



Marianne Birkby
A R T I S T

28th April 2019

To the Rt Rev Julian Henderson,

As an artist with an interest in the natural world I have produced an exhibition called 'Powerful Yellow Monster' which explores the impact of uranium mining on indigenous peoples and their ability to use the land for food and water. The exhibition has been used in schools to facilitate philosophical inquiry and has been hosted at many venues including the well known Dukes Playhouse in Lancaster.



Powerful Yellow Monster Exhibition before being ordered out under threat of police action in the Lund Church Hall.

On Saturday 27th April the Vicar of the Parish of Lund ordered me to take down the exhibition and vacate the (paid for from 1pm to 9pm) Church Hall saying aggressively "do this within the hour or I will call the police." (I now regret not waiting for the police who I suspect may have been more reasonable).

Outside the Church Hall is a sign that says Lund Church Hall FOR HIRE ideal for Parties and Clubs.



Opposite the Church Hall is the Springfields Nuclear Fuel Manufacturing site so when anti nuclear campaigners were planning the peaceful “Surround Springfields” to coincide with the 33rd anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster the Lund Church Hall seemed an ideal venue for the art exhibition to run on the same day and I was delighted to be invited to do this.

The hall was booked and paid for months in advance. Flyers and leaflets were distributed in the local area about the Surround Springfields event which attracted peaceful, respectful people from all faiths and many elderly, both from the local area and as far away as Scotland and Somerset. As well as hosting the exhibition the Church Hall was also to be a duty of care, to be a place to shelter, in case of bad weather (it was) and a place to get a drink and use the facilities.

When I was let into the Church Hall to set up the exhibition at 1pm by a local lady she showed me the kitchen area and asked if we would be providing refreshments. I replied that I thought it would be mainly hot drinks as there was a refreshment van outside, the conversation was friendly and she said she would come back to have a look at the exhibition. In the event, the weather was bad so the refreshments were brought in. I had just finished assembling the exhibition when the vicar (who I had not met before) stormed in and shouted at me that I had lied and that I was providing refreshments and that we had to get out within the hour. When we asked him if folk, many of them elderly could at least use the toilets (not in the main hall) as we had paid for the use of the whole Hall for the whole afternoon and evening - he said no. Maybe we should have made it crystal clear (there were thousands of leaflets in the area) that the art exhibition was to be run in tandem with the Surround Springfields but there was no excuse at all for the aggressive and unreasonable reaction that the exhibition got from the vicar.

He did not want to discuss his grievance that he thought we had deceived him over the nature of the exhibition and link up with the ‘Surround Springfields’ but was abusive and not prepared to compromise at all in any way. It was clear his loyalty is with Springfields Nuclear Fuels and that is fair enough, they probably are very generous neighbours in terms of funding. But the vicar’s unreasonableness was unfair on the many elderly folk who had travelled miles for the event. Organisers had planned to host a webinar from the Church Hall from 5- 7pm with contributions from indigenous people from around the world who have been impacted upon by uranium mining. A new venue had to be very hastily arranged incurring extra costs. The testimony we heard from indigenous people is that their voices are silenced with regards uranium mining. The Springfields site has had numerous contracts with the same uranium mining companies.

The day was a huge success in that a peaceful event took place to highlight the impacts of nuclear wastes (uranium mining involves massive radioactive and chemical wastes) with the biggest number of people ever to bear witness outside the Springfields Nuclear Fuel site. However the

nasty taste of the vicar's unreasonable stance against peaceful folk will stay with me for a long long time.

Yours sincerely,

Marianne Birkby
Artist and founder of Radiation Free Lakeland



Image: David Penney is retired from the Ministry as a C/E Priest - just one of the many faiths represented at the Surround Springfields event to mark the 33rd anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. There was no visible police presence at this entirely peaceful event.

The Parish of Lund, St John, What We Believe

We are a committed Christian community in the Anglican tradition. We strive to be a place where the diversity of Christian belief and understanding can flourish so that we can witness with authority and integrity to the love of Jesus Christ in the world.

We believe in God who creates and sustains all things, so that we return regularly to worship for rest and renewal. We believe in God who animates, energises and inspires us, so that we translate our faith into enquiry and wonder about the world. Standing firmly in the historic breadth of Christianity in the Anglican Church yet rooted humbly in the awareness of our own boundaries and limitations, we strive to welcome all, to include all.