



Newsletter

May 2000

# Breast cancer cluster near Hinkley

Our campaign to shut Hinkley 'A' the aged, polluting Magnox stepped up a gear when in April we released Chris Busby's report on Breast Cancer deaths near the plant. HTV News, West Country News and Carlton TV all covered our story with interviews while *The Guardian* gave a lengthy summary of Chris' findings and most local and regional newspapers also carried the story as headline news. BNFL replied to the critical reports by trying to rubbish Chris Busby as a 'Discredited anti-nuclear campaigner'! (Dedicated might be a better word!- Ed). They also announced in March their plans to reopen Hinkley 'A' in early summer after more than a year of being shut down. There was no mention in Hinkley 'A' News about the forced resignation of nine directors in BNFL's recent shake-up, nor the revealing fact that they are conceding there should be public consultation on the life extensions of Magnox's like Hinkley 'A'. In many respects things are going our way...

The study commissioned by Stop Hinkley examining figures for breast cancer deaths near Hinkley Point shows a cluster in north Burnham and high concentrations in areas near the tidal River Parrett. This is the conclusion of Dr Chris Busby who in April published a damning report looking at links between silty estuary areas containing radioactive discharges and breast cancer mortality figures near the nuclear power stations on a ward by ward basis.

The study shows twice the number of deaths in Burnham North than would have been expected in the four years from 1985 to 1998. People in a five kilometer circle from Stert Flats, large drying mudbanks alongside Hinkley, were 43 percent more at risk, those

within ten kilometers at 33 percent greater risk and within 15 kilometers at 24 percent higher risk. Minehead North also showed a high rate of 75 percent greater risk than normal. Stert Flats were taken as the centre of the source of exposure for the study.

The rates fell off with distance from Hinkley Point except in wards near the River Parrett, a muddy tidal river with its estuary near Hinkley, which is likely to convey radioactive discharges inland. It was found that generally those living on land lower than 200 metres above sea level stand a 64 per cent greater risk of breast cancer mortality, for example on the Somerset Levels.

His theory is that radioactive particles get tied up with the mud which, when it

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dries out at low tide turns to dust and is blown downwind to be inhaled by those living nearby. The tiny particles are then absorbed into the body, damaging tissue and eventually forming cancer.

He says that for Burnham on Sea the impact is worse because of radioactive incineration discharges over many years blown downwind to the town which is relatively close to the station.

Interestingly rates were shown to be low for nearby Cannington and Comwich which Dr Busby attributes to the ward's geography, Cannington the larger village being protected from the effects of sea-to-land transfer by its position in the lee of a hilly spur.

Dr Busby points out that these figures are for *deaths* rather than *incidence* of breast cancer which would show much higher risks. But the figures are not available from the Regional Cancer Registry as they feel people could be identified from the statistics. Dr Busby argues that cancer victims usually want answers to how they got their illness and says the information should be available for studies like this.

He also maintains that current risk models used by the nuclear industry to calculate the likelihood of cancer induced by man-made radiation are shown by this and many other studies to be misleading and discharges into the environment should be halted now pending further research.

We held a public meeting on Chernobyl Day, April 26<sup>th</sup> in Bridgwater Town Hall where Paul Dorfman from the University of the West of England presented the

details of the report. We will also release the findings from further cancer studies as we receive them later in the spring.

### **Chernobyl Day Events**

To commemorate the world's worst nuclear disaster we organised some events in Bridgwater. Early in the day Bridgwater signposts were discretely added to with professionally made "twinned with CHERNOBYL" signs. These were complimented by thought provoking laminated signs repeating the words "Nuclear", "Unclear", "Unclean" on the approach road to Hinkley and the A39 near Bridgwater.

For several hours we ran a stall in the Cornhill in Bridgwater with a two metre square design depicting Hinkley 'A' with "Chernobyl?" printed above it. A continuous stream of people came to talk to us, mostly about their own concerns about the station and to hear more about the Breast cancer study which had been widely reported on TV and in national and local newspapers. Several spoke about their personal experience of cancer which they felt sure was connected with living near Hinkley.

A minority of pro-Hinkley people chatted with us, some of whom seemed interested to hear for the first time some of the concerns that Nuclear Engineer John Large had put to us about runaway scenarios at Hinkley 'A'.

Thanks to Peter Margerum for design work and great enthusiasm.

### **Public Meeting**

In the evening at Bridgwater Town Hall forty people gathered to hear three speakers.

**Paul Dorfman**, lecturer at the University of the West of England and

an expert on Nuclear Risk Assessment outlined the details of the Breast Cancer Study. Using a marine chart of the Bristol Channel he showed the fifty square kilometer mudbank between Hinkley and Burnham-on-Sea to which particles of water borne nuclear waste become attached. At half tide he explained the banks become exposed to the atmosphere and the fine particles get blown downwind to be inhaled by those living nearby and the blood system distributes the potentially deadly isotopes to different parts of the body.

He said that in the case of Burnham the effect is probably reinforced by inhalation of the incinerated waste from Hinkley, which is only five miles upwind from the town.

Paul also spoke of the effect shown in the Somerset Levels, possibly due to the tidal River Parrett whose estuary passes close to Hinkley through the mud flats off Burnham. Again nuclear particles could dry out on the river banks to be blown downwind onto the Levels where higher numbers of Breast Cancer deaths were found.

Paul's conclusion was that the government should release much more information on cancer *incidence* as well as deaths so that more studies could be conducted.

**Karalina Matskevich**, who lived in Belarus at the time of the Chernobyl disaster spoke of some of her experiences then and now. She reminded us of the translation of Chernobyl, "dark story" and spoke of the total black out of information at the time to members of the public who were the most exposed to the fallout. Her friends were conscripted to "clean up" the worst areas in a nightmare project which probably made

things worse by transposing contaminated soil to relatively safe areas.

She touched on the deaths and illnesses she had encountered and highlighted a recent report by the World Health Organisation predicting 50,000 thyroid cancer deaths in the Gomel region to the south of Belarus, where over a third of children aged under four at the time of the accident will die of the disease.

Karalina spoke of her concern about the prospect of Hinkley 'A' reopening in view of John Large's recent lecture.

**Humphrey Temperley**, Chair of Somerset County Council and former Secretary of the Consortium of Opposing Local Authorities which coordinated evidence against Hinkley 'C' at the Public Inquiry chaired the meeting. During an animated question session he said he felt the Emergency Plans at Hinkley were hampered by inadequate resources particularly in the regulating bodies.

I (Jim Duffy) spoke about the campaign to shut Hinkley 'A' and outlined the three worst case scenarios which John Large had put forward in his recent lecture in Taunton.

### **Bristol Public Meeting**

Held at the end of March featuring **Hugh Richards** from Wales Anti Nuclear Alliance and **Patrick Van Den Bulck** from National CND. Hugh gave details of the consequences of a Top Cooling Duct failure at Hinkley 'A' supported by his mathematics showing 'Embrittlement' at the station is equal to that at Trawsfynydd when it was deemed to be at the end of its life. He reminded us that in 1989 the Chief Inspector of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

described Hinkley's reactors as the worst on the system in terms of embrittlement after Trawsfynydd!

Patrick spoke about his work with the Environment Council where he (and Hugh and many other green organisations) have an ongoing dialogue with BNFL over issues such as Decommissioning, Transportation of Waste and Reactor Safety. The audience unanimously supported this approach to breaking down the barriers around the nuclear industry.

I spoke generally on our Shut Hinkley 'A' Campaign. There was a lively well informed discussion chaired by Gundula Dorey from Bristol Green Party who set up the meeting.

## Literature

We have a range of interesting books and magazines which are available at our public meetings or by post at up to half price. Please make cheques payable to 'Stop Hinkley'. Prices include postage:

*Cancer Mortality and Proximity to Hinkley Point, Breast Cancer*, Chris Busby. £1 or free to members.

*Wings of Death, Nuclear Pollution and Human Health*, Chris Busby. £6

*Chernobyl, Environmental, Health and Human Rights Implications*, Permanent People's Tribunal, Austria 1996.£4

*The Trace of the Black Wind*, compilation of Belarusian children's written work after Chernobyl. £1

*John Large Taunton Lecture* March 2000, Video tape 1hr 30 min. £3

*The Ecologist Special Issue 'The Madness of Nuclear Energy'*. £1

*Radioactive Times* Journal of the Low Level Radiation Campaign Oct 99. 50p

## Future Events

- **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 8.00pm Stop Hinkley Committee Meeting.** Bridgwater Town Hall. Open to all members. Ring for agenda papers.
- **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 11.00am Public Meeting in Weston-Super-Mare.** Speakers Paul Dorfman & Jim Duffy. Crossroads Centre, 1, Graham Road, Tel. North Somerset Green Party: Linda 01934 416717
- **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 8.00pm. Public Meeting in Wellington** at the Ship Inn. Paul Dorfman & Jim Duffy. Tel. local environmental group, CaraQuan: Stacey 01823 664776.
- **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June 7.30 pm. Public Meeting in Burnham-on-Sea** in the main hall of the Princess Suite. Speakers: **Dr Chris Busby**, author of the Breast Cancer Study and follow up studies on Prostate and other cancers local to Hinkley Point; and **Hugh Richards**, Coordinator of Wales Anti-Nuclear Alliance and key mover in the closure of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, currently involved in dialogue with BNFL over decommissioning of the plant. Not to be missed!
- **Glastonbury Festival, June 22-25<sup>th</sup>:** We plan to have a stall in the Green Futures Field, subject to confirmation. Come and say hello!
- **Low-Level Radiation & Health Conference.** 14-16<sup>th</sup> July, Reading. Tel. Pam on 0118 978 0148.

## Contacts

**Jim Duffy**, Coordinator. Rydon Lodge, West Quantoxhead, Taunton, TA4 4DW. 01984 632109, Mobile 07968 974805.

**Val Davey**, Membership & Treasurer. Tel. 01460 240241.

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