "You would be surprised how low the price of people is." In other words, if you want to play devil-God with people you can offer them what they want. You can buy them. He was an evil genius at doing that.

So to a large extent I think we must think of it in those terms - they are graphic and precise ones. Americans are bought and sold. If you are going to be commercial to the extent that we are in this country, you are going to be buying and selling lives too. When it comes to the bomb or the arms race or intervention policy, two fundamental problems come to the surface. First, the intention of the will to kill. Secondly, the law that legalises that will to kill. Kill means of course, in the context of thermo-nuclear weaponry, suicide. Global suicide at that. Obviously the intent to kill and the law are linked. They are bed fellows. Suppose some of you break the law in the hall of mirrors (Pentagon). Suppose some of you label it with blood - as the temple of blood. (More bloodshed is planned and carried out from that building than from any other in history.)

So the Christian symbol of blood is apropos here.) If you act in this way you get sent off to the icebox for 6 months or a year. But suppose you don't say that. Suppose you merely say to yourself - I have nothing to do with killing. I am against those weapons. I am against the government using them. Now, is that enough. No, it is not. Simply because your previous intent to kill has been institutionalised in the law. And we cannot withdraw it without challenging the injustice of that law. You can withdraw your intention, or convert it, only by breaking the unjust law.



(Below are the four concluding paragraphs from an essay by Philip Berrigan published in 1982. We think they will further clarify the point Philip and Liz are making above. A copy of the complete essay is available on request. editors)

Thoreau in his Essay on the Duty of Civil Disobedience secularizes a divine mandate: "dissent without civil disobedience is consent." Why is that? Because legal protest and dissent embody the notion that justice lies with the law, that redress can come from the law. Moreover, protest and dissent offer the State and its law vast credibility, further entrenching the myth that the law can undo what it has done, undo its own crime — the legalization of nuclear weapons and nuclear war.



That is the most deadly of illusions. Only the faithful can cut through the legal/lethal maze — taking the law into their own hands/life to assert the law of life — compassion, justice, love of neighbor. Which is it for us — God's law or Caesar's? We cannot keep both! So leafletting, letters to editors, prompting of elected representatives, rallies or vigils — any of the numerous efforts which aim to build public opinion, or to obtain better "law" — all of this is consent. And while we can be tolerant (and grateful) of others doing these things as their lives emerge; tolerant of ourselves also because family or community cannot temporarily bear another arrest — a criminal state remains immune as long as its law is. But we must cling to the substance of faith/justice/hope. We must honor God's law by breaking Caesar's — that is bottom line, that is reality. We can declare the Lordship of Christ over the Beast and its Bomb only by breaking a law which terrorizes everyone by the Bomb and the prospect of nuclear Holocaust. Only by doing this can we assert faith; only by doing this can we expose the law in its deceit and menace; only by doing this can we deliver and rescue the victims, including ourselves.

(Jean Dreze brought this letter back from a trip to the SOVIET UNION earlier this year. He took CPA material to share with a peacegroup he met there.)

Good day:

A family of Catholics greets you from the Soviet Union. Valerie Khasnoceyol and Annetta Khasnoceyola, in order to establish friendly contact and enable a strengthening of the Christian world.

We here struggle for peace, and so that little by little, very slowly, Christianity increases.

I think that frequent meeting and discussion, and also action, from both sides will lead to disarmament.

And so my wife and I invite all as guests. We would be happy to receive you, all who come to us and we will try to do whatever so that your trip to us in (our) country be interesting and enjoyable.

Respectfully,

Valerie and Annetta

GOOD BY:

(Valerie and Annetta's address is available from CPA)

(Carmel was asked to speak at the Pax Christi conference on Nonviolence held in Leeds November 1988. Below is the substance of what she said.)

In the short time I have tonight, I would like to tell you briefly of my experience and understanding of nonviolent civil disobedience.

For six years I have been a member of a peace group whose members are otherwise normally functioning people of this society. The word 'otherwise' refers to the fact that we have, since April 1983, set out deliberately to break the law at our local war establishment--the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall.

I have participated in activities which include the pouring of our own blood on that building, chaining the doors closed and refusing to give the key to the police, obstructing the entrances, writing on the building with blessed charcoal and scattering ashes.

With most of this activity we have been found by the MoD security or the police to be on our knees in prayer. We do not use prayer as some sort of gimmick, or publicity stunt. We come from prayer, community and discussions. We spent a whole year in prayer, community and discussions before we did our first nonviolent civil disobedience in April 1983. And even if we do not do anything too obviously illegal, we have found that it is illegal to pray too close to the MoD. The State likes to keep a certain distance between us and those who prepare for war. To pray on MoD property is to be charged with 'behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace.' The State would prefer that praying people confine themselves to churches and perhaps so do many Christians. But for me prayer, like faith, is 'a matter of geography' as Daniel Berrigan has said. So where we pray is important. The content of a prayer for peace is affirmed or negated by one's action and location. And last year we were threatened with arrest for singing Christmas carols too close to the Building, even though we were totally non-obstructive.

For this audience I don't feel the need to elaborate too much on why we do this, and for every one who does engage in civil disobedience the reasons will vary. But for me this civil disobedience is more properly called Divine obedience because it is an intrinsic expression of my relationship with God. To maintain a sincere relationship with God, 'to keep the faith' so to speak, to say a continual 'Yes' to God with any meaning, I must say a periodic 'No' to the State's willingness to incinerate creation. I see it as one task of the followers of Jesus to choose life and oppose death in all its guises. I see it as a matter of obedience to nonviolently interfere with the smooth, ongoing, daily preparations for nuclear war. So I do what I can.

The other part of the Group's work at the MoD is attempted dialogue with the staff. Jim Douglass once said: 'Resistance without dialogue is cynical but dialogue without resistance is sentimental.' Our attempts at dialogue take the form of a leaflet distributed to those workers who will accept them, twice a month. We have done this work since August 1983.

Though what we are doing is not considered normal citizenry, I believe it is normal Christianity. I do not consider myself specially gifted or strong or courageous or, as some people have said, prophetic. I, nor the rest of us, are doing anything which you or anyone else, in time and with preparation, can not do.

I do not enjoy doing this. My stomach churns at the thought of doing it again. I still face the prospect of either the bailiffs coming into my home and taking my property or a short prison sentence because I refuse to pay £18.45 incurred as a result of marking the MoD last Ash Wednesday.

I have the money to pay but I don't feel in conscience that it is right to pay. The £18.45 amount consists of £15 for court costs and £3.45 for the cost of cleaning the MoD. I don't see why I should pay the State (i.e. the courts, prosecutors, police) for arresting and prosecuting me for engaging in Christian activity. Nor do I feel it is consistent to pay to clean the MoD. My mark should remain there until our country rids itself of nuclear weapons. The warning and call to repentance should remain.

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The pain of doing civil disobedience comes, of course, because of the prospect of the consequences. I do not engage in such activity unless I am prepared to go to prison. Practically speaking no one should do resistance unless they are personally prepared to go to prison. It is always a real possibility. The option of paying a fine can not be guaranteed. Also to prepare for the worst is to be free. To accept the possibility of prison, which is the worst the Government can do to you here, is to have greater freedom to act in the spirit of love and nonviolence because it eliminates fear. I have found that by not being distracted by the threat of imprisonment I can more freely respond to the Spirit and speak with greater clarity in the court. But for me the pain of prison is not prison itself but the separation from my three small children, husband and friends. Being locked up is not very pleasant--the fear is worse than the reality--and fortunately, though I have been arrested six times I've only been sentenced once.

Accepting the consequences of my actions--in this case the possibility of prison--is, I believe, an essential ingredient of nonviolence. As a result of my actions I may be deprived of my liberty and/or property but I do not ever plan to cooperate by handing over my money.

While it is good to have ideals and a clear vision I understand that the living out of them is difficult. For example, once I did sign a 'bind over to keep the peace.' Our trial was three days before Christmas, 1983. I was emotionally and spiritually unprepared to be in Holloway over Christmas. I just could not deal with the thought of being away from my family, especially my two children then ages of three and one. So I try to prepare more fully now.

Since this conference is on the theme of nonviolence I would like to share a few thoughts on the difficult question of nonviolence versus violence as a method of social change. In my understanding of the Gospels and the example of the life of Jesus, I can only come to the conclusion that we cannot kill another person. If I believe that each one of us is made in the image of God, then how can I ever justify killing that unique part of God found in another human being? To do so is to make a mockery of the coming together at the table of the Lord in the Holy Mass, where we cherish each other in the universal church, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This belief is often criticized for being naive, simplistic and only possible for comfortable Christians in the first world. I've been told I wouldn't hold those views if I lived in Latin America or South Africa. Maybe not, but I am only able to respond to the Gospel in the context of my life. Of course, there are many ways to kill people. Our economics kills as surely as our arms trade and wars. The struggle for justice in other parts of the world would be easier if more people in the few over-rich, over-protected countries, like this one, lived more radically. The barriers to justice throughout the world find support there. While the choice for our brothers and sisters who struggle for justice overseas may be between active nonviolence or the armed struggle; the choice for us comfortable Christians is either active nonviolence or silent complicity with death in all its guises. A nonviolent ethic helps me see how I am part of, and participate in, violence at many different levels. My work against nuclear war preparations is only one aspect of my understanding of nonviolence. The point, therefore, is not nuclear weapons but nonviolence. And if I, as a Christian committed to nonviolence as a matter of principle, not just as a tactic, have nothing to say about nuclear weapons, which are the greatest concentration of violence in human history, then I have nothing to say about anything.

A turning point for me, or the point at which I can remember making a conscious decision to be more active in this work for peace happened in December 1982. Two events occurred. The first was the birth of my second son, Sean. While in hospital the second event occurred: This Government's decision to commit itself to Trident. I felt powerless, angry, and pain. The beginning of my son's life coincided with the beginning of the end of the world. I felt too the silence of the our Church at the time on this issue to be deafening. My outrage and anger increased as I made the connection in my own experience of the millions of mothers who are unable to feed their children. I will never know, I reflected, what it is, not to be able to stop my child crying from want of food. My cupboard is full. How easily and almost without thought could I pray
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the 'Our Father'; but what does that prayer mean when prayed by such mothers, especially the words: 'give us this day our daily bread.' I felt, and still feel, that our children's future is too important, too precious to be left in the hands of politicians or military leaders. So a time of great significance and what should have been a time of joy was mingled with feelings of despair, helplessness, and hopelessness. Ten months later I participated in my first act of civil disobedience.

Since then my despair has been transformed into hope. This hope accompanied by a renewal of faith is not psychological make-believe. Through resistance I've discovered that hope is a gift from God. It is tangible, and is made more abundant by the doing of justice and the making of peace. By participating more fully in the struggle, by risking more, I receive more.

Dear Dan and Carmel

Thank you very much for the latest CPA newsletter. I am writing because I want to thank you particularly for Carmel's "Statement in Court". Such courageous statements are always tremendously inspiring to people like me, and it is a great help to be able to read them. I am only sorry that I was not in Court on the day.

The second reason for writing is to say how very good I thought your "Proposals for Christian Civil Disobedience/ Divine Obedience". The document is obviously the fruit of what is now your very great experience of these things, but what has impressed me very much is how well you have resolved the tensions which I always felt underlay your early actions - the conflicts between prophecy and publicity-seeking. These now seem to have disappeared and we are left with a programme for a clear act of witness. Thank you for that, too.

Love and prayer

Ian Gardner
Tadworth, Surrey

Swords into Ploughshares Gathering

Stephen Hancock is organising this event and invites anyone 'interested in finding out more about the Ploughshares movement, and exploring its possibility in this country.' Contact him, c/o 69c DeLaune street, Kennington, London SE11. It will happen somewhere in London on 18 February. The day will include videos, information workshops, discussions, letter-writing to prisoners, and, hopefully, input from someone who has taken part in a Ploughshares action.

Dear Dan

I haven't quite 'got over' the Summer School yet, and long may that continue! It's certainly given me a lot to ponder on. One thing I am sure of, is that I'll never again be at 'peace' with the war machine and its system of class rule--'this filthy rotten system' as Dorothy Day described society dominated by the State and Capital. As silence in the face of injustice and impending nuclear holocaust, is consent and to be at 'peace', the question for me is how, where and when to bear witness to Christ's Gospel of peace and revolutionary social change? Sounds really heavy, eh? But with the help of the Spirit and dare I say, a sense of humour, who knows!

The Great Spirit bless you,
love, peace, and Christian anarchism,
Derek Innes

When Bail Conditions Have to be Abandoned

By Sarah Hipperson

On the 10th of August 1988, Cruise Convoy support vehicles started moving out from the Main Gate of Greenham Common, around 1pm. It was a complete surprise to me. The ratification of the INF agreement in May during Mr. Reagan's visit to Moscow coupled with the statement on television by George Younger, secretary of State for Defence, in HM govt., had convinced me that there would be no more 'convoys' after the treaty was ratified.

The day after the treaty was signed on the 8th December 1987 I appeared in the High Court in the Strand in Chambers in front of Justice Owen and argued forcibly to have my bail conditions, which had banned me from Greenham Common, varied. I had an indefinite ban imposed after I had appealed the conviction and three months sentence handed down by stipendiary magistrate Voelker, in a Newbury court. Justice Owen at first did not want me to address him, but later relented and allowed me to speak. I had to attempt to undo all the repeated lies in the press by the 'Greenham Women are Everywhere' that I had pretensions to leadership at Greenham; lies which the MoD and Crown Prosecution Service very quickly seized upon and repeated earlier in the Crown Court where I had failed to have my bail conditions varied. I told Justice Owen that I was no longer flavour of the month in the 'Peace Movement', and that aside from my family and a few friends I didn't think I had any influence of any kind.

He then asked me if I would agree to certain conditions: not to commit criminal damage; not to enter the base; not to obstruct any vehicles entering or leaving Greenham Common; not to incite others to do any of these, either. I agreed for the following reasons, which I stated. I said: 'Yesterday when the INF agreement was signed I realized I could agree not to take action on the 'Common'. I felt that I must trust that the signing of this treaty, to remove the Cruise missiles from Greenham Common, has been entered into in good faith and therefore there was no need for me to take further action; I have done everything I needed to do on Greenham against the siting and deployment of Cruise missiles.' On the basis of this statement, my bail conditions were varied and I was allowed back to Greenham after two months absence.

That banning experience is one that I shall never forget and one which had a profound effect on me. As I watched women continue to take action I had to discipline myself and remain outside of arrestable situations. When women entered the base I had to remain by the fire. I accepted all of this for eight months, but when that time came when I realized that in spite of signing the INF and the signing being ratified in Congress in May they continued to prepare for mass murder, that we had been lied to by the Sec. of State, that convoys would not stop after ratification--that there was no 'good faith', then I had to break my agreement and take action again. When arrested I announced to the custody officer that I had broken my bail conditions. He phoned the High Court and due to some mix up the message came back that I had no bail conditions.

I was free, when I expected to be on my way to Holloway for months. The latest message is that a mistake was made--my bail conditions stand. I go to court on the 8th of Sep. I await their next move.

(The above was first published in the 5 September newsletter of Yellow Gate Women. Address: yellow Gate, Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, nr. Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7AS. For a copy of the newsletter send them £1.25 plus p&p.)