

WFWP UK: Opening of the New Peace Arch in the Peace Garden, Watford

Francoise Murphy
June 19, 2022



On Sunday June 19, around eighty people gathered in the Peace Garden in Cassiobury Park Watford to witness the opening of the new Peace Arch and to thank all those who worked together to bring the Arch back.



The afternoon started with a presentation from Françoise Murphy, coordinator of the Watford Bridge of Peace, a project of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP). She told the story behind the original Peace Arch. She recalled how the incident of 9/11 had prompted her to reach out in friendship to the Muslim women in Watford and coordinated a Bridge of Peace, sisterhood ceremony between Christian and Muslim women. Women met under the Arch and became Peace sisters committing themselves to be bridges between their communities. This was on March 3, 2003, at the break of the Iraqi war. The Mayor of Watford witnessed the event and congratulated everyone for their commitment to peace and reconciliation. Over the years, other Bridge of Peace, sisterhood ceremonies were held inviting women from all backgrounds. In 2017, the Watford Bridge of Peace donated its Peace Arch to the Peace Garden. Unfortunately, in 2020 the Arch was destroyed twice to the dismay of everyone. The Peace Garden was then left without an Arch for a while until people from the community came together to bring it back.

Jeff Bateman, MC and team coordinator for the Peace Garden, a project of the Watford Interfaith Association (WIFA) spoke about the Peace Garden, a place of peace and tranquillity where everyone is welcome. He added: 'Peace begins with me'. He then introduced the following eminent speakers:

Mitty Tohma WFWP UK President gave a brief but comprehensive talk about the WFWP.

Cllr Rabi Martins, a friend of the Peace Garden, facilitated in the summer of 2021 a group of young

people from the National Citizen Service / Watford Football Club Trust to volunteer in the Peace Garden. At that time, they raised money for the Peace Garden just enough to meet the expenses for the new Arch.

Sri Mohan, committee member of WIFA, spearheaded the project with great zeal and determination. His friend Bob Smallworth skilfully welded the Peace Arch together following Sri's design. Another of Sri's friend handcrafted a beautiful sign with the lettering 'Peace Arch' and doves on both sides.



Watford Elected Mayor and MP congratulated all those who invested themselves in enabling to create great community relations in such a diverse town as Watford.



The ribbon was then cut by Ellarose, the daughter of Bob, who had just turn 9. Gifts were presented to Bob and his daughter as well as to Sri and Mitty.

Harjit Singh, Chair of WIFA concluded by thanking everyone for coming.

Refreshments were served in the Peace Garden on that beautiful sunny afternoon with the Arch now standing proudly at the entrance of the Garden, the door to a place of peace and tranquillity for everyone to enjoy.

Françoise Murphy

The opening of the new Peace Arch was recorded by Reamonn Bateman and can be viewed at this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrsQJOJpBus

For more information about the Watford Bridge of Peace: www.watfordbridgeofpeace.org