

# PART 4:

## THE STORY SO FAR

Over many years, ever since she first heard of the Ploughshares movement, Angie Zelter wanted to do a nuclear Ploughshares action. She writes: “After my experience of the Hawk action whilst in prison I decided I would do one (it only took three years!!) - but the Hawk action and lack of our follow-up with more actions afterwards made me want to set up a structure and campaign to enable many others to do it too - to really be effective I realised we needed to have very many other people over a period of time continually doing Ploughshares actions to follow-through in depth - hence the evolution of TP. Then I sat down and over a few weeks wrote the outline and then sent out an open letter in August 1997 once I had tried the idea on a few people and they seemed to think it good.”



*The banner that would not drop - London launch, May 1998*

In April 1998 in Peaton Wood, belonging to peace activist Georgina Smith, just 5000 yards from the warhead depot at Coulport, there was a planning weekend involving representatives from affinity groups, to make arrangements for our first move into the active side of the campaign, a two-week disarmament camp in August of that year. As we talked over the practical arrangements and the ethos that we wanted for that event, we re-affirmed the fact that we were asking pledgers and others attending the camp to commit themselves to the pledge as an expression of a minimum set of core values that could hold together people from a wide range of outlooks and campaign histories. We talked about the possibility of a heavy response by the authorities, maybe even conspiracy charges (carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison), arising out of the simple process of signing the Pledge to Prevent Nuclear Crime. These anxieties have to date proved groundless, but it is surely significant that the

potential for such serious consequences did not lead anyone to withdraw their pledge.

Parallel to these practical arrangements the campaign set in motion its attempt to engage the UK government in dialogue. In March a letter from the Core group had been sent to UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, stating that we would not begin our attempts at disarmament before 11 August 1998, to allow for dialogue about government intentions and their response to our campaign. The response was that the retention of Trident was a manifesto pledge and that HMG was confident that Trident was legal under the terms of the ICJ Opinion. Just before the August camp TP again wrote to the Prime Minister, a ‘final plea’ for a meeting before the direct disarmament began. This time the reply had an additional reason for not meeting the campaigners. It was inappropriate to meet with members of a campaign which was threatening illegal actions.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1998 there were simultaneous formal launches of the campaign in Hiroshima, Gent, Gothenburg, London and Edinburgh. The declaration from Pol D’Huyvetter, of the Belgian-based affinity group Titanic Trident, set the tone: “For us as concerned citizens there is no other way but to start nuclear disarmament ourselves.” At the Edinburgh launch a fine banner was unfurled which listed all the 62 people who had by that time signed the Pledge.

Then came August, activists from far and wide and heavy and continuous rain. Among the 200 or so campers twelve different nationalities were represented, much of the international dimension coming with the For Mother Earth 1000 kilometres peace walk from the NATO headquarters in Brussels. The two weeks of direct action were formally opened



*Georgina at home in Peaton Wood*



**Joe Butler and Ed Stanton hammer Trident into shape - Opening Ceremony at Faslane, August 1998**

at the north gate of Faslane as a blacksmith hammered a model Trident submarine into the CND symbol of peace. Within two days the actions and arrests began. Not long after dawn on the 13<sup>th</sup> August five members of the Woodwooses affinity group attempted a fence cut at Faslane and were carted away. Then a group was arrested for blockading Coulport and at noon the Adomnan affinity group conducted a ritual cleansing of Faslane with gallons of harmless but brightly coloured detergent. Next night members of the Aldermaston Women Trash Trident affinity group cut into Coulport, to be followed next day by three young Swedish church ministers, members of the Corpus Christi affinity group. On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August there was a large rally at Faslane, organised by Scottish CND, involving about 300 people. On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> there was blockade and fence cutting at Coulport and another intrusion at Faslane. The highlight of the camp was however,

the spectacular swim in the early hours of 18<sup>th</sup> August by Katri Silvonen, Krista van Velzen and Rick Springer, from the affinity group Titanic Trident. Dressed in wet suits they entered the water at the far side of the Gareloch and got to within ten metres of a berthed Trident submarine before being arrested. They were carrying hammers and glue with which to disarm the sub and as they were taken from the water their captors congratulated them on their feat, though, predictably, the official MOD spokesman denied they had been anywhere near a nuclear submarine. Katri and Krista repeated this swim on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, again getting close to a submarine. Arrests reached the 100 mark on the 20<sup>th</sup> August. There were numerous appearances in the local court and at the end of the camp seven activists were on remand, Jens Light and Ian Thomson in Greenock prison, Helen John, Krista van Velzen, Hanna Jarvinen, Angie Zelter and Katri Silvonen in Cornton Vale in Stirling. The camp was a considerable success and people thrived on the co-operative

energy. The vegan food, provided in the first week by Bumblebee, was well received and campers overall felt that information was clear and helpful. On the down side, the chemical toilets were unpopular and the task groups needed more attention. Legal support was improved as the camp went on and we established what was to be our future pattern. We would provide 24 hour centralised legal support during camps and other direct action events and proactive communication with custody centres. Media coverage of our exploits was poor in the UK but much better abroad. In our 'safe house' media office in Cove, stories were being sent out in Dutch, French, Flemish, Swedish, Finnish and Danish, to Eire and the US, to Australia and Japan. It was a great thrill to see the



**Coulport Weather - blockade at the main gate, August 1998**

campaign as truly worldwide, to have a sense of all that international energy being focused on the problem and the solution.

Right at the end of the camp we filed a citizens complaint at the Procurator Fiscal's office in Dumbarton, asking that prosecutor to take action against the British government for breaching international law in respect of Trident. It is hardly surprising that that official took the view that the complaint did not merit further action, but it has been helpful to refer to it in court cases as a sign of our willingness to pursue all conventional routes.

Britain's fourth Trident submarine was rolled out of its shed in Barrow on the 19<sup>th</sup> September. The five women on remand at Cornton Vale decided to mark this event with a modest protest. They put together a banner from sheets with letters cut from newspaper and stuck on with toothpaste, ready to be dropped from their cell windows. They intended to remain in their cells for the day and refrain from speaking and eating. They prepared a statement for the prison authorities, explaining their action and making it very clear that their protest was against Trident, not Cornton Vale. The authorities got wind of their plans and raided the cells on Friday. All the women were strip-searched and given punishments but the treatment of Angie was particularly brutal. As she was removed to the punishment cell the officers twisted her thumbs and wrists, causing intense pain. She was left without clothes in the punishment cell for a whole day. A complaint was laid with the local police but, due to an effective cover-up, this led to nothing. The Scottish prison Complaints Commission took Angie's complaint seriously and recommended that prisoners should



*Titantic Trident ready to go*

not be deprived of their clothing in such circumstances and that officers should be trained in dealing with passive resistance. He also suggested that the Scottish Prison Service apologise to Angie but this has not happened. The Parliamentary Ombudsman considered her complaint worthy of further investigation and is due to rule on her complaint in October 2000. The whole experience of visiting these prisoners had a profound effect on the local Stirling support group and has led to an active and practical concern for what goes on behind the bars.

When they appeared in court on two different dates at the end of September four of the women were admonished, as were Jens and Anja Light. Strong defences founded on international law were mounted and in the case of Katri, Krista and Hanna were backed up by expert testimony from Glen Rangwala of Cambridge University. The Justice of the Peace was clearly impressed but still found them guilty, saying that he had to disregard arguments from international law. Helen John was fined £180. This is how Argyle and Bute District Court has dealt with our cases ever since, with a few exceptions. The attitude of the local magistrates may be summarised as: "You are nice people and we bend over backwards to avoid coming down heavily on you. You argue from international law, but we don't know much about that, and we are pretty sure it does not apply on our patch. These matters are for a higher court but we will still hear the cases and dish out our judgements. We deal with Scots law and under that you are guilty and must be punished."

Rupert Eris and Peter Lanyon got the November camp off to a good start on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> by cutting into the Coulport base near the Explosives Handling Jetty. This was no idle attempt: in their heavy



*Corpus Christi Affinity Group, Coulport, August 1998*

equipment satchels they carried pliers; bolt-cutters; super glue; liquid cement; carpets and saw blades. The weather was with us too, with sharp, clear sunshine. More actions followed - five women were arrested at Faslane on Friday and on Saturday the Garelochhead Horticulturalists locked up the main door of the MOD building Glasgow. At a religious service at Faslane on the Sunday Scottish church leader Maxwell Craig put Trident firmly in the sin category and there were more arrests. Monday saw a new type of drive-in direct action when Angie Zelter spotted an opportunity at the main gate of Faslane and drove Peter Lanyon's car into the line of queuing vehicles and on into the base. The security personnel were so embarrassed at this that they invented a charge of assault on the basis of reckless driving. Krista, Anna, Katri and Hanna were also in the car and there was anxiety about the computer in the boot. When the case came up in August 1999 the Sheriff in Dumbarton laughed it out of court, saying: "A famous Queen's counsel once said of a Crown case, 'It was a frail bark that set sail towards the horizon, disappeared and was never seen again.' This is what this case reminds me of."

UK media coverage was by this time slightly better, with the highlight a three-minute piece on Radio 4's PM show. Meanwhile documentary pieces about the Belgium-based activists appeared on television there, and a Finnish TV crew present at the November camp created an excellent half-hour programme round the involvement of Hanna and Katri.

In December 1998 representatives of the affinity groups met in the Peace Church in Berwick - on - Tweed. We had a good five months activity to look back on but there were concerns. Some felt we had wandered from the original blueprint -surely a 'real' Ploughshares campaign would involve more serious attempts to disarm Trident than we had had to date. The two swims to the submarine berths by Titanic Trident in August were all we had to balance against lots of comparatively low-level actions, most veering towards the symbolic end of the spectrum. On the other hand, should we devalue the more symbolic actions, which were all many activists could manage for various personal reasons? Were they not just as 'serious'? In the end we agreed that all our actions should be given equal value and that we needed actions which we would call 'maximum disarmament', as well as the rest of the spectrum, so as to provide as many opportunities as possible for all sorts of people to become involved. In retrospect this discussion was very important for clarifying the character of the campaign. We would not become a campaign in which a small elite of disarmers was supported by a large

group of supporters who did not undertake direct action themselves. We would be a campaign in which everything was underpinned by the concept of what much later came to be called 'citizens' disarmament' - the undertaking by ordinary citizens of the urgent work of disarming Trident in the absence of any such action by the authorities.

Another concern apparent at Berwick has not been similarly resolved. As a movement aiming to be non-hierarchical and aiming to reach important decisions by the consensus of all the pledgers we had to face the fact that many affinity groups were not directly represented at the meeting. Although written contributions from all groups were included in the discussion we felt that the decisions we were making there were being made by too small a number. This tied in with concerns raised as early as April that year by Swedish pledgers, in particular the Bread Not Bombs affinity group, whose view was that our approach to consensus should be much more thorough and should include the facility of an affinity group and individual veto. Their stance was based on their long experiences in Europe of infiltration of peace and environmental groups by extreme right-wing elements, as well as a conviction that anything less than thoroughgoing consensus would lead to too much power being placed in too few hands. Although agreeing in principle to the concerns raised by some of the Swedish groups and valuing their insights, as a campaign we had decided not to go down the most thorough consensus route, for pragmatic reasons. The widespread nature of our membership made the achievement of complete consensus on all campaign decisions impractical. The basic structure is that the twice yearly pledgers' meetings and those which take place at disarmament camps make the basic decisions about the direction of the campaign, the yearly timetable, the approach to direct action, the legal strategy, the principles for



*Planting a tree at Peaton Wood in memory of John Lane who died suddenly on his way home from Coulport in November 1998*



***Rosie James and Rachel Wenham prepare for Barrow***

running camps, etc. etc. The Core Group then work within that framework to make sure that it all happens. A number of checks with all pledgers have shown that people are happy with this arrangement but the unease still remains about the small turn-out to the representatives' meetings.

The first six weeks of 1999 illustrated a healthy spectrum of activity, including the 'symbolic', 'maximum disarmament' and the germ of a pattern for involving more and more people. In January Margaret Bremner was in Helensburgh District Court for blockading Faslane in August 1998 and for doing some anti-nuclear graffiti on her cell walls. She told the Justice of the Peace that as a health professional she knew that the health services could not cope with results of a nuclear war. Later that month Katri Silvonen told the same court how this was an international matter since the whole world was under threat from Britain's weapons. There was frustration with that court's deafness to any reference to humanitarian law. Angie Zelter, also appearing on August camp charges, told the JP "If you can't give me justice here I might as well leave". She walked out and was arrested and held in the cells for contempt of court. Supporters in the public seats refused to rise as the JP left the court and eventually he gave in and walked out with them still seated. This kind of frustration has shown signs from time to time of being about to bubble over as more and more evidence of that court's inconsistency and general incompetence accumulates. Then, on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February we woke to the news that a very significant dent had been put in the new Trident submarine, HMS Vengeance, in its dock in Barrow-in-Furness.

At 5.30 am Rosie James and Rachel Wenham, of the Aldermaston Trash Trident affinity group, swam to and boarded the submarine. They painted "Illegal" and "Death Machine" on the sub, draped a banner "Women Want Peace" - over the conning tower and damaged test equipment before giving themselves up. Three other pledgers, Ippy, Helen Harris and Louise Wilder, were arrested when they went to the Barrow police station to deliver

clothing to the wet-suited swimmers. All five women were accused of causing £25,000 of criminal damage.

"The reality of 'Yes, we're really doing it!' hit us when we reached the let-off point." said Rachel. "We were amazed at how simple it was reaching, getting onto and inside the sub. The action worked on the night due to boldness and luck. If you believe it you can really do it. The funniest thing was the jaw-drop response of the security men round the sub. Saying 'Alright mate' to a man who didn't bat an eyelid at two dripping women with hammers sticking out of their wetsuits was beyond belief. Being in the water with

that atrocious construction is something I will never forget."

Rosie said: "The message I want to pass on to other pledgers about this action is of its simplicity. Once we had realised how vulnerable Vengeance was from the water, the most difficult thing was getting into our wetsuits. Never underestimate that! We can take heart from how dozy they are when there's not an organised event going on. So all you need is to see a way in, buy the tools, borrow the wetsuits and take the plunge!"

Almost a year passed before Rosie and Rachel (who are both free on bail) first came to trial and at the time of writing they are still in the toils of the system. It is very difficult to be sure but as time passes it looks more and more likely that their disarmament work did hold HMS Vengeance up for several weeks.

We had decided that our next concerted effort at the Clyde bases would not be a camp but a one day blockade of Faslane on 15<sup>th</sup> February. Overnighters stayed at the Friends Meeting House in Glasgow and bussed to the base early in the morning. As a sign that political support was growing, ex-chair of the Scottish Nationalist Party, Billy Wolfe was arrested at the blockade (along with 48 others), while Dennis Canavan, still at that time a Labour MP, and Tommy



***Seize the Day singers Theo and Shannon take a break at Faslane, 15th February 1999***



**Ante-room at Helenburgh District Court on a busy TP day**

Sheridan of the Scottish Socialist Party joined Iona Community leader Norman Shanks in giving support to the blockaders. The mixture of a Woodwoose, a vehicle and an open security gate was again a potent one as Martin drove the Norwich minibus right inside the base. Max the dog, an innocent occupant of the van, was also held for questioning but released after the usual paw-print routine. It was an exciting morning for the legal and media support team in Jane and Jim's living room in Helensburgh as we developed the logistics for monitoring lots of activists in different police stations. The presence of politicians had got the press interested and they came at us avidly for the story. At least one journalist was starting from square one and had to have the basic facts about Britain's nuclear 'deterrent' spelled out for her. It was worth it, for in time to come she became a fair and consistent reporter of the campaign story.

Two days later Trident Ploughshares was in action again, this time at the Atomic Weapons establishment at Aldermaston. Tigger McGregor and Sam Geall scaled the perimeter fence, hung banners from the barbed wire and decorated the fence posts before being escorted off by MOD police. Although many days had already been spent on remand, on 4<sup>th</sup> March the campaign had its first prison sentence.

Sylvia Boyes appeared in Helensburgh District Court on three charges, two under military by-laws and one for cutting a perimeter fence. One of the by-law charges was dismissed due to lack of evidence. JP Mrs McGuighan found her guilty on the other counts and proposed to fine her £50. Sylvia made it plain she had no intention of paying and was jailed for seven days on each of the counts, to run concurrently. As March rolled on the same court heard Fredrik Ivarsson, of the Corpus Christi affinity group describe nuclear weapons as blasphemy, and dished out heavy fines on Jo Markham and Angie Zelter. When Angie appeared again later in the month with fellow Woodwoose Clive Fudge, on a breach of the peace charge from the February blockade, they were both simply

admonished. Various theories as to the chronic inconsistency of the prosecution and the magistrates in Argyle and Bute District have been propounded. The most likely explanation for the Procurator's whim is that he sorts the charge sheets by throwing them down his back stairs. If you land below the seventh stair, you're for it. Magistrate variability is perhaps best explained by indigestion or the ability of some activists to exert effective magical influence. At the end of the month Adomnan member Barbara Sunderland also had a wrist-slap for blockading just as the Northumbrian affinity group were dismantling large amounts of the fence at the Albemarle Secure Nuclear Vehicle Compound near Newcastle, regularly used

by the nuclear convoys carrying nuclear warheads from Burghfield to Coulport. The group spent over half-an-hour chopping the fence, and painting slogans on the bunkers and concrete. Since no-one was around, the group practised thorough accountability by leaving leaflets and the slogan "TP 2000 were here".

Amid all this blur of activity new pledges were being signed and new affinity groups formed. One such was the Local Heroes, centred in Helensburgh but with other Scottish members. It was launched in style on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Local Hero El wrote: "Minutes before the morning shift change some of us donned up to the North Gate at Faslane for a chat. One policewoman gawped in mid-sentence as Eric and David secured a cable across the entrance to the base. Seconds later Brian had to help me lock-on to the cable as my hands were too shaky. There was a pause as we looked at each other and it sank in that we had done it... the traffic was queuing up. The elation was tangible. For most of us this was our first locking on, for some their first non-violent direct action and subsequent arrest. After a while a copper took a huge pair of bolt cutters to the fine cable - but to no avail. Red-faced he left, to return 10 minutes later with suitable adjusted croppers. Eventually they



**Brian and El at the Local Heroes launch, April 1999**





**MEP Neil McCormick at Faslane, 16th May 1999**

gnawed through. One by one we were unthreaded and led off. Brian sat down looking calm and strong. The symbolism left me feeling proud and humble to be part of such a powerful creative group.”

Also ongoing were the attempts to engage the government in meaningful dialogue. As the new Trident Submarine HMS Vengeance set off for its base at Faslane an MOD official explained how the executive would deal with the issue of Trident's legality. Simon Gillespie said that they would take legal advice about Trident only if and when its use was being considered. This is known as the SOFAL response –Send Out For A Lawyer. Trident Ploughshares activists were a significant part of the warm reception Vengeance got when it reached Coulport. Fungus and Tamson both swam very close to it and the latter's naked protest (his kilt fell off) was featured in the papers the next day. This action, like so many of the actions against nuclear warhead convoys, showed the strong collaboration and mutual support between Trident Ploughshares, Scottish CND

and Faslane Peace Camp and on these occasions individuals who belong to more than one of these groups are pretty relaxed about which particular hat they are wearing –the common purpose is the thing. For Trident Ploughshares the solid backing from Scottish CND, especially in terms of research and networking, together with the spontaneity and energy of Faslane Peace Camp, have been essential ingredients for the work in Scotland.

In the middle of May we were back in numbers at Peaton Wood. Earlier in the month a Teletext poll had registered 85% of Scots as opposed to nuclear weapons in Scotland. At the main gate of Faslane on 16<sup>th</sup> May, leading Scottish nationalist activists including Professor Neil McCormick gave the same strong message. The same day there were 16 arrests and our total topped 200. One action featured wheelchair users Morag Balfour and



**Mark Leach in Star Wars role, 16th May 1999**



**De-fencing Faslane, May 1999**

Roz Bullen along with Ceilidh Cratur pledgers from Edinburgh. They were variously locked on to the fence and each other, threaded through the fence and generally entangled in such a complex weaving of arms and legs that the tableau looked like the result of a very nasty accident during a wheelchair race. It took ages for the police to sort it all out, which they did with good humour. It was a very colourful weekend. The sun shone, Martyn strode about as Tony Blair on a pair of stilts and the Ceilidh Cratur's enlivened everything with their imaginative costumery. A Scottish TV company took footage for their schools Channel 4 Programme on the re-emergence of Scotland as a Nation.

Later that month, as NATO bombed Serbia from a great height, Local Hero Brian Quail was among the 500 non-violent activists from all parts of the globe (including many from Trident Ploughshares) who walked from the Hague to Brussels in protest against NATO's illegal nuclear weapons policy. Brian wrote: “That huge grim stalinistic star so often seen on TV,

the rows of water cannon, ranks of riot police with visors, shields and batons, all left no doubt. We had arrived at NATO Headquarters. This was the end of the Long Walk. Blistered, bleeding and exhausted, I slumped to the ground. It was shortly afterwards I was hit full on by a jet from a water cannon and sent spinning across the road. A novel experience indeed for a 61 year-old with a heart by-pass... Later, I saw riot police lash out at the arms and wrists of demonstrators approaching the wire. Our crime? Simply being there. Confronting NATO with the illegality of its own nuclear war plans. Peacefully, openly and non-violently.”

In the background something had been brewing for a very long time. After months of planning and plotting, the ad-hoc affinity group the Pheasants' Union, Ulla Roder, Ellen Moxley and Angie Zelter, put the finishing touches on their banners, filled their bags with ironmongery and set off in a van with an inflatable dinghy to Loch Goil, home to 'Maytime', a floating research barge operated by the MOD research arm DERA which helps the Trident submarines guarantee their sonic 'invisibility'. They got on board, got into the lab, draped their banners, emptied the lab and tipped computers, electrical equipment and documentation into the deep waters of the loch without any sign of police interest or attention. They had intended to do similar work on another barge but their boat was leaking so they sat down in the late evening sun and had a picnic. It was riveting to be on the shore and take it all in, the small scurrying figures, the sharp clang of metal, the frequent heavy splashes of sinking hardware and the delicate fluttering of hundreds of sheets of paper. On the barge Ellen felt as if she were getting rid of the building blocks of oppression: Trident; the 'free'



**The Pheasants Union in preparation for Maytime**



**The Peace Walk arriving in Brussels, May 1999**

market; the exploitation of children; unbridled militarism; the all-prevailing violence of society; third world debt. It was to her an amazingly liberating experience. We are pretty sure that it was our press release just after 9 p.m. that eventually alerted the security people to the fact that they had a problem “up the Goil”. As darkness fell the plaintive words of the bargemaster rang out across the water: “What have they done to all my stuff?” Refusing to accept that they had done anything wrong the three women were remanded to Cornton Vale. With the honourable exception of the Big Issue in Scotland the press did virtually nothing with this splendid story, claiming that they were worried about being in hot water for dealing with matters that were *sub judice*. This was hardly the real reason since the media, even in Scotland, where the courts are more strict on this issue, regularly go near the edge and tell as much of the current story as they can. In the week that I write this story BBC Scotland has shown many times a film clip of football manager Jim McLean getting ready to assault an interviewer when they well know that the matter is before the Procurator Fiscal.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh, which was due to hear Brian Quail's appeal against a conviction following his disarmament action at Faslane naval base last November, permitted the appeal to be resubmitted on broader grounds. Brian had been convicted in Argyll and Bute District Court of causing criminal damage “without reasonable excuse” to the fence at the base. Brian's defence was that the illegality of the Trident system in international law gave him reasonable excuse. The appeal will consider whether the magistrate was wrong not to take account of international law in reaching his verdict. At the time of writing Brian's appeal has still not been heard. An earlier appeal by Helen John on similar grounds was rejected by the High Court. Her case had been poorly





***Ulla, Ellen and Angie approach Maytime, 8th June 1999***

presented by her advocate and in particular failed to focus on the specific issue of Trident and the fact that it is a threat. The judges came out with the view that her sincere believe in the illegality of Trident was not a sufficient defence. Apart from Brain's case, two other appeals against lower court convictions in Scotland are in the pipeline.

There had been a feeling for some time that the campaign should extend its attentions to other Trident related sites in the UK, apart from Coulport and Faslane. The 'Maytime' raid was a good example and this was followed up by a Midlands group action against Aldermaston in July. Roger Franklin, Sylvia Boyes, Alison Crane and Marlene Yeo, later dubbed the "Magic Four", rather to their embarrassment, were able to enter the 'secure' Nuclear Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston where they had time to display banners before being arrested. They had intended to confront workers inside the site on the basis of the Nuremberg Principles. Although regarded by the four at the time as a relative failure as an action the consequences in terms of court proceedings and encouragement to others were to prove significant. On 13<sup>th</sup> July Ian Thomson (Tamson) was released from custody after appearing in Helensburgh District Court on charges related to his action in July when he celebrated the official opening of the Scottish Parliament on 1<sup>st</sup> July by attempting to demolish the perimeter fence at the Coulport nuclear weapons base on Loch Long. He was also in bother for his May swim to HMS Vengeance. Found guilty on both charges he was set free without sentence, having spent 12 days on remand in Greenock prison.

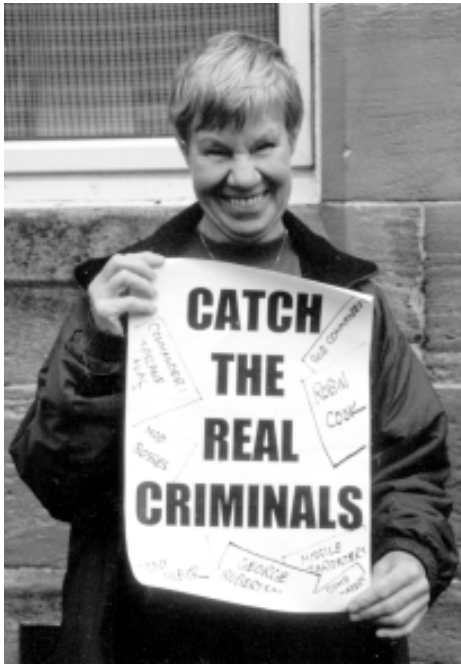
July and early August was spent preparing for the August campaign and supporting the Pheasants in Cornton Vale. Their imprisonment was having a big impact on support and awareness world wide, but there was a downside to that -apart from the obvious. Angie had from the start decided to represent herself while Ellen had solicitor Stephen Fox and Advocate John McLaughlin. Ulla had solicitor

Matthew Berlow and Advocate John Mayer, who earlier had worked on Brian Quail's appeal. Communication with and between the lawyers' teams and Angie faced the difficulties of the prison logistics and it was fraught with problems right up to the trial. For August 1999 the camp infrastructure was much improved, with mains electricity and compost toilets. Bumblebee again cooked for the first week with the added bonus of training sessions for Trident Ploughshares people who could take on this responsibility in the future. It was in fact the excellent Bumblebee's swansong and they handed on to us valuable kitchen equipment.

The flavour was again distinctly international with lots of new faces. The activists were anxious to get on with the work and Joy Mitchell and Joan Meredith set the tone on the first day by blockading the main gate at Coulport. Indeed, not a day of the fifteen passed without at least one arrestable action taking place. Some of them were spectacular such as the swimming actions, involving variously Marcus Armstrong, Louise James, Clive Fudge, Kirsty Gathergood and Josje Snoek. New ground was broken by the Woodwoses and friends who improved the external decoration of the submarine testing station at Cove with appropriate messages such as "Trident is Illegal". There was a 'pernicious paddling' women's action where the Coulport fence runs into the water. The women carried their banners inside the base by paddling deep along the shoreline. One MOD



***Grace Nichol and Bernard De Witte, Peaton Wood, August 1999***



*Helen John setting off for Edinburgh*

policeman was heard to say "I'm not having them standing there taking the piss". The charge on their arrest was not in fact Taking the Piss, but Breach of the Peace. This flurry of activity went on right up to the last night of the camp. As Marjan Willemsen recounts: "Monday was the last day of the camp and the people that were still there, went to have a ceilidh at the gates of Coulport. It started out with nice music, singing and dancing, and then all of the sudden every one ran a different way in order to do some decoys. After most of us got back we heard something and 2 girls were inside the base! Then we heard another noise and Jenny was on top of the fence, inside the rolls of razor wire! She stayed there for a few hours. Meanwhile David and Emma were arrested for cutting the fence, Teapot for blowing raspberries, Fungus for trying to get into the base by crawling underneath the gate, Anne for blocking a police van, and myself for seeing how they were treating Anne." If they thought it was all over then, they were wrong. Just four days later Sylvia Boyes and Anne Scholz swam round the perimeter fence at Faslane and after two hours in the water were intercepted while swimming under the jetties where the Polaris submarines were formerly berthed. Anne said: "My plan was to get onto a Trident sub and lock myself to it. Sylvia had a hammer to use on the exterior and spray paint to use on computer monitors inside the boat. With a bit of luck we would have got there, just as Rosie and Rachel did in Barrow." Media coverage of the August events was patchy but we did get into the Irish Times and on the on-line bulletins - we were top story in the Yahoo newspaper for a day.

Early in September Helen John reminded the people of Edinburgh about the UK's nuclear crime, as well as its illegal use of depleted uranium and its support for the sanctions against Iraq, by painting slogans on

imposing public building in the High Street. Two weeks later she included Westminster in the process by painting foot-high slogans on the St. Stephens entrance to the House of Commons. The Edinburgh Procurator has not yet been organised enough to bring her to trial. When she appeared in December 1999 for the Westminster work, a London jury, who had heard from MPs Alan Simpson and Tony Benn, found her guilty of the criminal damage charge. However, perhaps uniquely, they added a rider that she was justified in what she had done.

In spite of the difficulties in preparing a thorough and coherent defence from prison we approached the Greenock Trial of the Pheasants with some hope. Jane Tallents had seen Sheriff Margaret Gimblett in action at an earlier hearing and had sat in to watch her deal with a young offender firmly but with real insight and empathy. She left the court sure that Gimblett could be the one to reverse the closed mind syndrome with which we were so familiar.

Establishing a support framework in Greenock was problematic. Not one of the churches or other agencies we contacted came up with an offer of office or living accommodation. In the end we rented office space and travelled daily from Glasgow where we again enjoyed the hospitality of the Friends Meeting House. This was a short and convenient journey compared to that faced by the accused. They had to travel first to a police station in Glasgow and then transfer to another van for the journey to Greenock. This meant a very early start and a late return to Cornton Vale, leaving little or no time for recreation or refreshment. The prison only provided them with cold food on their late return from court. It was only the pragmatic intervention of the court officers in Greenock that led to a decent system of nourishment to take them through what turned out to be a month-long trial.

The women appeared on four charges of malicious mischief and theft. Procurator Fiscal David Webster put forward a very simple Crown case proving that the three women were on 'Maytime' and that they had done all the damage mentioned in the



*Yuko at Greenock. She kept drumming all through the trial.*



*Verdict day at Greenock*

indictment. The highlight of the Crown case was the MOD video of the bottom of Loch Goil. The film showed the entirely predictable image of computers on their sides in the silt as the small fish flashed round them. One monitor had an orange starfish draped to order on the corner.

The Defence case involved five expert witnesses. Francis Boyle, Professor of International Law, University of Illinois, gave evidence that international law applies everywhere, and that, due to its destructive power, Trident could not be used in any manner that was lawful. Judge Ulf Panzer from Germany gave evidence of the legitimacy of nonviolent action to uphold the law. He described how he had campaigned to get American Pershing missiles removed from his country, culminating in a sit-down blockade of the Mutlangen base, along with 20 other judges. They had learned from the Nazi era the high cost of remaining silent when their government acted unlawfully. Professor Paul Rogers from Bradford University gave evidence on the composition and capabilities of the Trident system, the imminent danger of nuclear war and accidents and of the effectiveness of civil resistance to change official policies. Professor Jack Boag testified about the imminent danger from nuclear weapons. Finally, Rebecca Johnson of the Acronym Institute explained the consequences of the failure of successive UK governments to fulfil their obligations to disarm under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and how the present administration is continuing to block negotiations. She described how 'Maytime' is an essential part of the Trident weapon system, and how other states perceive Britain's deployment of Trident as a threat.

The defence submitted that international law applies in Scotland; that the threat or use of nuclear weapons was found to be generally contrary to international law by the International Court of Justice and the deployment of Trident is seen as a threat. In

addition, John Mayer put forward a defence of necessity and John McLaughlin argued that although the women had been wilful they had not been malicious. At the end of their arguments both advocates put a submission to the sheriff that she should remove the verdict from the jury and acquit the women.

In addressing the jury Sheriff Gimblett said "I have to conclude that the three in company with others were justified in thinking that Great Britain in their use of Trident... could be construed as a threat and as such is an infringement of international and customary law. ...I have heard nothing

which would make it seem to me that the accused acted with criminal intent."

Since these heady days Margaret Gimblett, who came in for a good deal of flak for her verdict, has been the benchmark against which we tend to measure judicial performance. This is not so much about delivering the right verdict, though that counts a good deal, but follows from her basic professionalism, insight and courtesy. Her court manners were perfect and she included the public gallery in her cheery "good morning". One has also to say that to date no other judicial figure has come out of the comparison particularly well. The mutual respect between her and Judge Ulf Panzer was evident and he took the unusual step of congratulating her from the witness box on the manner in which she conducted proceedings.

The Scottish media, which had been fairly apathetic throughout the trial, belatedly realised there was a story and the headlines were well and truly hit. The event hardly registered in the English media and the Guardian was particularly disappointing. Predictably the District Court in Helensburgh, five miles across the water from Greenock saw no reason to change its steadfast refusal to entertain international law and on the 25<sup>th</sup> October Anne Scholz was found guilty and fined for her swim into Faslane in August. On the 27<sup>th</sup> the Lord Advocate announced his decision to refer the Gimblett ruling to the High Court for legal clarification. The motives of this government minister in referring a ruling were obvious. After all, it raised a huge doubt about the legality of the UK's defence policy. At the same time we welcomed the further opportunity to have Trident's legal status debated in a higher court. There was also a positive political response with stirrings in the Scottish Parliament and the European parliament heard from Neil McCormick MEP that: "The courage and independence of Sheriff Gimblett, the courage of Angie Zelter and her companions has been in sharp

contrast with the petulant failure of the US Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.”

There was certainly a fresh edge as we returned to Coulport for our weekend camp on the 12<sup>th</sup> November. However crude and simplistic the media reporting of Greenock had been, there was every reason to believe that it had begun to sow doubts in the minds of those whose business it had been to keep the Trident project going and to protect it from our crime prevention activity. We handed in a letter at the Coulport gate to the man in charge, Rear Admiral Gregory, advising him that he was putting his personnel in an unenviable position by inciting them to engage in criminal and immoral activities. We had long known of the sympathy for our stance that existed within Strathclyde Police and we publicly expressed our hope that they would get the support they needed as they thought through what it means to be involved in law enforcement in a society which is becoming more openly unhappy about threatening genocide. At this time we began to emphasise more and more our crime prevention role. The action highlight of the weekend was the two-gate blockade of Coulport. While one group formed a linked obstruction across the main gate, Sylvia Boyes, Marjan Willemsen and Jenny Gaiawyn locked on to three separate workers' buses at the construction gate. A quirkier event was the long moorland walk in the autumn sunshine to a communications mast above Kilcreggan. There was no intention to damage this as it supported innocent as well as criminal marine traffic, but suitable placards were posted. It was a long walk and not all the participants were sure of the worth of the enterprise. One was heard to remark under his breath as he pulled himself out of the moorland mud for the umpteenth time: “I always said it was a hare-brained scheme.”

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November Helensburgh District Court failed to surprise as it found Irish activist Mary Kelly guilty in spite of a brilliant summary of the case against Trident. The police witnesses wandered even further than usual from the truth and claimed that they did not know that there were nuclear weapons inside Faslane. Meanwhile HMS Vengeance was back in Barrow-in-Furness awaiting its commissioning. It claimed the attention of Sylvia Boyes and River who were arrested inside the VSEL dock having intended to swim across the dock and board the submarine. They carried with them hammers, glue and spray-on varnish. Sylvia was refused bail and River did not

seek it. At their hearing on 2<sup>nd</sup> December River refused the bail conditions then offered, which included the condition that he stay at least ten miles away from any nuclear weapons base. River pointed out that the UK was crammed with Trident-related facilities and said he would accept the conditions if he was assured that no nuclear warheads would be within ten miles of HMS Vengeance. He was sent back to Preston prison. A week later he argued successfully and significantly that the conditions infringed his basic right to protest peacefully and was freed. River and Sylvia will go to trial in Manchester Crown Court on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2001. [They have since been acquitted]

From November 1999 some accused activists were developing alternative approaches to their defence in the District Court in Helensburgh in an attempt to break through the impasse there. Local heroes Barbara McGregor, Brian Quail, Jane Tallents and Eric Wallace put in a claim that the European Convention on Human Rights gave them the right to intervene peacefully and nonviolently when they knew a war crime was being committed. Alan Wilkie of Adomnan made a similar claim as he defended himself against a breach of the peace charge and Pamela Smith challenged the whole concept of breach of the peace. These submissions are known as Devolution Issues, since they refer to the incorporation of the Convention into Scots law under the Scotland Act 1999. Alan's plea has been rejected, as has Pamela's, though she has appealed. The Local Heroes are waiting on the outcome of a similar case elsewhere in Scotland.



*Ganesh and his ploughshare,  
November 1999*

Rosie James and Rachel Wenham came to trial in Lancaster on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2000 for their good work on HMS Vengeance but the trial was over before it had properly started. Acting for them was solicitor Gareth Peirce and barrister Vera Baird. At the time River, who was note-taking at the trial, wrote: “In a nutshell the CPS fouled up totally, by not logging a vital piece of prosecution ‘evidence’ when they got it last May. This was not the fault of the prosecutor who appeared in court, but of the team that is supposed to have done the groundwork in advance.”

Because a vital statement was never logged it was never passed on to the defence. By an unlucky coincidence this piece of evidence was the most controversial item they had - upping the value of the damage done from £25,000 which the Crown had mentioned at the committal proceedings to £110,000. This jump in value would make a big difference to the sentence, if things should come to that. As is

their job when the other side springs a last minute surprise, counsel wanted to look very carefully into the matter - even more so than they would last summer if they had got proper notice of the increase. They challenged the paperwork supporting the evidence, and lo and behold the Crown get yet another expert and, intriguingly, we are back to around £25,000. The defence want to get their own expert to look at the equipment, the Crown are most willing for this to happen, but nobody available to the defence can do this till the middle of next week." The new trial did not happen until September.

In our publicity for the planned blockade of Faslane, jointly organised with CND, on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2000 we had asked people to make it a priority for the year and the response was most encouraging. The big training and briefing events in



**MEP Caroline Lucas (on right) with Ceilidh Craturs, 14th February 2000**

Glasgow on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> went well, much aided by the goodwill and patience all round and a sense of expectation. At 5.30 next morning the minibuses and coaches were loaded and took off from the Glasgow centres with a minimum of fuss and delay, while other overnight transport from

all over the country was homing in on the base. Media interest had been aroused by the prospect of parliamentarians being present and the messages of support from celebrities, including Sean Connery, Emma Thompson, and Kurt Vonnegut, whose message described the campaign as "the shock troops of the sane in the war against insanity". The blockade held the base up for two hours or more and 185 were arrested, including Member of the Scottish Parliament Tommy Sheridan, MEP Caroline Lucas and ten Scottish church ministers.

While waiting to be processed, many people used the opportunity of the captive audience of the two police officers looking after them, to chat a little about why they were there. Apparently, one person was let go on her way to the processing line, having been told that she was the 'nicest person' that the police officer had ever arrested.

The weather deserves a special mention. When some of the cases came to court on October 2000 a police witness, asked if he had his notes from that day, said



**Scottish church ministers about to be nicked at Faslane, 14th February 2000**

that due to the weather conditions note taking had been inappropriate. That was putting it mildly. Legal support 'runners' did a brilliant job logging the arrests and dashing to and fro with sheets of paper disintegrating in their hands and many activists are still carrying around diaries and notebooks with that tell-tale Valentines Day water stain. The legal support team did an unbroken 26-hour shift monitoring the arrests, updating information about who was in what police station and arranging pick-ups for those released. It was a media event countrywide but the biggest boost was the evidence it gave of more and more people willing to play an active part in nuclear crime prevention.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March the "Magic Four" from the Midlands Group were found guilty at Newbury Magistrates' Court by a magistrate who said, like his myopic peers in Helensburgh District Court, that he could not consider international law if it was not incorporated by statute. Hefty compensation orders were dished out and Sylvia, in view of her honourable record, was



**Waiting to be processed and making new friends, 14th February 2000**



also fined. Marlene Yeo's refusal to pay up had an interesting sequel and a lesson about the value of local media work. She wrote: "Well it is the bailiffs next. I have put a poster in the front door saying: Trident warheads are weapons for mass killing. I won't pay for them. Bailiffs keep out. Friends welcome. Leicester Mercury came specially to photograph it, although they'd already got 2 items in yesterday's paper - all favourable. So there can't be many locals who don't know about Trident. And so far, all from my angle! Great. In court, too, I had a chance to talk about the deadliness of Aldermaston, about cost of Trident, & about me, not them, upholding the law."

Helensburgh District Court continued to throw up bizarre hearing after bizarre hearing. In the trial of Marilyn Croser and Helen Harris a police constable from the Gorbals Division in Glasgow said that if told by a peace protester that international law was being breached in Faslane or Coulport he would take action to investigate that allegation. Testimony by Crown witnesses was a shambles and JP Stirling found them not guilty, as Helen put it "not for the best reason". Typically the JP had not allowed the accused to cross-examine Crown witnesses on international law.

When the Lord Advocate of Scotland had submitted his Reference of the Gimblett ruling to the High Court in January, he set down four questions that he wished to be addressed. These questions seemed



**Commotion drummer Sheila Mackay at the south gate, Faslane, 13th May 2000**

designed to elicit answers that would prevent the use of international law in the future trials of activists in Scotland and in general seriously limit the ability of ordinary citizens to act to prevent war crime. A very unsatisfactory and worrying preliminary hearing in connection with the Reference took place on 4<sup>th</sup> April. For a start Lord Rodger was in the chair. As a former Lord Advocate in 1992 he had rejected a plea by anti-Trident campaigners to look at its legality. Not only was he at least theoretically biased, his conduct of the proceedings was less than professional. Angie, representing herself, was cut short in the middle of her presentation. As it has turned out many of the sharp concerns we

had after this meeting have been relieved. Lord Rodger was removed from the panel of judges although we have no way of knowing whether this was due to our strong representations and those of supportive politicians. A transcript of the last three days of the Greenock trial, together with the testimony of some of the expert witnesses there was ordered. Some of Angie's costs are being covered by the Crown and, most significantly, the actual panel of judges have shown themselves happy to go behind and beyond the Lord Advocate's questions. A network was set up to take the best advice from legal experience worldwide on how to approach the hearing.

Marcus Armstrong and Louise James were fined in Helensburgh District Court on 9<sup>th</sup> May for their August swim to Trident, when they had only made it right up to the floating barrier at Faslane. Marcus gave a simple but brilliant summary of the moral case against Trident and ended by saying: "If anything ever happened and if any of my children, grandchildren or any person asks me, did you know? What did you do? Although it would give me little comfort, I would be able to say yes, I did know and although I wish I'd found the strength to do more, I did what I could at the time, given the circumstances." Turning to Justice of the Peace Scullion he asked him directly: "What would you say to your children or grandchildren?" There was a silence and then the JP said: "I will not answer that question."

On May 13<sup>th</sup> Trident Ploughshares along with Scottish CND arranged a 'Carnival' at Faslane. While Scottish based activists were happy that the main attention during May was going to be in Aldermaston they wanted to keep the pressure on the Clyde bases and give thereby a message of solidarity for the action in the south. Barbara McGregor described it: "May Carnival: a festival of fertility and earthy eroticism.



**Maypole, 13th May 2000**

Traditionally young men and women went to the woods the night before Mayday to find a suitable maypole “grooving the dark earthy groves vicarless and knickerless” in search of a sturdy trunk. Our El had been on the case though. Up came an erection made with love in Lochgoilhead. More of a totem than a mere pole, with sea creatures, birds and cute beasts all the way up, crowned by a golden sun. And the revellers danced round it - weaving patterns of creative chaos. At the appointed hour, cleverly liaising with the North gate and a run on the Barricades by riot grrl Morag, nine whirling dervishes laid the pole to rest across the middle of the road, punched holes into the papier-mâché coating and locked their assorted jewellery onto the centrally running chain inside. A cheer went up, funky music went on, the police roasted, and we toasted under a benevolent sun, chewing on liquorice and succumbing to sloppy kisses from wayward dogs. HOLD ON by the Soulmasters was never so apt. “Too many to arrest” was the word on the police walkie-talkie - even the bobbies were languorous. At 3 we all traipsed off to catch the bus home. A jolly splendid summer sortie.”

Thames Valley Police had written to us in April, hoping to identify organisers for the planned event at Aldermaston and asking us to confine our activities on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May (the day of the planned blockade) to a designated car park. We pointed out that: “There are no ‘organisers’ or ‘leaders’. Different people take on different responsibilities at different times but the bottom line is always individual responsibility and autonomy along with respect for others.” We were pleased to learn later from an MOD leaflet that this point had been accepted. We also took the opportunity to challenge TVP about their failure to act, in the following terms: “The Trident system



**Blockade at Aldermaston,  
22nd May 2000**



**Sonnerie perform at Aldermaston, May 2000**

threatens innocent civilians in their millions and presents a long-term and serious threat to the natural environment. What action is Thames Valley police taking on this urgent and desperately serious matter?” Although TVP had been in touch with Strathclyde to gain from their experience of dealing with our activities they opted for intimidation, but they relaxed into a more reasonable line when their bluff was called. This extended to an understanding that we would use the informal camping site we had intended. There was also a letter from AWE plc threatening legal action against the campaign should there be any disruption or damage.

The weekend began with a concert at the gates by the baroque ensemble Sonnerie with world famous violinist Monica Huggett who said: “Maybe doing a concert at Aldermaston will present a stark enough contrast to nudge peoples’ minds.” There was a march from Reading the next day and the first arrests. Ulla Roder, Roger Franklin, Joan Meredith and Fungus (Zoe Weir) got into the base and were arrested. The police bail conditions were that they did not come within five miles of Aldermaston. Eric Wallace, of the Scottish affinity group The Local

Heroes describes the blockade that took place on the Monday: “The decision to use karabiners and tubes in our action seemed a bit daunting to some of us at first, but Fungus persuaded us otherwise and it all turned out for the best since the equipment stopped the police trying to pull and push us apart and we were able to hold the gate shut for more than three hours. Even when special constables arrived to cut us loose we were able to hold on or let go as individuals, always it seemed that control rested with us. If we had merely linked arms then our line would almost certainly have been broken when one irate motorist decided to call our bluff and drive through the line. Only when it became apparent to him that we were unable to move did he back off. Another advantage of this tubing arrangement was that we were able to move our

location at will and indeed the police cleared a way for us as we required!” there were 46 arrests that day

and 55 for the whole weekend. Very few of these were charged -most having been bailed to come back to a police station at a later date. The weekend was a considerable success, and it was especially helpful to have those involved who have long targeted that location. As Helen Harris put it: "Overall, despite some of the usual ill informed hostility, I felt the TP camp raised the local awareness of Aldermaston, leading to a high level of local interest and support." There were concerns about making a blockade the core of the weekend, some taking the view that particularly at Aldermaston, with its many gates and dangerous roads, it was not the best form of mass action and not ideal as a first action for newcomers.

In a joint Trident Ploughshares/Menwith Hill Women's Peace Campaign action on 19<sup>th</sup> June, Helen John, Angie Zelter and Anne Lee got through the new high security fence at the U.S. National Security Agency Space-War Spy Base at Menwith Hill in Yorkshire, in an attempt to dismantle the new fence that serves to protect the systems designed to support the new US anti-ballistic missile system (ABM). They were apprehended when starting to cut an inner fence - the one around the satellite communication area. Angie said: "Ballistic missile defence undermines the entire international order. Even if we get rid of Trident tomorrow they are still planning to have nuclear weapons in space." Three days later a group of Walkers For Peace set off from Aldermaston to cover the 400 miles to Faslane. The core of the group were the monks and nuns of Nipponzan Myohoji, a small Buddhist order committed to peace. The following Thursday Helen



**Susan van der Hijden, Barbara Sunderland and Davida Higgin at Aldermaston, May 2000**

Harris was sent to prison for seven days after refusing to pay a fine and a heavy compensation order. At that time the number of days spent in prison by Trident Ploughshares campaigners was already over 700.



**The Peace Walk arrives at Faslane, 1st August 2000**

Preparations were by now well under way for the third August camp at Coulport and the Faslane blockade on the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month. In our July press release about these events we noted that the UK was defending itself in the High Court against the islanders of Diego Garcia, who had been evicted from their island as part of a treacherous Polaris deal with the US in the 1960s. The British Government's tendency

to recognise international law only when convenient has a long pedigree. In the run up to the blockade we wrote an open letter to the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police, John Orr, asking him not to arrest us or move us forcibly from the scene. This was the beginning of an interesting correspondence in which Orr showed willingness to discuss the issues of legality, at least to a certain point. The Greenock verdict was still having its impact.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> August, the beginning of the blockade was signalled by the arrival of the 30 peace walkers who had been on the road since June 26<sup>th</sup> from Aldermaston, where the Trident warheads are made. The walkers, led by the monks and nuns, went right up to the gate and attempted to attach the thousands of paper cranes they had brought with them. This was refused and after a brief ceremony activists blocked the gateway by sitting down or locking on to each other. After warnings police moved in to remove, arrest and charge them. Leeds MP Harold Best and Scots writer A.L. Kennedy were present to give their support and encouragement.



**Kath McNulty, Faslane, 1st August, 2000**



**Scottish writer Alison Kennedy (centre, in baseball cap), Faslane, 1st August 2000**

The day brought its own ironic twist, as many of the women on the Peace Walk from Aldermaston who had received a warm and high profile reception from West Dumbartonshire Council on their way through Clydebank, now found themselves in the police cells in the same town after being arrested at the blockade. Media coverage was good and the pick of the pictures showed Ray Davies from Wales with his mouth open in apparent agony as the police moved in to disentangle the blockading group. Actually, Ray was singing. Another fine picture, which appeared all over, was of Hoosey and Teapot on top of the tripod at the South gate which kept it closed for 7 hours until they came down voluntarily. The presence of A.L. Kennedy obviously touched a new constituency for within a few days we had a visit from Scottish sculptor George Wylie, who pledged his full support.

The camp itself began with Jenny Gaiawyn being sent to Cornton Vale for refusing to pay a fine. The following days brought a whole variety of actions: a Shift To Peace Work action at Coulport; several blockades; graffiti for peace; getting into the protected area at Coulport by inflatable boat; fence cutting galore (especially at the Sponsored Fence Cut). The action highlight was again a swim to Trident. On 6<sup>th</sup> August Ulla Roder and Marcus Armstrong were arrested after swimming into the

main security area of the base, getting through the boom and right up to the shiplift, and were only discovered by chance a few metres from the Trident. The bandit alarm was then set off. On Hiroshima Day we gathered at Faslane for a moving and extended ceremony, moving through a sequence of emotional responses to nuclear crime, from anger, to hope and empowerment, all symbolised in the giant statue of a woman. The evening ceremony was on the shore of Loch Long and began with a Buddhist ceremony on the beach. The floating lanterns we had prepared were in danger of being blown inshore so we sought the help of the MOD marine unit. Several campers waded out to the inflatable boat with the lanterns held aloft which the sailors took on board with great gentleness and understanding. There were a total of 161 arrests during the fortnight. Several campers had multiple arrests, Marcus Armstrong leading with



**Loading lanterns onto MOD boat, Hiroshima day 2000**

seven. As well as being an action camp the event provided many opportunities for activists old and new to renew their vision and commitment, to develop their skills in a whole range of areas, such as court work, the principles and practice of nonviolence, communication, boat-handling etc., and to reflect on strategies for the future. At the end of the camp Krieb Dragonrider was sent to Greenock prison on remand. He had failed to turn up for a previous trial and had broken bail conditions. On 4<sup>th</sup> September, although soundly defended by solicitor Liz Ross he had the misfortune to be before Justice of the Peace Fraser Gillies in Helensburgh District Court who fined him a total of no less than £850. Our patience with the shenanigans of that court was wearing very thin indeed and Sylvia Boyes showed a proper disrespect for its authority on 11<sup>th</sup> September when she was up for swimming into Faslane and locking on to a bus at Coulport the previous August. Sylvia refused to give her testimony from the witness box saying that as a Quaker it did not matter where she stood -she would tell the truth. JP McPhail listened patiently to her powerful summary but said he was not there to judge the legality of Trident. She was fined £100 and said she would not pay and



**Rage against nuclear crime personified, Faslane, Hiroshima Day 2000**

would not leave the court until the question of all her unpaid fines was dealt with. The next case was called and Roger Franklin sat down in the dock beside Sylvia. His case was then adjourned and Sylvia was still sitting there. The JP gathered up his papers and he and the clerk and the Fiscal scuttled out the door, ignoring the fact neither Sylvia nor the four supporters present had obeyed the instruction to stand up.

The trial of Rachel Wenham and Rosie James began the same day in Manchester Crown Court. The Navy mechanic who accompanied them off the boat at the time of their disarmament action against HMS Vengeance admitted that the vessel had been delayed in sailing after the action. On the next day of the trial another Crown witness said the sub had sailed without its radar surveillance system being in working order

through the lack of testing equipment to replace the equipment disarmed by Rosie and Rachel. Rosie then gave her own moving testimony and her realisation that direct action was the only way to make a difference. She was followed by Rosie on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the court heard of her

extreme trepidation swimming in the filth infested waters of Barrow docks. She told of German Judge Ulf Panzer and his blockading of a Pershing missile base in Germany to the evident surprise of the judge who joked that he might have to find a wetsuit! On the 15<sup>th</sup> three expert witnesses appeared for the defence. Angie Zelter spoke of the need to take direct action after every conventional avenue was exhausted. Professor Paul Rogers explained how the threat posed by the Trident fleet is fundamental to Britain's current posture. Rebecca Johnson of the Acronym Institute described how that threat had operated in the context of heightened international tension at the time of the disarmament action. The judge said that the threat or use of Trident does not contravene existing English law and ruled that the part of the defence founded on that matter could not be put to the jury. Rachel dispensed with the services of her barrister before the summing up and appealed herself to the jury to follow their consciences in accordance with the Nuremberg Principles. The women were found not guilty on the charge of criminal damage relating to the spray painting of peace slogans on the Trident submarine HMS vengeance in Barrow last year. Even after extra time

the jury was not able to reach a verdict on the first charge relating to the damage to testing equipment on the conning tower - so the result was a 'hung jury'. In the light of the fact that the women have never denied that they carried out the spray painting it would follow that the jury has decided that the women's defence was valid. It was a tremendous achievement. The case clearly caused a serious dilemma for the jurors. Fellow AWTT member Helen Harris said: "Perhaps the best part of the trial was hearing, through the guarded statements of prosecution witnesses that the action had indeed worked - for a certain length of time, perhaps weeks, perhaps even months, one quarter of Britain's nuclear fleet was delayed from deployment." After a considerable delay the Crown has indicated that the women will be tried again in the new year. This

means that the legal process to bring them to book for preventing crime and upholding the law will take at least two years, an appalling abuse of process.

The 4th October was another of those long days in Helensburgh District Court, with 24 TP cases being discussed, and six trials due to take place. In the end none of these trials materialised and we

were subjected to the usual chorus of adjournments, stretching well into next year. Late in the afternoon the court rose but our day was far from over. Why not make all our travelling worthwhile? A dozen or so of us made our way westward to Couplort where we set about the perimeter fence. Seven of us were arrested. Everyone was out again in a few hours and next morning the TV in Scotland ran the story in its morning bulletins, with a library picture of a Trident sub in the Gareloch.

The hearing of the Lord Advocates Reference of the Gimblett ruling began as scheduled on the 9<sup>th</sup> October. The process involves the Crown and the other interested parties (called Respondents -in this case Angie, Ulla and Ellen) putting their arguments before a panel of three High Court judges. In essence it is a government appeal by the back door against the Gimblett verdict. While it cannot actually overturn the women's acquittal, a negative outcome would obviously carry the implication that they should have been found guilty. All three Respondents have raised issues arising from the Convention on Human Rights (called Devolution Issues), one of which claims that the process amounts to a retrial of the accused. However -the real source of criminality



**Hammers for peace outside Manchester Crown Court during the September 2000 trial of Rosie James and Rachel Wenham**



is being discussed -Trident itself. The presiding judge, Lord Prosser, and the panel are obviously thoroughly engaged. They have shown that they will not be restricted by the terms of the Lord Advocate's questions but will look at all the relevant issues. Each of the interested parties will participate in two rounds of speeches. Simon Di Rollo opened for the Crown. The core of his argument is that Britain is not breaking any rule of customary international law by deploying Trident and that it is not threatening to use it and never has. Intriguingly he read out great chunks of the ICJ Opinion of 1996.

Then came Angie. Representing herself, the only lay person, she said that the proceedings would relate to whether there is a right for ordinary citizens to prevent innocent people from being murdered. She strongly refuted the Crown statement that she, Ulla and Ellen were engaged in some kind of opposition or protest. They had acted to try to prevent preparations for war crimes. Citizens had time and again attempted to have this criminality addressed through the legal system. No prosecutions had taken place - a "serious indictment of the criminal prosecution service in both England and Scotland". In concluding she said: "The nuclear crime prevention will continue whatever the outcome of the LAR but if the court is wise and courageous it will also grapple with the underlying problems arising out of the Greenock trial - that of the vital question of the illegality of Trident and how to remove it from Scotland." Sitting there in the court we pinched ourselves to check this was really happening at last - a legal demolition of Trident before an attentive bench and busy public seats in the highest court in Scotland.

She was followed by Gerry Moynihan QC. His view was that the only reason the ICJ judges did not come out with a blanket ban on nuclear weapons was that some of them felt that a legal use of a small yield weapon against a ship at sea or an isolated military objective in a desert was a possibility. This reservation did not, of course, apply to Trident, which was clearly illegal. Advocate John Mayer, appearing for Ulla, whom he had successfully defended at Greenock, stated that there was no such thing as mere possession of a fleet of Trident nuclear submarines, each armed with live and targeted 100 kiloton warheads. Deploying nuclear weapons means having them in a state of readiness for war.

On Friday 13th October the hearing was adjourned and was due to take up again on the 14th October. On the Friday evening Edinburgh City Council (a Nuclear-Free Zone Council) laid on a civic reception for Trident Ploughshares. This was preceded by a seminar organised by the World Court Project (UK) in the City Chambers with short speeches from Angie and Stale Eskeland from the University of Oslo. Angie pointed out that it was only the action and pressure of ordinary people that changed things. Stale said that there was considerable room for optimism but that we would continue to need "hard work, cool



**Justice waits outside the High Court in Edinburgh**

minds and warm hearts". The warm and practical welcome from St. Augustine's United Church in the centre of the city included office and accommodation space and enabled us to maintain a regular presence in Parliament Square sometimes accompanied by a very tall woman in white, Justice herself, with a Trident missile in one hand and constructive alternatives such as hospitals and schools in the other, and all the while looking poignantly towards the grey building of the High Court of Justiciary.

In spite of the high level examination of the issues in Edinburgh, Helensburgh District Court was still doing its own muddled thing. Jane Tallents was fined £300 on 23<sup>rd</sup> October for a straightforward blockade action in August 1999 and two days later Clive Fudge, Marilyn Croser and Joy Mitchell were all fined £50 for their part in the February Crimebusters blockade. The same morning Faslane Peace Campers Marjan Willemsen had been due to appear along with Fungus to explain why they had not paid fines for previous anti-Trident actions. Instead of coming to court they entered Faslane naval base by cutting a hole in the perimeter fence, climbed a lighting mast at one of the shipping berths within the base and draped from the mast banners reading: "Trident Subs Threaten The World." After being released at midday from MOD custody they appeared at the afternoon session in the court. Fungus was given another week to pay while Marjan was sent straight to prison for seven days. She was out on Friday and straight back to Faslane to get on with the work.

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Thanks to everyone who contributed photographs which were used in this chapter. Because the photographers were so numerous, and many were unknown, it was decided the most egalitarian solution was not to credit any of them!