

Celebrating 25 years of RoadPeace - An overview of the first 16 years

Brigitte Chaudhry MBE, RoadPeace Founder & President

RoadPeace was founded on 8th February 1992 with the launch on that date of the very first 'Helpline for Road Victims' in the UK, indeed of the first UK helpline for any victims.

On 7th April 1993, the World Health Day dedicated to "the prevention of accidents and injuries", RoadPeace had its public launch – to focus attention on the many thousands of preventable deaths and hundreds of thousands injuries on Britain's roads. In the same month, RoadPeace received charitable status.

For the first 14-16 years, RoadPeace was run/led by the trustees and I worked more than full-time, often 70 and more hours a week throughout. The office was in my house for the first 6 years, where I also manned the helpline during that time, often receiving calls in the middle of the night as we did not specify hours. Later the helpline was manned from 9am-9pm by a team of helpline volunteers, of whom I remained one until 2008.

From 1998 – 2008, the RoadPeace office was in Harlesden, NW London – a 20 minute walking distance from my house. We had a few employees – for admin., m-ship database, book-keeping and for several projects, for example the London Community Project, for which we received a Lottery Grant, and the Against Aggressive Driving Project, funded by the Department of Transport – the only government funding we received during my time.

From 1998-2008 we had a wonderful full-time administrator (Rita Hare), who also did the book-keeping very efficiently when the external book-keeper/accountant became very expensive.

RoadPeace had four Chairs before **Cynthia Barlow** – **Peter Smith** was meetings Chair in 92, 93 and 94, followed by **Sandra Green** for the years 95 and 96. **John Stewart** (who is the key person behind the Stop Heathrow's 3rd runway campaign) became our Chair in late 1996 (until late 1999) after being on the committee from early 1995 - a fantastic campaigner who compiled our SafetyFirst magazine (27 editions) until Summer 2007 – a span of 10 years *- and who was great in media interviews, networking with related NGOs, and at conferences and meetings.

John Stewart remained on the committee until 2001 (then as Advisor/Patron) after he was succeeded as chair by **Zoe Stow**, who was a bereaved mother like me – her 15-year old son Alex was killed in 1995. One of Zoe's relatives found us through media publicity and Zoe attended our AGM in 1996, coming onto the committee in 1997. Zoe was great at taking care of the business side of RoadPeace, for which she had an interest and personal experience. Zoe was also a solicitor by training and had many excellent relevant skills, including for media interviews, drafting our annual reports and consultations, attending ministerial meetings with me and /or our patrons, etc.

Zoe Stow and I had a great working relationship and worked very effectively together as we complemented each other. I had been a primary school teacher for 20 years and was used to working with many different people, was used to working hard, to multi-tasking and always had new ideas for taking RoadPeace forward:

One of these was our Campaign for Justice for Road Traffic Victims (pdf attached), launched in 1998 – at first for 5 years, extended by another 5, until 2008. Part of this campaign was the launch of an All-Party Parliamentary Group for Justice for Road Traffic Victims, which was very active for 10 years (1998-2008) and made RP well known among politicians. I was

in charge of this Group for the whole 10 years - RP was the secretariat; this Group was not continued by others at RoadPeace after 2008. **This All Party Group counted at one time 150 MPs as members.**

Another was the idea to declare August as National Road Victim Month following the death of Princess Diana on 31st of August 1997 (the death of the first car victim Bridget Driscoll was on 17th August and we celebrated the 100th anniversary of her death **in 1996** with a huge march from Crystal Palace Station to the Crystal Palace grounds where Bridget Driscoll died (the banners read: 100 years of cars 100 years of carnage), where we gave speeches to a large audience - we were supported by fellow campaigner organisations, including FoE, LCC, Pedestrian Association (still then), against road building groups, etc. etc. - the Police were there in force seemingly expecting trouble!

On the day the death of Princess Diana was announced (it was a Sunday), John Stewart and I decided immediately on a Press Release expressing the hope that **"her death would be the turning point to the way road deaths were treated"**! I wrote and sent it out to all media channels, I remember that only one paper followed it up.....We/ I also sent condolence cards and the RoadPeace Guide through the Aftermath of Road Death to the Royal family - they thanked us. The RP Liverpool Group concentrates now on commemorating Diana's death during August RV Month.

Another was to have a RoadPeace Exhibition at the House of Commons' Upper Waiting Room and applying successfully and organising it (though not manning...) single-handedly - some MPs commented that it was one of the most engaging they had seen. The exhibition culminated with the Launch in that part of the House of Commons of RoadPeace's Guide for MPs with the then **Attorney General Lord Goldsmith**. The Exhibition was transferred to City Hall, where it stayed for a whole month.

Yet another was the idea for the "Stand and be Counted" demonstration (with banners: 'We are here to remember the ...300 people killed on our roads each month') on the Green outside the Houses of Parliament on every last Saturday of the month **for 6 whole years**, which were attended by RoadPeace members from all around the country. This is where I met Cynthia Barlow and invited her to the AGM and later Committee.

Still others were the introduction of Annual lectures each April, held in prominent places and given by our patrons in order to publicise RoadPeace's messages, the organising of Inter-professional conferences and collaboration on several projects, which involved much of my time and energy, but which were very worthwhile for RoadPeace: the Red Flag Campaign with a student from Sheffield Hallam University, the When Lives Collide photographic project, including an exhibit tour of the country with photographer Paul Wenham-Clarke (now Professor), the Remember Me Roadside Memorials campaign with Elaine and Matthew Sweetapple, where Cynthia was also involved.

Another major work included the establishment of the **World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims**, which is described below.

Throughout my 16 years of full-time work for RoadPeace, I was dealing with the designers and printers and all RP's printing jobs (including the Remember Me plaque, car stickers, leaflets, posters, X-mas cards, etc., etc.), besides collating/writing/editing the newsletters, also with checking the incoming mail and making decisions on responses and the content of

our various mailings.

RoadPeace had a great media presence in the early years, featuring regularly in the national and local press, on radio and tv. All our past and current committee members and many members were keen media spokespeople, whom we regularly briefed on all developments to give them the needed ammunition.

Amy Aeron-Thomas joined RoadPeace as a member after learning about us on TV or radio, and then asking for a meeting – probably around 2000. She was working as a researcher for the Transport Research Laboratory on projects in Africa. We started employing Amy for some of our projects when she was in London and not in Uganda or Nigeria.

In 2004 I became the president of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR) – the umbrella organisation of our sister organisations in other European (and a few other) countries, which RoadPeace joined as early as 1993 and of which I was the RoadPeace delegate until 2008 and an active contributor to the work of FEVR. I also organised two FEVR assemblies in London, along with conferences and press conferences – in 1996 and 2002. FEVR had UN consultative status from 1998 onwards. <http://fevr.org/> and I had been attending the Road Safety Working Party (WP1) in Geneva together with FEVR's Founder and 1st President, Prof Marcel Haegi, from 2000 onwards.

This my new role was very onerous, as in 2004 the World Health Organisation was elected by the UN to be the “Coordinator for tackling the global road safety crisis” and they set up the UN Road Safety Collaboration Forum (UNRSC), to which FEVR was invited as member, therefore I was representing FEVR on that Forum and became very busy. I had to travel quite frequently to Geneva and destinations in Asia and America, to Brussels, besides preparing for these meetings, communicating with FEVR member organisations and representing road victims' concerns at European and global levels, organising FEVR assemblies in member countries, etc., etc.

This coincided with Zoe becoming ill – her cancer had returned after 15 years and Zoe had to withdraw from RP work. Zoe sadly died in 2009.

RoadPeace started looking for a director, which proved to be quite challenging. An appointment we made did not work out beyond the probation period.

Amy suggested that she could be an Interim Director and she was appointed in 2006, at first only for 2 days a week as she was still working for TRL initially.

Cynthia Barlow became Chair in 2006.

By 2007, Amy was RoadPeace's Executive Director.

On 7th April 2008 RoadPeace held a conference at Church House Conference Centre – it was 15 years to the day from our public launch conference on 7.4.1993 at The Friends Meeting House in Euston and at the end of my speech I announced my stepping down from the day-to-day work of RoadPeace. My speeches from both those conferences are attached.

Amy, who lives in South London, moved the RoadPeace office to the current venue in 2008. Rita continued part-time for about a year, no other employees continued.

RoadPeace's work continued in a new office, with new staff and with Amy as Director.

The appointment of a consultant in 2014 – to deal with a critical situation that had arisen at RoadPeace - resulted in Beccie d'Cunha being appointed CEO in June 2015, confirmed 6 months later after the probation period.

I had a meeting with Beccie in June 2015 and also sent her various documents for information, to help her understand the history of RoadPeace and the background to the charity's aims and objectives and importance to road victims of its work.

Included was information about the **World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims**.

<http://worlddayofremembrance.org/>

To achieve that this Day became the global day it has become, I had worked consistently from 1993 onwards - bringing the idea of a joint Remembrance Day to the European Federation and working within FEVR for many years to promote it, then proposing to the World Health Organisation's Chair of the UN Road Safety Collaboration, Dr Etienne Krug, to choose our Day of Remembrance as a global day, in preference to a proposed global Road Safety Day, then working with the WHO/UNRSC on the UN resolution relating to its adoption by the UN, after that creating the World Day website - writing the text, working with designers, technicians etc. etc. ,even funding a great part of it, and communicating with partners on all continents.

On 17th November 2015 - one day after World Day 2015, in Brasilia, as part of the 2nd Global high-level Road Safety Conference - FEVR was awarded the Prince Michael Road Safety Award - for creating the World Day, received by the current FEVR president Jeannot Mersch and myself.

2015 marked 20 years of World Day observance and 10 years of recognition by the UN.



Jeannot Mersch, President FEVR from 2010, Prince Michael of Kent, Brigitte Chaudhry MBE

There are also newsletters that reflect what has happened during the first 16 years – I was involved in producing 50 RoadPeace publications = 23 newsletters (of about 20-pages) and 27 editions of SafetyFirst.

This is what John Stewart wrote in the last 2007 SafetyFirst issue:

"There have been 27 issues of SafetyFirst, spanning exactly 10 years. In many ways, SF has grown up with RoadPeace. It has seen RP develop from a small charity run by unpaid volunteers from their homes into an established organisation, with a sound financial base, that has become the authoritative voice of road victims in the UK. Its influence now extends beyond these shores. Brigitte Chaudhry, the RoadPeace founder, is the current President of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims. She represents road victims internationally, including at the United Nations and the World Health Organisation.

Throughout its existence, RoadPeace has remained the authentic voice of road victims, calling for justice for victims and a radical policy to cut danger on the roads. Its refusal to trim its sails has almost certainly meant it has missed out on Government funding which, inevitably, went to 'safer' organisations. But its radical pursuit of justice has won it lasting influence at home and abroad."