

## Who we are

British Pugwash is the UK arm of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, an international network of scientists and experts on international affairs, which seeks to inform government and the public on matters relating to science and world affairs.



Joseph Rotblat (right)  
with Bertrand Russell

Pugwash aims to bring scientific insight and reasoning to bear on threats to human wellbeing arising from science and technology, and above all from the threat posed to humanity by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. It is also concerned with questions relating to the social responsibility of scientists, and the quest for an end to war itself.

Pugwash was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995, shared with its co-founder and the organisation's most inspirational figure, Joseph Rotblat, in recognition of their "efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international affairs and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms". It was the first time the prize was awarded jointly to an organisation and an individual.

As an organisation Pugwash has made a unique contribution to the peace movement. Since 1957, it has provided a respected forum for discussion where scientists and experts from different backgrounds and political systems take part as individuals and not as representatives of any government, primarily in "off the record" meetings. This ground-breaking approach provides channels to transmit information to the highest levels of government. Its influence has been enhanced by its reputation for impeccable scientific integrity and lack of bias.

Pugwash has national groups in over 50 countries. British Pugwash has played and continues to play a major role in many of its activities.

# The History of Pugwash

The organisation was born during some of the most uncertain days of the nuclear age when, on 9 July 1955, Bertrand Russell issued the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. It was signed by Albert Einstein as the last public act of his life. The Manifesto, which called on world leaders to “learn to think in a new way”, was launched at a press conference in Caxton Hall in London, chaired by Joseph Rotblat, its youngest signatory, who worked closely with Russell at this time.



Participants in the first Pugwash Conference held in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, 1957

The statement received worldwide attention and led to the convening of the first Pugwash Conference in 1957, involving 22 participant scientists from East and West. The meeting was held at Cyrus Eaton’s lodge in the fishing village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia – hence the organisation’s name.

Topics included ensuring the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, averting the dangers of nuclear weapons, and promoting the social responsibility of scientists. These threads continue to be interwoven in Pugwash’s work today.

At this first conference a British Advisory Committee for Pugwash was set up, which evolved in 1963 into the British Pugwash Group, initially under the chairmanship of Sir Neville Mott. Other scientists, including Cecil Powell, Rudolf Peierls, Dorothy Hodgkin and more recently, Robert Hinde, have guided British Pugwash over the years.

## Pugwash role in international WMD negotiations

British Pugwash worked with International Pugwash to bring together scientists and public figures from both sides of the Iron Curtain to discuss some of the most sensitive security issues during these difficult years. The Pugwash Conferences have been widely credited with laying the foundations for some of the most significant treaties of the period, among them the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions.

Rising concern over radioactive fall-out resulting from nuclear weapons testing during the fifties and early sixties led to discussions on a nuclear test ban treaty. At a 1962 Pugwash meeting, US and Russian scientists developed the “black box” idea – the use of sealed boxes containing instruments to monitor seismic activity remotely.

This meeting, and international discussions which followed it, influenced the signing of the **Partial Test Ban Treaty** in October 1963.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty negotiation benefited from the sustained involvement of Pugwashites. At the 12th Pugwash Conference in Udaipur, India in 1964 the eminent Russian physicist, Mikhail Millionshchikov argued that the Soviet Union should have defences against ballistic missiles. However he subsequently recorded that he had privately come around to the anti-ABM position during a Pugwash meeting in 1964. He finally stated his opposition to ABM systems in public during the 19th Pugwash Conference in Sochi, USSR in 1969. A month later, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks began in Helsinki. The outcomes were the **ABM Treaty** and the **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) 1** accords of 1972.

Drafts of the nuclear **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**, submitted by the US and the USSR to the 18-Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva, were reviewed by a working group at the 17th Pugwash Conference in 1967, and proposals to increase their acceptability were developed. Recently, in 2010, Pugwash played an active part in briefing delegates to the Quinquennial review meetings of the NPT, assisting in achieving a positive outcome.

Pugwash has not only been concerned with nuclear weapons but with all weapons of mass destruction. In 1959 the series of Pugwash Chemical and Biological Warfare Workshops were instrumental in bringing together technical experts, official negotiators, and industrial and academic experts to help lay the framework for the 1993 **Chemical Weapons Convention**. This Convention owed a great deal to the activities of a British Pugwashite and former member of its Executive Committee, Julian Perry Robinson.

The 1972 **Biological Weapons Convention** resulted from close cooperation between Pugwash, the World Health Organisation and the chairman of the UN-appointed committee, Sir Solly Zuckerman. Today the Pugwash Working Group on Chemical and Biological Weapons continues to meet to aid governments and international organisations in the successful implementation and verification of these agreements.

A Pugwash study group on Conventional Forces helped to encourage the restructuring of force levels, setting the stage for the 1987 **Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty** and the 1990 **Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty**.



Russian physicist, Mikhail Millionshchikov at the 13th Pugwash Conference, Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, 1964

*“The quest for a war-free world has a basic purpose: survival. But if in the process we learn how to achieve it by love rather than fear, by kindness rather than by compulsion; if in the process we learn to combine the essential with the enjoyable, the expedient with the benevolent, the practical with the beautiful, this will be an extra incentive to embark on this great task. Above all, remember your humanity.”*

Last lines of Joseph Rotblat's Nobel Acceptance Speech, December 1995

## **International diplomacy**

Pugwash's role in “behind the scenes” negotiations helped to keep open channels of communication between hostile states. For example, in 1962, links between US and Russian Pugwash scientists during the Cuban missile crisis provided an unofficial channel of communication between governments.

Pugwash also played its part in bringing to an end the Vietnam War. In 1967, a Pugwash meeting including French, Soviet, UK and US experts (at which Henry Kissinger was present) laid the groundwork for a secret back-channel involving French Pugwashites and Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Viet Cong. Code-named PENNSYLVANIA, this initiative had the support of Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara (later a Pugwashite), and President Johnson. McNamara later said this back-channel laid “the foundation for the start of the negotiations between North Vietnam and the US in Paris”.

In recent years, Pugwash continues to serve as a bridge for dialogue across divides in areas of nuclear risk, in addition to its more traditional arms control/disarmament brief. It holds an ongoing series of “track 2” discussions on the security problems in the Middle East, including the Iranian nuclear issue. Meetings between Indians and Pakistanis have promoted progress on Kashmir, nuclear issues and other confidence-building measures. In 2004, a Pugwash delegation visited Pyongyang and exchanged views on security developments in the region. Since then, unofficial discussions have continued.

## **Widening horizons**

In the Dagomys Declaration of 1988, entitled “Ensuring the Survival of Civilization”, Pugwash called upon “all scientists to expand our concerns to a broad set of interrelated dangers: destruction of the environment on a global scale and denial of basic needs for a growing majority of mankind”. It formally recognised “that environmental degradation and large-scale impoverishment are already facts and can lead to a massive catastrophe even if nuclear war is avoided”.

# Joseph Rotblat

*“Let me, in conclusion, remind you that the basic human value is life itself; the most important of human rights is the right to live. It is the duty of scientists to see to it that, through their work, life will not be put into peril, but will be made safe and its quality enhanced.”*

Joseph Rotblat, Message to the Inheritors of the Manhattan Project 12 July 2005

It is difficult to write about Pugwash without mentioning Joseph Rotblat. He was a former member of the Manhattan Project, a pioneer of medical physics and one of the leading advocates of his time for the social responsibility of scientists. He was the only scientist to leave the Manhattan Project on moral grounds, which he did when it became clear that the Germans were not developing an atom bomb.

Rotblat worked tirelessly for the cause of peace, making a huge contribution to Pugwash workshops and producing numerous books on the desirability and feasibility of a nuclear-weapons-free world. His work significantly increased attention on the issue and led to the formation of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (1995), on which he served.

Rotblat often said that preparing for peace required education at every level. In his last years he increasingly saw the need to alert the public to the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation. He therefore initiated the WMD Awareness Programme, a public education programme that works in collaboration with other concerned NGOs. The Programme was launched by Joseph Rotblat and President Mikhail Gorbachev in 2004.

Always aware that he would not achieve his goals within his lifetime, Rotblat devoted considerable time to engaging with the younger generation and to mentoring students and young scientists. He nurtured an international Student/Young Pugwash movement as a counterpart to the senior organisation. As a Nobel Peace Laureate he also took part in the US PeaceJam education programme which he wished to bring to the UK. This was done by British Pugwash after his death. He died at the age of 96 on 31 August 2005.

## Rotblat and Pugwash

- 1957** Founding member of Pugwash
- 1957-1973** Secretary-General of Pugwash
- 1978-1988** Chair of British Pugwash Executive Committee
- 1988-1997** President of Pugwash
- 1995** Received Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Pugwash Conferences
- 1995** Elected a member of the Royal Society
- 1998** Knighted “for services to international understanding”.



Joseph Rotblat and colleagues at the 17th Pugwash Conference, Ronneby, Sweden, 1967

# British Pugwash today

British Pugwash is carrying on the work that Joseph Rotblat and his colleagues began. Activities range from regular public discussion meetings and public education events to working with policy makers and officials. Publications include in-depth scientific and policy research as well as letters and statements to the media.

British Pugwash believes that we are living in challenging times, in which many established patterns of domestic and international behaviour are being questioned, and that there is a very real opportunity to influence political developments by urging that decisions should be based on good science and rationality.

## Themes and projects

British Pugwash has embarked on a number of projects which reflect its range of interests and commitments and also respond to the changing scientific and political landscape. Current nuclear-weapons-related work includes:

### Public education

- PeaceJam and the WMD Awareness Programme engage particularly with young people, to inspire and empower them to take positive action for peace, and raise awareness of the challenges and dangers of nuclear weapons.
- Following a very successful lecture there by Robert McNamara in 2005, an annual Joseph Rotblat Lecture was instituted at the Hay Festival. Subsequent distinguished lecturers have included Sir Martin Rees (then President of the Royal Society), David Attenborough, Lord Ashdown and Mohammed El Baradei.

### Scientific and policy input into decision making

- The Nuclear Weapons Policy Liaison Group involves collaborative working with other experts to engage with government on the future of Trident in the short term, and on realistic ways of stepping down the nuclear ladder in the longer term.
- The Disarmament Institute project focuses on both the scientific and policy issues involved in moving towards multilateral nuclear disarmament, including technical matters relating to verification of nuclear weapons dismantlement.



Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon delivers the annual Rotblat Lecture at the Guardian Hay Literary Festival, 2009

- Linked to International Pugwash's work on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, British Pugwash has co-sponsored, with the School of Oriental and African Studies, a series of high-level meetings on the problems of moving towards a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East.
- In 2008, together with Croatian Pugwash, British Pugwash organised a NATO Advanced Research Workshop on "The role of independent scientists in WMD threat assessment", at which an interdisciplinary group of experts and policy makers from 12 countries discussed ways in which the technical advice to governments could be strengthened to aid policy formation in response to perceived threats.

### A widening brief

Hitherto the core competence of British Pugwash has been primarily in the area of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and we intend to continue making full use of that expertise. But we are also expanding our competence into the areas of energy policy and the environment.

In 2008 a working group explored options for the management of separated plutonium in the UK and produced a report: *The Management of Separated Plutonium in the UK* (2009). The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) subsequently undertook investigations into the three options discussed in the report. In February 2011 it published its preliminary conclusions and launched a consultation, to which British Pugwash submitted its response in May 2011. British Pugwash also submitted evidence to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee inquiry into the UK's nuclear R&D capabilities.



In mid-2011 British Pugwash organised a very successful public meeting on "Planetary Boundaries" (a topic which includes but is not limited to climate change) and has subsequently set up "Pathways to 2050", a working group on energy policy.

Professor Johan Rockström of Stockholm University explains the concept of 'Planetary Boundaries' to a British Pugwash meeting in July 2011





*“Not this year, not in my lifetime, perhaps in yours, and with a strong possibility in my grandchildren’s lifetimes, war will be seen as an unacceptable way of settling disputes between states.”*

Robert Hinde, December 2008

Alistair McGowan filmed in London’s Bethnal Green Road, ‘selling’ Trident missiles, for the WMD Awareness Programme’s ‘Don’t Buy It’ campaign

## Information

In response to a high level request for an overview of UK non-governmental work on nuclear disarmament, in 2011 British Pugwash produced a Directory of the UK-based NGOs and individual experts with a focus on the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The Directory aims to be useful to people seeking expert advice on specific issues surrounding disarmament. It could facilitate the dissemination of research and thereby enable better use of limited NGO resources, and also help groups identify partnership opportunities.

The Pugwash History Project is documenting the history of the Pugwash conferences and British Pugwash is now helping the project to archive and digitise publications and photographs held in its office. The Collected Papers of Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences are housed in the UK at the Churchill Archives, Cambridge.

The British Pugwash website gives detailed accounts of its work and its publications

[www.britishpugwash.org](http://www.britishpugwash.org)

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