

Peaton Glen Wood Margaret Ferguson Burns 07.10.2024

I'm not long back from a week long work party, up at Peaton Glen Wood – bought by Scottish artist and activist, Georgina Mary Smith when the MOD put it up for auction in the mid-1990s, and now in the care of Peaton Wood Peace Trust. There were between 5 and 7 of us working throughout the week.

When planning the week we'd agreed amongst ourselves that we wouldn't carry out any campaigning actions relating to either nearby RNAD Coulport or over at HMNB Clyde; and would restrict our activities to exploring, mapping, discussion, planning, getting to know the wood and group a bit more, and lots of chopping, lopping, clearing, cutting, sawing, burning, demolishing - trees, bushes, seedlings, paths and unsafe bridges, aimed at restoration.

It's a truly amazing and beautiful place – a rare Atlantic/Celtic Rainforest – on the hillside bordering the Military Road which runs along the top, and stretching down to the shore road, a deep gully running along the southern edge - just a few minutes along from RNAD Coulport Main Gate at the roundabout, and not far along from Peaton Road. The Coulport bus from Helensburgh stops there once an hour – the next stop for workers at the base. The wood is used by locals walking through with or without their dogs; and on Friday afternoons agreement has been given for a Forest School to set up within the wood – lovely to see children from Kilcreggan Primary School appreciating nature and enjoying the wood with two very creative staff. Excavations, now filled in, have discovered old drove roads.

On Thursday 20th September the day started with a great deal of attention from the Polis (all sorts and many – MOD, Police Scotland and Community Polis too) - starting as we unloaded our loppers, chain saws, protective clothing and kit and my trusty pick mattock (not a wire cutter in sight - just a wee bit spray paint, ready to refresh the Peaton Wood sign once more).

We were harassed and questioned for hours as we carried on with our work (despite one of our party having reminded them at the beginning of the day that it was private land and they had no right to be there – of course the UK's MOD had already awarded themselves that right. We were outnumbered as we were closely shadowed wherever we went in the wood. One of our party was even followed to the compost toilet where a policewoman stood eye-to-eye with them across the low barrier – just like the loos on the Finnish/USSR border crossing when I was there in the early 1970s. When we were up on the top path working, we could see more police at the edge of the Military Road looking down on us – effectively surrounding us. It just seemed absurd and unnecessary. Later I discovered that two police vans had blocked in my wee car, well-kent in the area, and sat guarding it while more continually cruised the area.

A Nuclear Convoy was mentioned – and this went just a little way to explaining their concern, if extreme – though the Convoy Gate is much further up the Military Road and it would not pass the woodland. Much later it was confirmed that a Convoy had gone back down South that day.

And suddenly the polis disappeared into thin air. It seems (as we discovered even later) we had inadvertently engaged in one huge action, occupying all these vehicles and personnel for some considerable time, several hours – them worrying that we were up to something nefarious; us blissfully unaware. To cut a very longwinded story short, unknown to us (not our) King Charles III was visiting – and then he too was off, just like that, leaving us in peace and puzzlement. Who'd have thought?

A bizarre day, where all the King's horses and all the King's men will be able to tell their grandchildren about the day they were safeguarding a Nuclear Convoy, as well as defending their King from chainsaw and mattock wielding terrorists rampaging through the woodland leaving mayhem in their wake – and what a great adventure and honour it was...

<https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news/2024/september/19/20240919-the-king-makes-special-visit-to-submariners>
<https://www.thenational.scot/news/national/24597272-king-thanks-royal-navy-submariners-service/>
<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/the-king-royal-navy-charles-mod-b1183053.html>

I think Charles needs reminded that production, storage, testing, maintenance, transportation and decommissioning etc. of Nuclear Material, Weapons and Power threaten the climate, environments and lives at every stage, everywhere in the world – and that support of the UK's Nuclear-powered, Nuclear-armed submarines runs counter to his aspiration to become a Climate King. Very ill considered.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/charles-iii-1st-climate-king-experts/story?id=89749798>



Photos Shore Road at Peaton Glen Wood beside Loch Long © Margaret Ferguson Burns

