

March 1993
A letter from the Department of Transport to one of the campaigners against the road.

Foreword: A Hidden Agenda

By George Monbiot and Paul Kingsnorth



1994
George Monbiot (top) and Paul Kingsnorth (below) at Solsbury hill.

On a fine day in May 1994 two over-dressed policemen struggled up to the camp on Solsbury hill. Averting their eyes from a naked woman stretched out in the sun, they asked to be taken to the leaders. "You want to talk to Aqua and Sulis", someone told them. "They're up the top. You'll recognise them 'cos they're both black."

The officers sweated up to the top of the hill. They told the people there who they wanted to talk to. Everyone stared at them. "Aqua and Sulis? You sure about that?"

"Definitely."

"Right."

They were taken to meet the two black piglets.

No one returned from Solsbury hill unchanged. The battle against the Batheaston bypass was a turning point both in the fight against the Government's road building programme and in the lives of many of the people who became involved in it. The protest began at a critical moment, when a raw, uncertain movement had begun to coalesce and find its voice.

People emerged at the other end with a sense that life was richer – richer with experience and possibility – than they had imagined.

By the time the fight over Solsbury hill started, in the spring of 1994, the road protest movement had already experienced some defeats. Campaigners had lost the fight against the motorway being built through Twyford down in Hampshire and had been evicted from most of the route of the M11 through East London, but in losing they had begun to turn public opinion against the Government's programme.

During one of the greyest periods in modern British politics, the road protest movement provided both colour and hope. While most people expressed their disagreements with the fading Conservative government politely, the roads protesters put their bodies in the way. In doing so they focused public anger towards a government that wouldn't listen, a politics that put money ahead of human beings, a philosophy that placed no value on anything that couldn't be quantified.

boarded-up high streets and dying local communities; all the detritus of the 24-hour global economy in which growth is god and everything else is a side-effect.

We lost the fight over Solsbury hill, and Bath has been left with a high-spec dual carriageway to nowhere. We lost Newbury, Pollok Park, Fairmile and half a dozen others. But in doing so, we won the rest. By 1996, before the Conservatives had left office, the road protests helped to cut Britain's road-building budget from £23bn to

£4.5bn. By fighting a few schemes and bringing the absurdities of the roads programme to public notice, we helped destroy the philosophical basis of the roads programme. It is probably true to say that a new motorway building plan of the kind the Conservatives envisaged can never be relaunched. Building our way out of congestion and pollution is a discredited idea, and for this the campaigners of Solsbury hill can claim some responsibility. In that respect, at least, victory was ours.

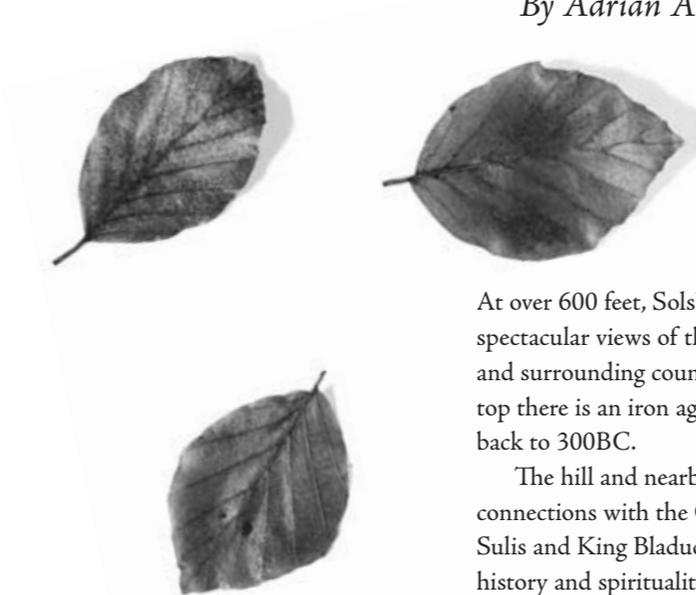


June 1994

Kai in the trees at Whitecroft.

Solsbury Hill

By Adrian Arbib



At over 600 feet, Solsbury hill affords spectacular views of the city of Bath and surrounding countryside. At the top there is an iron age hill fort dating back to 300BC.

The hill and nearby springs have connections with the Celtic goddess Sulis and King Bladud. The sense of history and spirituality is palpable, inspiring Peter Gabriel to write the song 'Solsbury Hill'.

In the valley below there are equally beautiful water meadows. The whole area falls within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It was hardly surprising that there was local and national anger at the decision to build three miles of road through it all.

Having spent over a year in East Africa photographing nomadic herders living precariously in a fragile and endangered ecosystem, returning to grey John Major Tory Britain was particularly uninspiring. I had focused on environmental photography for most of my working life to this point. It seemed to

me that the never ending cycles of famines and wars were fuelled by a craving to over consume. No one appeared to care.

But on my first visit to Solsbury hill in March 1994 it was refreshing to find passionate, committed people prepared to make a stand. Conversations were hostile to consumer culture, savvy and cynical about the media, and driven by a will to save the planet. Their attitudes were optimistic and constructive, and they expressed themselves with humour and creativity.

At times it felt as though the land was gripped by a second civil war. Conspirators huddled round fires united in their belief in the cause.

The authorities responded in a way that heralded our current surveillance culture.

I remember going to the Bath police station on one occasion to report some act of security guard violence that I had photographed. On the wall of the police station there was a "have you seen this person?" poster of many faces from the Welling riots in

"Civil disobedience on grounds of conscience is an honourable tradition in this country and those who take part in it may in the end be vindicated by history."

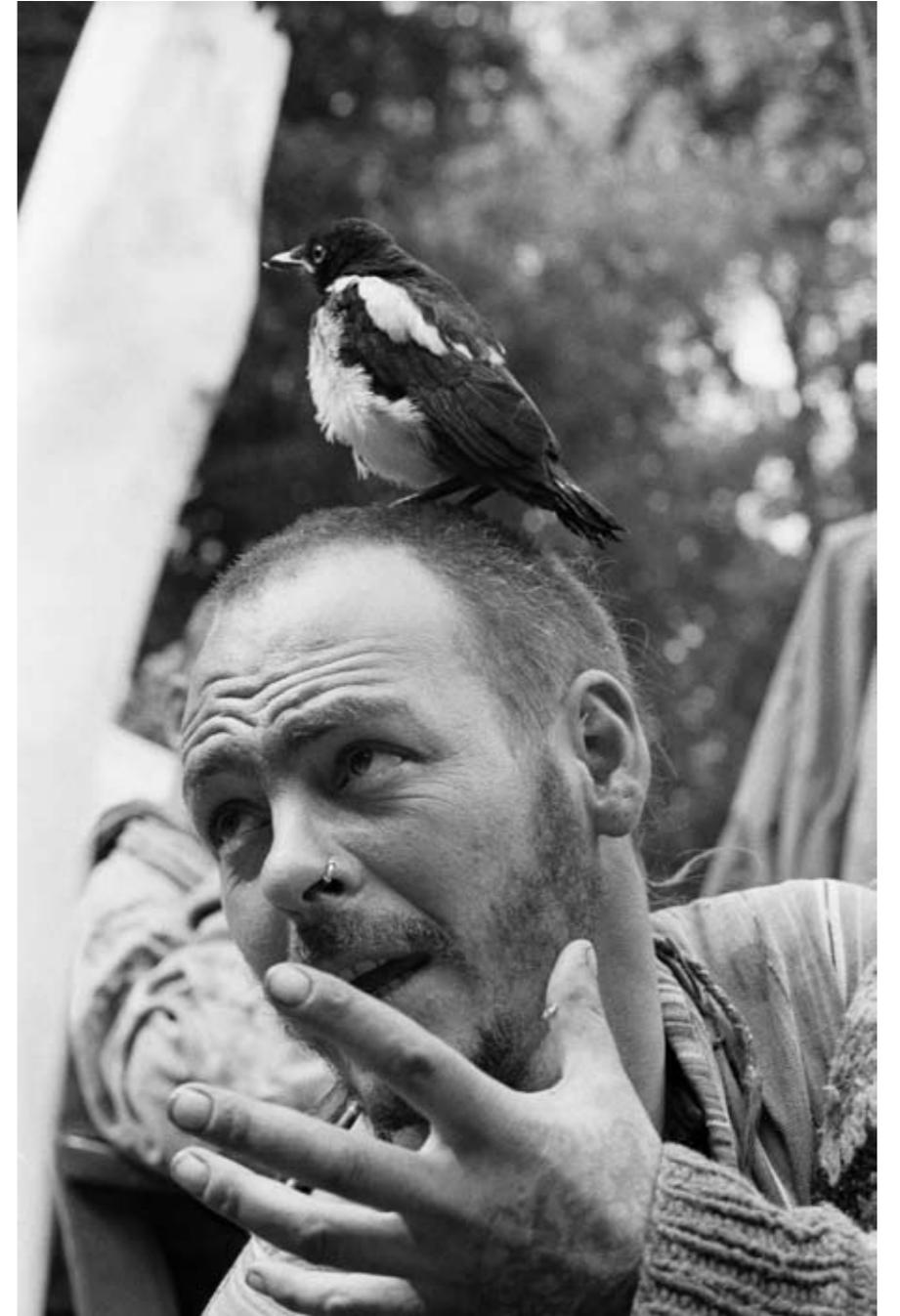
Lord Justice Hoffman

May 1994

Looking from Monument field towards
Bailbrook, Bath and the water meadows.



May 1994
Bailbrook Lane
Residents discuss the road.



May 1994
Whitecroft
Pete and a young magpie rescued
by the RSPCA. The construction
company were illegally felling trees
during the nesting season.

May 1994
Fluffyland
A security guard tries to persuade Dylan to
get off machinery.





June 1994
Whitecroft woods
Much of life in the trees was
spent reading ...



June 1994
... and drinking tea.



July 1994

A huge security fence was erected around the last stand of trees at Whitecroft in an attempt to restrict access and stop food and water being passed to those in the trees.



July 1994
 Whitecroft woods
 Protesters risked their own lives
 playing a game of cat and mouse on the
 walkways, challenging bailiffs to cut the
 ropes whilst people were on them.



July 1994
 Whitecroft woods
 Martin in his tree.