

Hexham Peace Walk

Saturday 11th November 2022



100 people joined the peace walk organized jointly by Hexham Town Council, Hexham Town Twinning Society and Hexham Churches Together. The walkers were emphasizing a need for peace in an increasingly disrupted world.

Speeches were given by Cathy Booth from the Town Twinning Society and Mayor Derek Kennedy who shared words from Noyon's Mayor Sandrine Deschelles. Before the walkers moved to the War Memorial they had Ukrainian folk song, '*Oi u luzi charvona kalyna*' (adapted by Stepan Charnetsky 1913) sung to them by Hexham's Ukrainian residents. At the war memorial there was a reading from Ian McEwan's '*Black Dogs*' by Caroline Westgate.

The walkers proceeded across the beautifully autumnal park to Hexham Community Centre to find out about the prisoners of war that were housed there during WW2. Cllr. Suzanne Fairless Aitken read '*Human Beings*' from Adrian Mitchell's anthology; '*Tell me Lies Poems 2005 – 2008*' (Bloodaxe Books 2009). Una Clay-Wallers and Freya Villiers-Stewart sang their own song, '*The Peace Makers*'.

From the Community Centre the walkers walked alongside the Abbey and across the marketplace to the Old Gaol. At the Old Gaol, interesting information and facts were shared about conscientious objectors with Caroline Westgate reading an unpublished piece called '*Remembering Those Who Refused to Fight*', then Archie Aitken read his own poem, '*The Deserter*' (2019, unpublished)

The walkers moved along the side of the Wentworth Carpark and running track to the station where they heard John Cobb read Edgar Albert Guest's '*On Station Farewells*' (Hardpress Publishing 2014) and Marianne Corder read Choman Hardi's '*At the Border 1979*' from '*Considering the Women*' (Bloodaxe Books, 2015)

The Peace Walk returned to the park and were invited into St. Mary's RC Church, to take part in the final moments of the Churches Together in Hexham annual Peace Vigil or could go to St Mary's Church Hall to enjoy a piece of well-deserved cake.

