

POLLOK FREE STATE
30 YR'S
ON...

A Zine about youth activism at The Pollok Free State - by
Young People from Pollok



Born To

Be Wild!



A Wee Bit of History

Fifteen hundred years ago the great forest of Eastwood covered the lands south of Glasgow, giving shelter to the folk of the Damonii tribe and providing them with sustenance through farming, hunting and fishing. Five hundred years later, by migration and incursions, the mix was one of Celts, Scots, Angles, stray Norsemen and Saxons (e.g. Carnwadric - "the farm of Vadric")

Often land-hungry folk would arrive and try and muscle into the area. After some fisticuffs the intruders would either settle down or be repulsed. However, additional waves of invaders were very disruptive to peaceful pastoral and agricultural life and gradually it became necessary to retain the best fighting men on standby as a permanent charge on the community. But as Trotsky recognised (and he ought to know) if you put a gendarme in charge of a food queue he is unlikely to end up short of provisions.

So slowly but surely the protection racket known as the feudal system was established and in the place of the amateur crooks of Eastwood came a heavy professional team - the Maxwells. The Sir John Maxwell gang came here from the Borders in 1269 and proceeded to organise "their" territory between Pollok Castle in Mearns and Nether Pollok on the White Cart Water.

Like any mobster family they had changes of fortune. The Sir John who had Haggs Castle built was killed in an encounter with the Johnstones, a Dumfriesshire family, at Dryffe Sands in 1595. Always at pains to back the boss of bosses they succeed in allying themselves to the lost cause of Mary Queen of Scots at the battle of Langside. As a result they temporarily forfeited their estates. Having recognised the mistake of supporting a declining Catholic power in one century, the flexible Maxwells then went overboard for the Covenanters' Protestant cause in the next, with consequent social ostracism and a hefty fine (better than the fate that befell one of their

tenants at Cowglen who was hanged for his loyalty to the Covenanting cause).

By the late 18th century the Maxwell fortunes were fully recovered, for while confined to Nether Pollok, they had acquired considerable lands throughout Renfrewshire and further afield. The Maxwells were now successful gentry, a power in the land, fêted by government, aristocracy, captains of industry, the arts, universities etc, but one task remained. There was a certain residue of the middle ages disfiguring the estate - Polloktonn!

This was a substantial old village of some 400 adults in the late 18th century located opposite the new Pollok House and detracting from the arcadian vista. It had to go! So the people were uprooted and thrown out, their little houses demolished and their gardens destroyed. The only evidence of their existence is the vandalised dovecote opposite the weir. No trees grow on the site so if any archaeologist wishes to unearth a mediaeval village, it's readily available.

The Maxwells were, of course, great vandals. They destroyed farms, changed the course of rivers, hounded people from the land, accused folk of witchcraft and had them burned at the stake etc etc. But the strange thing is - they started to change! From a family that seemed to revel in the destruction of the great East Wood (because the more arable land, the greater the rents) they began to cherish it. Perhaps it's like the reformed criminal regretting his past.

Whatever the reason, the principals of the Maxwell family during the past 150 years have been champions of conservation and had a serious commitment to tree planting. The last Sir John Maxwell (died in his 90th year, 1956) founded the Glasgow Tree Lovers Society. He must now be birling in his urn at the spectacle of Wimpey emulating the worst example of his ancestors.



Reg. Sas.
GLASGOW.
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May 4, 1939.

3-4 p.m.

Presented by Allan W. Campbell, Writer, Edinburgh.

Agreement between Nether Pollok Limited and National Trust for Scotland.

This Agreement is made the Twenty-sixth day of April Nineteen hundred and thirty nine between NETHER POLLOK LIMITED, incorporated under the Companies Acts 1908 to 1917 and having their Registered Office at One hundred and twenty West Regent Street, Glasgow, C.2. (who together with their successors in title to the lands hereinafter described are hereinafter referred to as "the First Party") of the First Part and THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND for places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty incorporated by the National Trust for Scotland Order 1935 (hereinafter referred to as "the Second Party") of the Second Part.

WHEREAS (1) the First Party is heritable proprietor of the lands and others hereinafter described and is desirous that the said lands should remain for ever as open spaces or woodlands for the enhancement of the beauty of the neighbourhood and so far as possible for the benefit of the citizens of Glasgow; (2) the Second Party is by Section 7 of the National

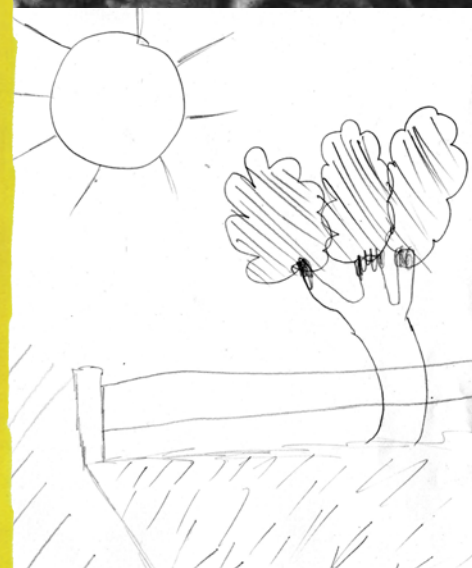
the subjects in favour of the Second Party, and (3) the First Party has therefore agreed with the Second Party that the restrictions after-mentioned shall be imposed upon the said lands and others and shall be real conditions thereupon.

ACTION! ACTION! ACTION!

The Pollok Estate was to be protected by the first conservation agreement ever entered into by the National Trust for Scotland. The Trust founder and owner of "the estate, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, wished to secure the amenity of open space and woodland FOR EVER..."For the benefit of the citizens of Glasgow"(conservation agreement 1939). The Regional Council is making a mockery of this and other protective legislation, revealing a massive gap between its pretentious green rhetoric and the harsh reality of their insensitive transport strateg Colin Macleod

THERE'S GOING TO BE AN OUTRAGE AND WE'RE STARTING IT,!





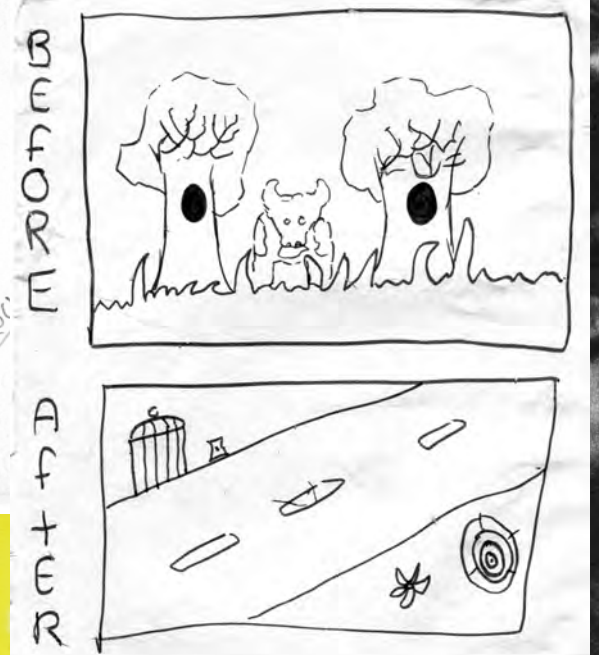
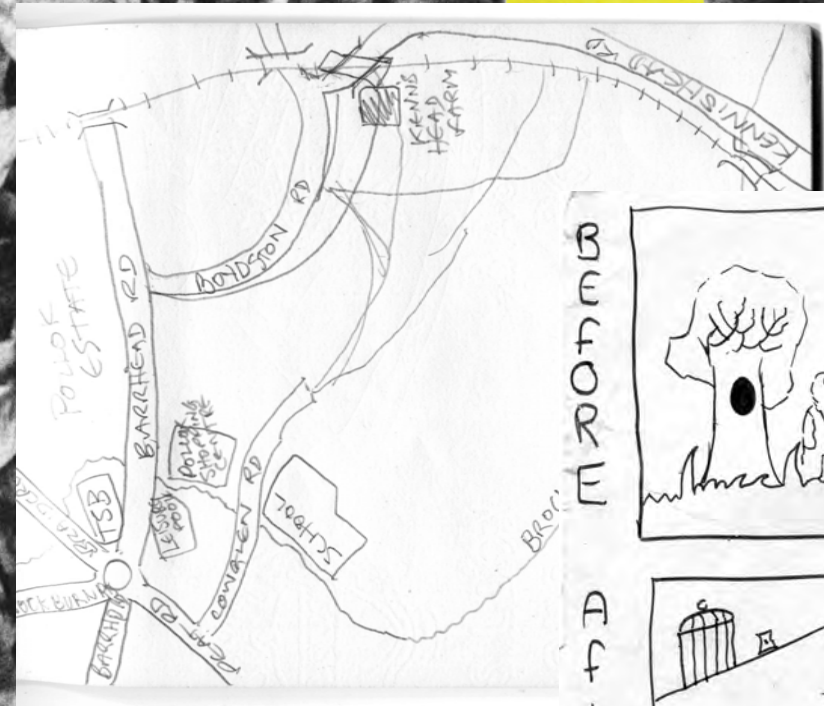
Vast sections of arable farmland, pasture, wildflower meadows along with rich corridors of mature woodland habitat are at stake. As time passes by people are becoming more alienated from nature, so we must not compromise this area which acts as an important connect point for people and nature. This unique city oasis is home to many wildlife species including a small number of roe deer. The greenbelt is part of the essential wealth of our city, not a luxury, but a necessary part of a healthy environment and our aim is to protect it. It's quite clear that the authorities dont care, WEVE GOT TO MAKE THEM CARE.

Colin Macleod



This is what Pollock Park would look like

NO M77 MOTORWAY THROUGH THE POLLOK ESTATE



HOW DID YOU MAKE THE TREE HOUSES?

We put on harnesses and climbed the trees, we made these frames, the funny thing about it is that we actually got architects... We never wanted to harm the trees, we wanted to protect these tree's, our park. Pollok Park was left to you and me, so it was decided therefore that we've got to be up the tree's. It was all roped on, so that we didn't harm the trees and that when we were done it could all come back down.



The Free State had its own university, it had classrooms, a library, kitchen, different areas designated for different activities. It had a garden, a forest garden and the treehouses - they were quite unique, but they were brilliant for what came in the end because they were a safe place for people to be in the trees. (Levi)



So I was born in Govan, very busy with houses, streets, cars and buses, and when I was 10 I moved to Pollok, on the doorstep of Pollok Park. It was like another world to me. I had never seen so much greenspace and I spent every weekend, every holiday, every summer in Pollok Park. Exploring and teaching myself about nature which you probably guessed because I'm a science teacher - and what that gave me was an 'in' to science - a passion and interest in nature. My best friends, two of whom are still my best friends now, we went to school together but we met through Pollok Park, hanging about, climbing trees, swimming in the river, (not that I'd recommend that - it's not very safe) but it's what I did, I loved it and I still do.

I didn't spend a lot of time watching the news when I was 12, 13, 14 or so, meaning I was unaware of The Free State until I literally stumbled across it one day. I remember vividly, me and two of my friends, we were just doing our usual walk hoping to go through to the river and have a wander through the woods etc. When we were met with a barrage of colour and people! It's a very quiet place Pollok Park, from the centre of the city it's where people go for that quietness - and it wasn't quiet that day. I didn't have a clue what was going on. I won't lie I was a bit taken aback, not scared, but I thought this is not normal and I remember we kind of side skirted it and went into the park as we normally did. But that night I remember I went home and I said 'Mum what was that all about?' And my mum started telling me about what was happening. And then I started thinking, well what would the impact be of that motorway going through, would that block the access for me and my friends and everyone in the local community? That was my big passion. Number one - that we might not have access to Pollok Park. Number two the impact on the animals, on the environment, on all these things that I'd grown to love. I got right drawn into the idea that we have got to do something to stop this.

I'm naturally quite a shy person and when I was young I was particularly shy, so in terms of getting involved in the strike and the movement I would never be front and centre but I felt I had to be a body and be there, so I contributed my support that way. (Peter Yuill)

'I feel really lucky that my role models were so full of magic and mischief and empowerment and they were really doing something powerful for our planet.'

I was 14 at the time, I went to a local secondary school Hill Park and the 48 bus took you along the Barrhead Road where the camp was. The reason I got the 48 bus was because it was a quieter route. School was quite rough, I didn't really fit in very well and I didn't really like it.

From the bus I spotted things happening, but it was my mum and her friend that went and investigated. They saw banners, they saw somebody up a tree and they took me once they had been down and thought this is ok. So all of a sudden I was surrounded by really vibrant colours, really passionate adults, people who were using their weirdness in a way that was different, to save these trees and stop this road. I became really aware of that and I thought it was great because I didn't realise that there were people here that were on the same wavelength as me! They were fighting for things that I believed in already and rather than just saying 'this is a fad or phase, you should get on with what you're doing,' - it was 'Join in! Wee mischief, Join in direct action! learn about it!'

The best, the most exciting, the most empowering, the most exhilarating memory was when we'd gone beyond soup round the campfire and they had already invaded the camp and tried to clear it and the road was really starting to become a reality, it was getting serious. It was proper direct action by this point, fences up and security was in and they were going to do car henge. So the guys had driven up with the cars and they were all painted and we had marched from the town and we got to the Free State and I was on the bonnet of this car and driving into the Free State, everyone was dancing and drumming. It was post apocalyptic and it was empowering and magical. The cars got rammed into the ground and they got burnt. It was really really powerful and it really stuck with me, it was quite scary because the adults were really going for it, it was really important. (Amy Quinn)



'We're goin on strike from school'

'We're gonna get oor point put oer that we're not going to school till we know this m77 ain't getting built, cos it's oor future health that's at stake'

'They're taking away oor park, oor environment and it's just not right'



By the year 2050, one fifth of our country will be covered with tarmac (Source: CPRE).

NO

I am worried but hopeful
I wonder who thought this was a good idea?
I hear they'll severe our access to vital greenspaces
I see activists, they're on our side
I want my children to play, laugh, breathe fresh air

I am worried but hopeful
I understand this will bring more money to the area
I say 'no amount of money is worth losing our natural resources'
I dream of running free, of picnics and long walks
I hope they'll change their minds
(Nurture Group, St. Pauls)



(Pupils from Bellamine Secondary School, 1995)

M77 parents stay away

By SIMON HOUSTON

Adult lack of support is condemned as truant pupils form backbone of protest

TRUANT children flocked to the M77 protest site yesterday — but their parents were notable by their absence.

About 50 pupils from three secondary schools formed the bulk of the latest anti-motorway demonstration.

It followed early-morning clashes between more than 300 security guards and police and a handful of environmentalists.

Tommy Sheridan, the Militant

councillor for Pollok, criticised parents for failing to follow their children's example.

He said: 'If the adults were doing a better job defending the environment for children to grow up in, children wouldn't have to protest.'

'I want to ask parents: Isn't it positive that your children are at least aware and concerned about their environment and they don't

want their lungs polluted by a motorway development?' He said pupils should act responsibly and speak to their parents and teachers.

But the councillor refused to condemn their truancy. 'We are 100 per cent behind their right to protest — it's their future health we're fighting for. They're more than welcome as far as we're concerned.'

Four arrests were made during the day, which saw the final major tree-felling operation before construction of the Glasgow-Ayr road begins.

Police and security guards struck at dawn, pulling protesters from tents and making two arrests as early as 5.30am.

Metal fences were put up for the first time, to keep children and

protesters at bay. Some protesters claimed they were punched and manhandled by police.

But road construction firm Wimpey hailed the operation as a great success, and said no more major tree-felling work was required.

A spokesman said that could mean a reprieve for trees within the Pollok Free State protest camp on Glasgow's Barrhead Road.

He added that an alternative route for an M77 slip road avoiding Pollok Free State, had been drawn up.

The spokesman said: 'We have looked at the design of the road to try to reduce the number of trees which have to be felled.'

DAILY MAIL 4/3/95



Some of the press was extremely negative about it, made it look like we were collecting children and influencing them negatively... but to say that is to down play the knowledge that these children carry with them. They couldn't go to school without seeing us... from the buses, from the street and slowly but surely they'd be joining in. Some of their brothers or sisters were involved, so they were very very well aware... Bellarmine school had just won an award for caring about the environment, and oh the irony, of them being told to take care of the environment whilst this road was going to pass by their school, In fact being about the demolition of their school, was hypocritical beyond belief, and they knew that. (Rosie Kane)

... really it was the kids organising themselves and we were just trying to put something around that to ensure their safety. But they were really articulate and had informed themselves about the issues, so we tried to create that space for them to exercise their right to protest as well (Gehan Macleod)

Guidelines for Kids :

suggestions to help you make the best of striking

- * You have a good opportunity to make a difference - make sure you don't waste it.
- * If you want people to take you seriously; act sensibly and responsibly.
- * Get yourselves organised if you want to get somewhere.
- * Try & get teachers and parents to support you.

When you are at the Free State:

(the same rules apply to you as well as adults)

- * remember - apart from animals, birds and trees, the Free State is also our home
- * treat things with respect - we can not afford to replace them
- * ask before you touch equipment/ climb treehouses etc.
- * try & leave things tidier than you found them - DON'T drop papers.
- * put things back where you found them.
- * sorry - but we can't afford to feed you all, so bring food with you
- * sorry again - but don't hang around after dark unless your with an adult.
- * look after your belongings
- * we can't stop you, but we'd rather you didn't smoke. If you must - do it out of sight - there are a lot of press around and it will be used against you and us.
- * keep off the roads
- * if you have any problems - tell a Free Stater - they'll try and help you out

When you are near Wimpey:

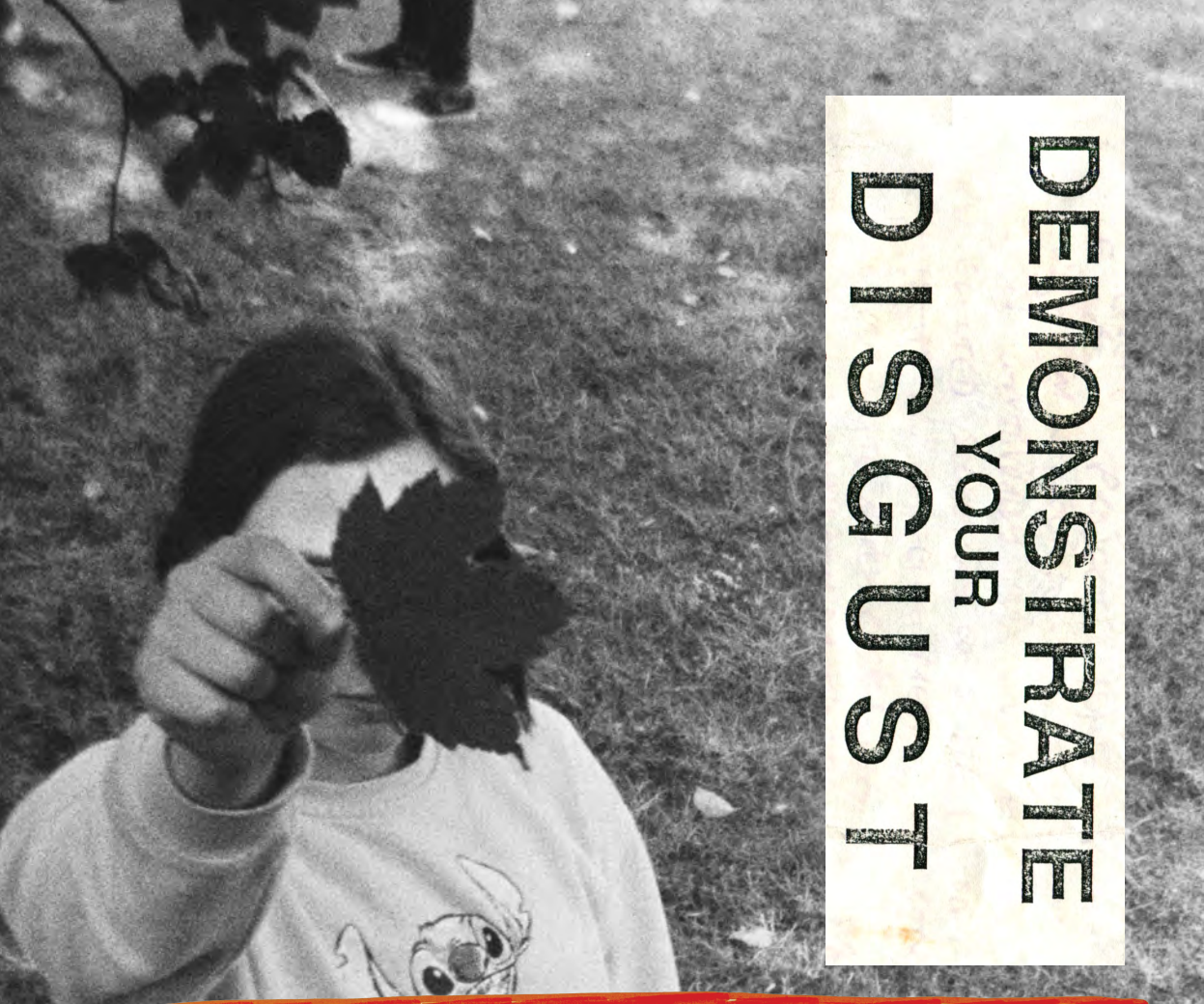
- * make sure there is an adult with you, to act as a witness etc. if anything goes wrong.
- * do not climb on dangerous machinery.
- * Wimpey are very worried about you getting involved - don't make it easy for them to write you off by acting irresponsibly.

Remember - your actions reflect on the Free State.

DONT GET INVOLVED WITHOUT YOUR PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONSENT

Signed Parent/Guardian

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT



DEMONSTRATE YOUR DISGUST

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE?

More important than ever, in the early days, where it was more the adults, I think the local society probably judged them, thought 'they're just there to have a moan, they're the kind of people that just like to complain about things!' but I think when you saw the local young people get involved it highlighted the genuine importance to people, and people started to take more note and listen a bit more... After all it's your guy's future and who are we to dictate what your local area will look like for you guys growing up. Everyone should have a say and I think it was really important to hear the kids' voices. Like I said I was shy, but I was always there, there in the background, chipping away with my pals because it was so so important. (Peter)

Bellarmine Students Union

1st year:- Lynsey Barrett
Mark Murphy

2nd year:- Louise Docherty
Stacey Ralph

3rd year:- Nikki Cairney
Laura Carberry

4th year :- Amanda Lang
Michelle McCaughey

Nikki Cairney

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These are the eight people who have decided to speak at meetings or interviews ect.

Things we have to get through to the press

* The adults of Pollok Free State are Not persuading us to stay on strike.

They are not forcing us into things
* we do not want to do and the things we do are our own choices.

Dear Allan,

How are you man? We're having a lot of fun down here in Pollok Free State. You may have seen in the media; the battle has begun and we're in the thick of it. However local support is flooding in, in a way we could not have predicted - the local school kids have gone on strike for the sake of the woodlands and their right to protest. Wimpey's task could prove impossible if things continue at this pace.

ROADS AND CARS CAN KILL PEOPLE AND TREES...AND POLLUTE THE ENVIRONMENT.

Of course we are all told that if we want to save the planet we must start the process in our own backyard....



I wish it never happened
I see a motorway that was never needed
I feel inspired
(Kira)

The man on the tree
The man protected the trees
Protested for the trees
(Leon)

Food for all to share
I remember there were dogs
Music box plays songs
(Zachary)



Can we go on strike?
A question about the Free State
That question was first
(Kira)

A very big sword
The trees are very old
It very cold
(Cheryl)

It was so rainy
There was a big protest
We met a tree person
(Anon)



HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY?

Mentally it made me feel really good, because it made me feel like I was doing something, I didn't feel like I wasn't doing anything, being powerless. I think I felt good because I was around a lot of people. I know I had my daughter with me then, she was just born and when I moved into a flat later on and didn't have any of my family around me in Glasgow I found that really hard mentally, whereas when I was at the Free State although it was very physically uncomfortable, it was very cold and there wasn't running water or things like that and sometimes it was quite scary, I felt much better for being around folk all the time. (Gehan)

I genuinely loved this place, it was an escape for me. Growing up like many young people, you've got challenges in your life, so whenever I felt anxious or under pressure from school, family or whatever - that was my escape. So the idea that we might lose access to that just fueled my anxiety, you know. (Peter)

It was an adventure, it really was an adventure, but the thing was we were doing something really important, the environment really is an important thing and to be part of something, doing something for that environment, that felt magical. I went to prison for it, and I didn't feel bad about that. I got letters from all around the world, saying 'to the tree person.' (Levi)

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY OF COLIN?

There was a man born and raised in Bonny Scotland
The wee yin was a Tree Man
And a rally began and a protest was made
(Jayden)



Colin Macleod, Tree man of Pollok (1966 - 2005)

Once he had had enough of the busyness around the fire, so he climbed a tree, possibly that tree there in the photo, but one of the biggest trees there and took his hammock and a book, and strung up his hammock about 200ft up and sat and read. (Gehan)

He was one of those people who could motivate you to do what you didn't think was possible, you'd be like are you sure we can do this? But by the power of his magicalness... you know some people are just so wonderful you would follow them to the ends of the Earth, well that was Colin. (Levi)

What I really remember were people like Colin and Danny who would take me around and show me all the things you could eat, plants you could eat and what you could do with plants and that really got in my bones. And personally I'm still an avid forrester, I studied herbalism! (Amy)

He was a very warm person and he was very passionate, now when you are young and you stumble across something like that, initially its quite intimidating, I was only a wee boy and I'm seeing all these adults, very loud and very confident and as I said I was quite shy, so it was quite intimidating at first, until one or two of the older people came and spoke to us and told us why they were there and I met him. (Peter)





WILDLIFE * GREENERY
RECREATION * CLEAN AIR



FIGHTING FOR
EARTH SURVIVAL

If our woods were threatened...

I would rally support from our pupils to go on strike again.

I would go on strike with them!

Our greenspace is such an integral part of the school community and more essential to the wellbeing of our young people than ever.

Protesting is like planting trees, we do it for the benefit of future generations.

(Mr Heron)

If our woods were in danger

I would write a letter and hijack the news

I would go on a radio breakfast show

We would riot

We would dress up as trees and run up and down Sauchiehall Street as a protest

We would go to Buchanan bus station dressed as logs, a white t-shirt with leaves stuck on it

We would go to the city chambers and demand change

(Jayden)

Today I see young people who want to protect our green space but don't know how best to do it

Yesterday I saw myself just like them.

Tomorrow I will see the fruits of what we do today

(Mr Heron)

Yesterday I saw a protest

Today I see a sad reality

Tomorrow I will see more trees,
more animals and no pollution

(Jayden)

Yesterday I saw trees

Today I see blue skies

Tomorrow I will see more nature

(Jamie)

For St. Pauls High School Damshot woods is as important as any classroom. It actually is a classroom but one made of trees and leaves, as opposed to bricks and concrete. (Mr Heron)

Breathing fire over green issues

It is time to stop this madness, ITS NOT TOO LATE YET!

So Pollok Free State, it set a lot of fire in my heart, it's always there, and when things are feeling hopeless in the world, things are feeling hard or stuck in my life, things are not going to plan, I can blow that little ember and it always re-ignites. I always remember these people doing these things, and we didn't stop the road but good things came out of it. I've joined many many campaigns since and Pollok Free State gave me the courage to do that, I felt empowered. I'm a shy person, a quiet person, but I'll always ask if there's a guy in a yellow jacket surveying trees - 'what are you doing?' I love a good planning objection letter. My kids go to forest school and I think we still generally follow the aims of Pollok Free State, Free University, you know to look after each other, to look after the planet. It's the only way, it's human nature. (Amy)

I look after the woods.

The air is so fresh.

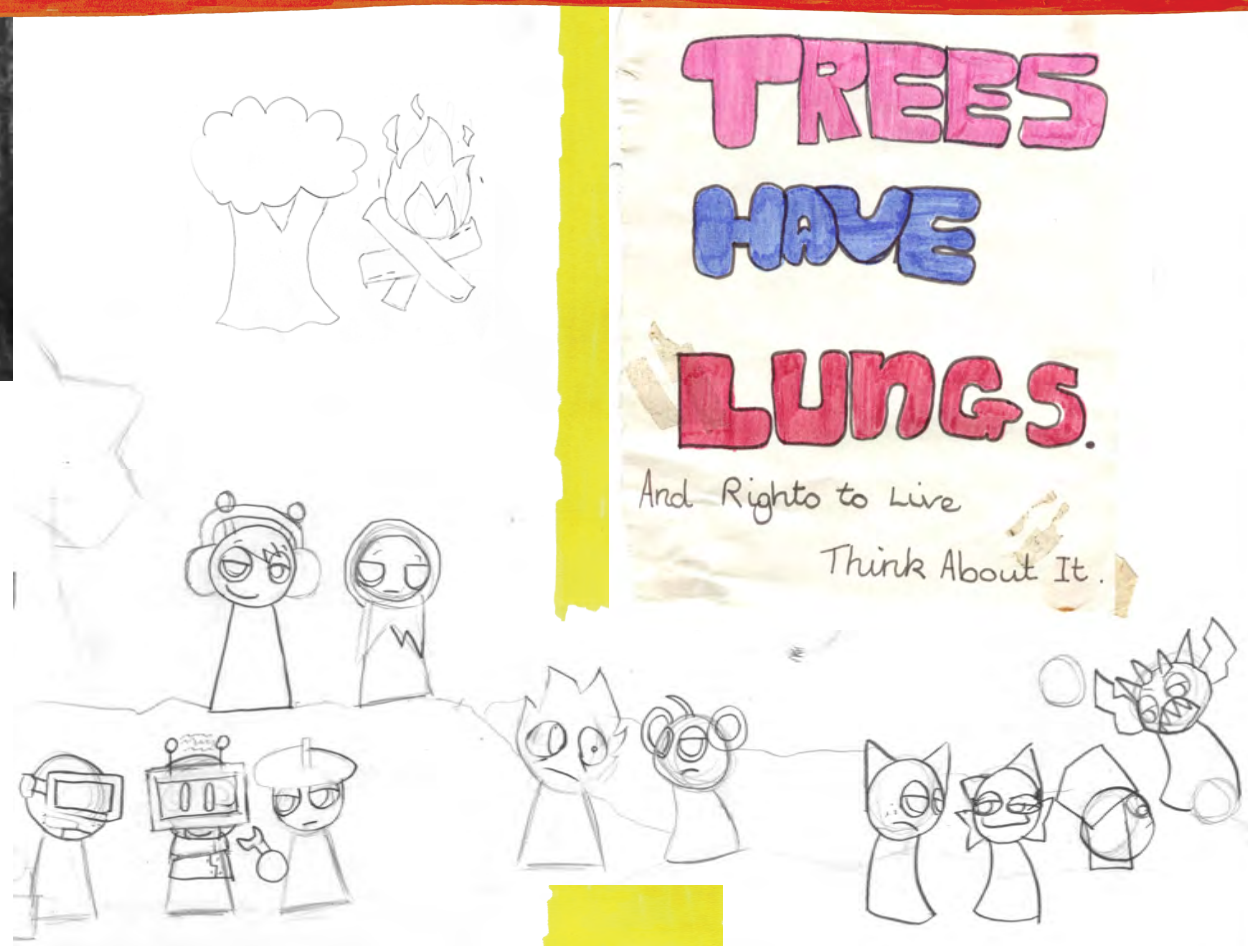
We socialise around the fire, eat smores and it improves our wellbeing.

One day we even saw a Hawk! That's why it's important to talk and respect our environment.

I'd like less litter there and for people to see it as a more positive space.

We use the woods every Friday to be creative, use our imaginations and connect with nature.

(Nurture Group, St. Pauls)



The archive is not the photographs, the archive is the people, and you've just come in here as part of that now and that's the point, the archive is you, everyone is part of this story everyone who comes through GalGael. The Free State was the beginning of that story, but we couldn't leave that behind, we couldn't do that - after all those wonderful kids from your school came and saved our day, and all the wonderful things that happened to us, and all the memories and all these people, some of them no longer with us. (Levi)

Detailed, artistic and creative wood carvings stand proudly as we enter the room. I feel inspired, in touch with nature. I wish I had been there, in that place and time. I like the sense of community. Everyone needs to be heard, everyone has a voice, young people included. The past can always make an impact on the future. (Alison)

This zine was produced through workshops delivered by Colin White (storyteller) and Hannah Brackston (artist) with a nurture group at St. Pauls RC High School as one of the projects for 'Connecting Pollok', led by The Village Storytelling Centre.

Huge thanks to all who have kindly contributed to this zine. This zine brings together;

- Materials from the Pollok Free State community archive, kindly shared by The GalGael Trust, (materials from the 1990's)
- Quotes from the BBC documentary, 'Birdman of Pollok,' (2019)
- Photography, artwork, poetry created in response to the archive by a Nurture Group at St. Pauls RC High School (Pollok) including pupils; Chloe Muir, Alyson McHugh, Zachary Sibanda, Cheryl Young, Kira Gilchrist, Leon Sinani, Freya Graham-Cusick, Jayden Ward, Jamie Lynch, Ebony McRae, Marcey McMillan with Nurture Teacher Seb Heron (2024/5)
- Interviews conducted by the pupils with Gehan Macleod, Livi Livingston, Peter Yuill and Amy Quinn (2024/5)

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