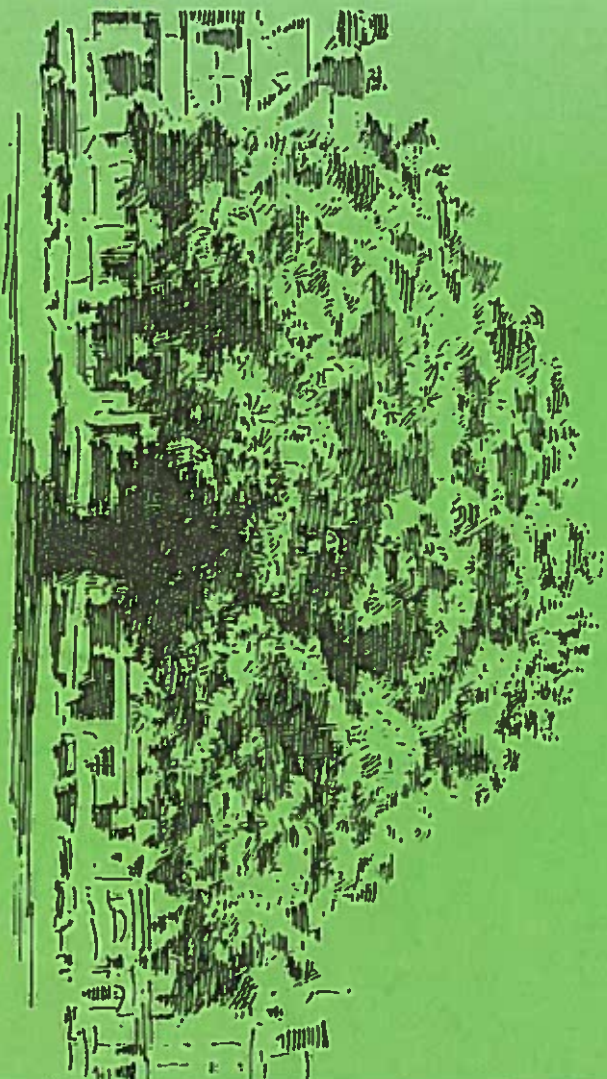


"I really do believe now, that things are going to change. You young people have had an impact on the public consciousness ... I feel so strongly for you in your chestnut tree. You are doing the things that my generation should have done when we were young. And you are splendidly inspiring the next generation. I do not know whether or not, by your efforts, spring will ever come again to your tree. If it does, then that is a triumph over darkness. But even if you fail, other things will be defended by people following your example, and someday somewhere, trees will stay alive that would have died, had you not done what you are doing now. With gratitude. Good luck."

R.I.P. TREE
c. 1740 - 1993

"You can't kill the spirit"

Dear Tree



"400 spontaneous letters of goodwill delivered to a tree must constitute some sort of record" – The Guardian

Up the ladder went the postman
with his letters in his bag
a slotted cardboard box was tied
to branches with a rag
from all across the country
came the letters, notes and cards
to George Green's tree and
treehouse
they sent their fond regards.

So get out your pens and papers
it will only cost a stamp
send letters to the treehouse
where these people have their camp
to this address please send them
to the Sweetest Chestnut Tree
at George Green, Wanstead, London
postcode eleven-2.

As the parasites in power
tell the leeches what to do
they boast of third world
land reform
and plunder me and you
the dispossessed and homeless
are a national disgrace
we'll have a peaceful rising
reveal the tyrants' face.

SAD CHRISTMAS TREE
(to the tune of O! Christmas Tree;
words by Joe Boggys)

Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches
Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches.
The slaughter never tires us
your spirit still inspires us.
Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches.
Oh! motorway, mad motorway!
we'll never let them build you.
Oh! motorway, mad motorway!
we'll never let them build you.
and if they should, we'll shake you
with sledgehammers we'll break you.
Oh! motorway, mad motorway
we'll never let them build you.

And the parents with their children
and the grandparents as well
defiled the teeth of bulldozers
and sent them back to hell
their jackets full of spoilage
and with all their heart and soul
the crowd scooped down that
soil bank
filled up the bulldozed hole.
and the children planted flowers
from their hearts with all their
worth
their messages in pebbles said
"we'll have to save our earth"
an all day, all night vigil
they set up around the tree
prepared for silent chainaws
their sneaky strategy.

And the passing cars at Wanstead
they would cheer and toot their horn
supporting unsung challengers
and babies not yet born
from Tyrford Down to Oxtans
and at Tayfen Meadows too
we'll crack their concrete
hardened brains
WE'LL SHOW THEM WHO IS WHO!

It's people power! It's people power!
the power of the pickaxe.
It's people power! It's people power!
the power of the pickaxe.
Our voices will be spoken
our will shall not be broken.
It's people power! It's people power!
the power of the pickaxe.

Communitiest! Communitiest!
we're stronger than bulldozers
Communitiest! Communitiest!
we're stronger than bulldozers
our chestnut trees they shade us
we won't let them invade us.
Communitiest! Communitiest!
we're stronger than bulldozers.

[softly, sadly, slowly]
Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches.
Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches.
The slaughter never tires us
your spirit still inspires us.
Sweet chestnut tree, sad christmas tree
they've chainsawed all your branches.

Dear Tree

The 3.5-mile M11 link road is designed to connect the M11 motorway in Essex with the Blackwall Tunnel in east London. In order to knock an estimated eight minutes off the commuter journey from Essex and Hertfordshire, the Department of Transport is prepared to spend at least £250 million (some people estimate the eventual price tag will be closer to £1 billion), destroy 350 houses, wreck three green spaces and pour at least 25% more traffic onto the congested streets of Hackney.

The Department of Transport itself appears less than convinced about the wisdom of going ahead with the road, which was first proposed early this century in response to totally different transport needs. London's transport minister, Steven Norris, has said: "We don't perceive a large road-building programme in London and we don't think there is much public support for it."

In early November 1993, protesters built a treehouse in a much-loved sweet chestnut tree that stood in the path of the M11 road-builders. The tree had graced George Green in Wanstead for 250 years. The group of dedicated tree-defenders took turns sleeping in the treehouse, braving unseasonably cold weather, a rare November snowfall and a pre-dawn petrol bomb attack.

A man in Warrington, Cheshire, saw a story about the tree in The Guardian (8-11-93) and wrote a letter of support to the tree-sitters, care of the tree itself. The fact that mail had been delivered persuaded a High Court judge to declare the treehouse a dwelling and to grant the tree-sitters squatters' rights. Because of Judge Tuckey's ruling, the tree won a brief reprieve, which was overturned two days later by another judge.


When the national media picked up the story, hundreds of people from around the country, and some from abroad who heard about the tree by word of mouth, sent letters of encouragement to the tree-sitters. As The Guardian's environment editor, John Vidal, observed: "400 spontaneous letters of goodwill delivered to a tree must constitute some sort of record."

Many Wanstead residents wrote expressing heartfelt attachment to the tree in question. The sweet chestnut also became a symbol of something bigger, and a focal point for an outpouring of anger and frustration at the government's ill-conceived transport policies and arrogant remoteness from the mood of the country.

Many people wrote to their MPs and newspapers. James Arbuthnot, the local Conservative MP who chooses to live miles away in posh Kensington, received a letter from former supporters: "Are the Tories intent on committing political suicide? For the party is not listening to the voice of its members." They had always voted Conservative, they wrote, but would not do so at the next election, "if only to save the environment for future generations."

A mother of two wrote to newspapers: "Building more roads for the increasing traffic isn't the answer, especially in light of new evidence that car fumes exacerbate asthma in children. Public transport could be greatly improved in this area. A train and bus network would be a cheaper and cleaner way to ease traffic. congestion ... I feel bitter and angry that the government does not listen to the people's point of view."

In its last month of life, the sweet chestnut tree inspired a creative blossoming. As one of the tree's correspondents put it: "All the creativity in this campaign will eventually triumph over the destruction." A tree-defender urged a crowd on the green: "To help stop this road, go out and perform acts of random kindness and senseless beauty." Folksinger Joe Bogggs

wrote songs dedicated to the tree, including an alternative Christmas carol (see p 36). Several people wrote poems to the sweet chestnut and to other lovely old trees which were felled as the road-widening began to scar the neighbourhood. Others sent drawings. 

THEIR STOMACHS CAN'T EAT BITUMEN.

THE WANSTEAD CHESTNUT AND THE MOTORWAY (Words & music by Joe Bogggs)

On the sixth day of November in the year of ninety-three a bunch of so-called criminals sat camped up in a tree to stop the M-eleven and the stampeding of greed of backhand-secret handshakes the speculators' creed.

And the residents of Wanstead came to lend them their support fed up of being lied to by the roadbuilders' report they gathered 'round this chestnut tree that stood five hundred years to save this aged beauty moved only by their tears.

The developers invaded they put up a prison fence around this leafy giant man they knew no common sense their motivation's money and they preach democracy excuses for dictators to sprawl their colony.

And the guards took aim with cam'ras shot the action by the roll and those with no employment got blacklisted down the dole these planning laws are bonkers they're no use to you or I so guard your shades of conkers until the day you die.

The security was stepped up they denied them food and drink the comrades and supporting friends got locked up in the clink the locals kicked the fence in and they razed it to the ground the shutter screens and timbers lay shattered all around.

Joe Bogggs lives in Bury St Edmunds and writes and sings about grassroots issues.

A policeman hit some fruit juice it splashed down around the place the papers said protesters threw some urine in his face so deep rots the corruption through our democratic scene which bribes police and papers to keep them sweet and clean.

Into George Green came the digger like Big Brother in a tank and George Green's flesh was wounded dug into an earthy bank the residents were angered at democracy's attack they seized that eerie earth mound their bare hands moved it back.

There's a lollipop and lady she's so loved by one and all she powers the pedestrians brings traffic to a stall she got herself suspended just for standing on George Green they purchase open spaces democracy's obscene.

Made her lollipop a shovel when her work of day was done the care of her community for her was next to none they had her house-arrested in her own home she was jailed the papers turned a blind eye the truth was not unveiled.

Then a legal person took out an injunction on the tree he broke with all conventions and made legal history got squatter's rights established sent a letter of command protesters with the locals ran tyrants off the land.

(continued)

about 10 minutes, before arresting them for "breach of the peace". As the cherry-picker finally reached the green, it appeared Mother Nature still had a trick to play: it became stuck in the mud, caused by the brief and violent storm of the night before. About 30 yards from the tree it was surrounded by security guards, who tried to push it out of the mud, and who were surrounded in turn by people trying to stop them.

Despite the repeated protests made to the police on the scene by a barrister, acting as legal observer, about machinery being operated in proximity to people without protective helmets -- culminating in a citizen's arrest of the Sheriff by him -- the police refused to act to protect either the people protesting, or the security guards, at least one of whom was run over by the cherry-picker as it attempted to free itself from the mud by rocking backwards and forwards. He is reported to be still in intensive care. A young woman was also run over by an ambulance and, realising that the police had lost control of the situation, one of the protesters stopped traffic to prevent further injury to her. The police seemed at a loss as to what to do until an army truck drove onto the green and an occupant got out to talk to the police for about five minutes before speeding off. This seemed to provide the necessary inspiration and some marching around followed, with hundreds of police forming cordons and corridors before the bogged-down behemoth was finally dragged out of the mud by a JCB and started to lift its hydraulic platform through the branches of the tree at about 12:15 p.m.

It was time for the seven tree-sitters to face the sheriff's officers. This was unpleasant, as they seemed to relish their job and admitted wanting to hurt those locked on to the branches. It took a further hour and a half before all seven were finally down. A sheriff's officer was seen by many to strike out at a protester with a saw and another tried to stab one in the hand with a knife he was using to cut down the tree-house ropes. Formal complaints are being made about this, in addition to numerous others. Equally spirited resistance was put up by inhabitants of the other trees, but equal violence was used, resulting in one young girl's wrist being broken as she was dragged out of her tree. The afternoon sun greeted a scene of devastation, with the sound of sobbing interspersed with the tremendous crack of branches being ripped off the tree trunks by the JCB. Bewildered and outraged people spoke of "disgusting violence by the police" and stories of injuries included a pensioner and a nine-year-old child.

After the violent taking of the tree on December 7 (see news release, p 32), campaigners retrieved part of the trunk and rolled it on to common land beyond the barbed wire-topped hoardings that now surround and conceal the construction site on the edge of the green. A small sign appeared: "R.I.P. Tree".

But the fight against this motorway and all senseless road schemes continues with ever-increasing vigour. Campaigners along the link road route regularly stage peaceful disruptions of construction work. The presence of the treehouse on the green for five weeks drew many local people into the campaign; they turned up with food, clothes, and wood for the campfire, and stayed to make friends.

The national adoption of the chestnut tree sprang from an increasing public awareness that motorways are not the solution for Britain's transport problems, as well as from the growing solidarity among anti-roads campaigners around the country. They know they are fighting not just for their local playing field, housing estate or ancient woodland, but for a cleaner, fairer, more efficient transport system, and a cleaner, fairer, more efficient path of development for this country.

This booklet was compiled by a local resident inspired by the ingenuity, courage and cheerful determination of the tree-sitters, struggling to get their sensible message across to a government suffering from "mad car disease". The letters to the tree helped raise morale; now, hopefully, they will also help raise money for the campaign against the link road.

The "builders" have started demolishing the first of 350 houses; 1,000 people face eviction. The campaigners vow to fight the road, house by house, tree by tree. As this booklet goes to press, one M11 protester is in Holloway prison. *Dear Tree* is dedicated to her and to the many other young people who, through their peaceful defence of an ancient tree, have woken up many people in Wansstead and beyond. As a message sprayed on the pavement near the tree asked: "Mum, Dad: where were you in the eco-war?"

9-11-93

From: The Old Chestnut Tree, George Green, Wanstead, London E11

After receiving a telephone call at our campaign office this morning concerning excess noise during the night (from the Ilford Recorder on behalf of some local residents), the protectors of the Green have agreed to pay particular care that this should not happen again. We play music during the night vigil to keep our spirits up, as it can get very nerve-racking waiting for a surprise attack from the darkness, which could spell the end for the old chestnut tree that we have made our home and will protect for as long as necessary. Of course, the best possible thing for our spirits would be for even more local people to come and lend their support, especially at night!

We would like to take this opportunity to stress, once again, the NON-VIOLENT nature of our activities. We use, and ask everyone to use, the tactics of Non-violent Direct Action that won freedom for many small countries, equal rights for Black people, for women and has already saved Oxleas Wood in South London and other places around the country. Together we shall win a reprieve for Wanstead and help to halt this motorway madness!

On a lighter note -- today brought a heart-warming message of support in the form of our first letter to be delivered by post directly to The Old Chestnut Tree, from a man in Cheshire. Thanks! Please keep those letters coming in; they do our spirits no end of good. (Perhaps we can set a record for the most letters ever posted to a tree house!) Please show your support for us here by joining the phone tree, signing the Beat the Bulldozer Pledge and by asking what is needed. Thank you.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-- Margaret Mead

IF NOT US -- WHO? IF NOT NOW -- WHEN?

imported to this country from America (nostril-holds, eye-sockets, ears and more intimate parts). There was screaming from those in pain, as well as those trying to protect each other and reason with the police. Some of whom were striking out indiscriminately. Many officers were obviously shocked by this situation and tried to restrain their colleagues; others were acting in a sympathetic manner and led people away from the tree, with reasonable force, depositing them outside a circle formed by police and checking to see that they didn't require the services of the waiting ambulances. Four people formed an inner defensive ring, locking their hands together inside heavy, steel tubes around the trunk of the tree. Others supporting them were subject to the police's efforts to remove them and some of them managed to return, over and over again. The ground around the tree turned to mud and the surreal sight of police and public wrestling in the mud greeted the television crews as they began to stream onto the green.

For some hours, it seemed as if the police had made no progress. There was still a large group of people around the tree. The police seemed to be under instructions not to arrest anyone and so protesters returned almost as soon as they were dragged off. The police formed a large circle around the protesters' inner defensive ring and held the waistband of the trousers worn by the officer in front, which looked comical to say the least! It appeared that they were not, as we had enquired, preparing to do the okey-cokey, but were waiting for a hydraulic platform (known as a "cherry-picker") to tackle the six men and one woman who had secured themselves in a number of ingenious ways to the upper branches. They had to wait (still in the "okey-cokey" position) for a further four hours, during which the people sang, danced and played music, and others made repeated attempts to break through to the tree. A number of different tactics were tried by the protesters to persuade the police to stop and consider what they were doing, including: hugging them, talking with them and various attempts to make them laugh at the incongruity of their situation!

By 10:50 a.m., the cherry-picker, presumably delayed by elves or incompetence, was being obstructed by mass sit-downs on Cambridge Park. About 15 people sitting in front of the cherry-picker were told to stand up or be arrested. They stood up and were surrounded by police, who pressed in on them and hit out unprovoked at some individuals for

NO M11 LINK ROAD CAMPAIGN NEWS RELEASE

8/12/83 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PLEASE. NO MORE STORES ABOUT BUCKETS OF EXCREMENT BEING
THROWN OR POLICE BEING STABBED AS THEY ARE NOT TRUE!**

"BLUE TUESDAY"

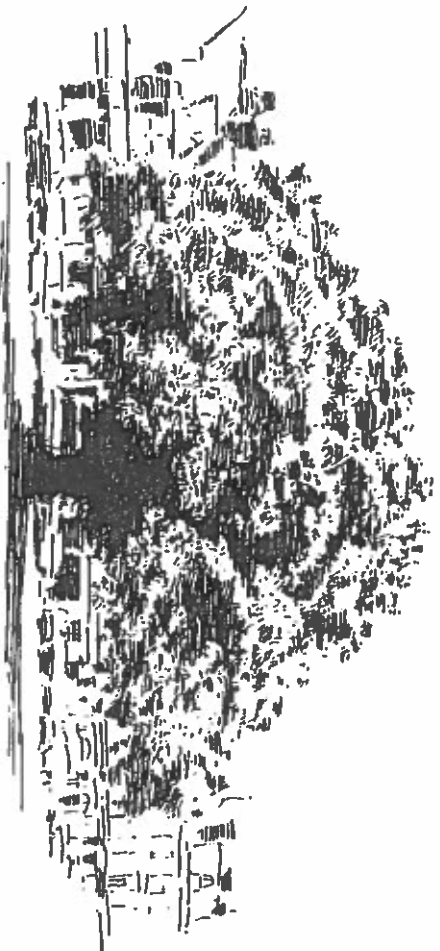
Almost a year ago to the day after "Yellow Wednesday" at Twyford Down, Hampshire, the nation is shocked to hear that extreme force has been used against a peaceful protest. This time, the scene was not a secluded corner of rural England; it was right in the politicians' back yard, under the watchful gaze of the media and the outraged local community.

The tree house had been occupied since the beginning of November and people, including a security guard who quit his job and joined the protest after prolonged conversations with campaigners, took it in turn to sleep in it and keep the camp-fire burning during the tension-ridden and freezing nights. It formed a focal point for the campaign, a place where people could come and find out the truth about the road and a place to meet and get to know the campaigners and break through prejudices formed by unfamiliar looks and misinformed "news stories" about us.

The campaign had been tipped off on Saturday and preparations made to take peaceful action to defend George Green and its legendary chestnut trees. A telephone tree was set up to enable local people to respond to a sneak attack and this was used to pass the message along. The tree-sitters were kept informed by CB radio, as local people phoned in with reports of a massive buildup of men and machinery, a fleet of ambulances and the unwelcome appearance of the Tactical Support Group, a special police unit, not known for intelligence and sensitivity.

At 5 a.m., 15 police vans, accompanied by three large police coaches and a fleet of ambulances drove down Cambridge Park and stopped. As they spilt out onto the road like an oil slick, a violent storm broke out and sudden winds rocked the branches of the trees. The alarm call of the Dongas tribe rang out: "ARROOGAI ARROOGAI"; our land is threatened! Everyone sat down around the tree and linked arms and legs, ready to suffer the onslaught. There was a lot of fear as to how the police would act, coupled with determination to protect the tree as much as we could by peaceful means. Without warning, they rushed in and began to pull at people, dragging them by whatever they could get hold of, including clothing, hair and other "compliance holds" recently

Dear Tree



To the Wanstead Chestnut Tree house people,
I really hope you can save the tree that you are trying to save at George Common. It looks a beautiful tree, from the photograph here in The Guardian newspaper. You are doing something very worthwhile. Don't give up. Stand your ground. I'd love to join you if I wasn't stuck here in work. Good luck!
Warrington, Cheshire

Hello again, Tree house people,
I've just read another article in Friday's Guardian. There is some story about receiving a letter from a Cheshire admirer. Is that my letter? Well anyway, well done in getting your tree made into a house status by a judge. Stay where you are! We don't want that bloody motorway to be built, do we? Glad to see the old ladies getting involved. I'll write again. It seems it may be doing some good. "Whatever we do to nature, we do to ourselves, as we are part of nature." Good luck,
Warrington, Cheshire

Dear Tree

11-11-93

Dear Tree Folk,

Good luck in your brave battle against the bulldozers - and the evil hobgoblins from the Department of Transport. **Ealing**

Dear Tree,

We think that the government's road building programme is the most disgusting waste of resources and the most environmentally damaging development in English history. We wish you luck and hope you live another 250 years. Yours, **Leeds, W. Yorks.**

The picture in The Independent made me cry.

I was born and grew up in Wanstead. I used to play on the three trees on the Green, scrambling round the trunk, trying not to put a foot on the ground. I used to throw sticks in the trees and collect the chestnuts and I used to keep a weather eye on the bus stop, before doing a quick sprint to catch the 101 bus home. I can't believe that the DoT can ride roughshod over the tree preservation orders on such a beautiful, isolated tree. I am heartened by your actions. We owe our surroundings to people like yourselves. I should also say that I remember the posters in house windows 20 years ago saying "Tunnel It" about the M11 link. If we've kept the planners and builders at bay for so long, we can surely win. **Warwickshire**

Dear Tree Protectors,

I saw the picture of the Chestnut Tree on George Green in The Independent today. I was born in Dangan Rd and lived there until I was 10. I vividly remember collecting chestnuts from under that tree and I very much hope you can save it from destruction.

Redhill, Surrey

P.S. Here's a fiver for a pint at The George!

Dear Tree

7-12-93

Dear Folks,

I work at [a library] and all of us here are really sickened by what the police did. It's just another example of the decay in this country. We don't need any more roads. Soon there will be nothing left. May the Goddess bless you all and give you strength. Love from, **London SE22**

7-12-93

To everyone in the campaign,

"Anytime you live in a society supposedly based on law and it doesn't enforce its own law because the colour of a man's skin happens to be wrong, then I say those people are justified to resort to any means necessary to bring about justice when the government can't give them justice." -- Malcolm X

I wish I could have been with you throughout the day, but I had to go to work after 8:30 a.m. My thoughts were with you. You are brave without even trying. You have given me more than you in your whole life can imagine. There will be no second Noah's Ark! Turn on, tune in, change society.

10-12-93

Dear Tree & Inhabitants (human and otherwise),

Cling & cleave to the earth who sustains us all, in body, mind and spirit. We shall not give up the fight. We have only begun!

To the Old Tree,

You can't kill the spirit.

Dear Tree

To everyone in the tree and in the houses and fighting to save a bit of green space -- Season's Greetings. Thanks from everyone at my house -- may the tree survive to see the New Year! **Wanstead, London E12**

Dear Tree,

You've been in Wanstead 300 years -- here's to 300 more.

Dear People,

I really think that what you are doing is fantastic. It must be really cold up there now. I know deep down that all the creativity in this campaign will eventually triumph over the destruction. I send my warmest regards and continued support at ground level.

Dear friends,

I hope this letter reaches you! Today I heard about the police action against you at George Green, and I felt that I had to write to express my support for you. I travel regularly by coach between London and Cambridge, and I have followed your protests in Wanstead for many months. I cannot afford to travel by train, let alone by car, and I am horrified that yet another motorway is going to penetrate into London. As far as I can see, this link road would add, rather than take away from, further congestion. Surely such a large amount of money could be spent to far greater benefit to the local area. I am sure that you have the full support of all of us, both in London and everywhere roads are built, who would prefer to have investment made in public rather than private transport. Every green space in London now seems to be disposable. You have my full support in defending yours. Yours sincerely, **London SE25**

Dear Tree

Dear Tree,
I saw your picture in the paper today and heard the good news. Congratulations! It sounds like you have a lot of friends down there, but if you should need extra help, you know you only have to ask. Good luck! Much love, **Ambleside, Cumbria**

[Cree postcard]

11-11-93

The occupiers, The treehouse,
Greetings and our full support.

Snaresbrook Labour Party

[postcard of 10 Downing Street]

11-11-93

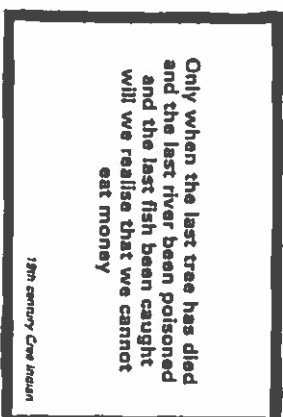
The occupiers, The treehouse,

Sorry to disappoint you, but it will not surprise you if I tell you that the Tories are not supporting you. But don't be downhearted. **Snaresbrook Labour Party**!

11-11-93

Dear Sweet Chestnut Tree,

What a pleasure to read in the Guardian that the Sweet Chestnut has been given a reprieve. That a tree has "rights" is recognised in case law in the United States. Little wonder that lawyers from our Department of Transport are somewhat perplexed, not to say worried. One hopes that the lead given by children and women to recognise that the tree has "rights" will continue, so much so that victory will be ensured and that future generations of children will be able to enjoy the Sweet Chestnut for itself. Trees have rights, none more so than the Wanstead Sweet Chestnut. This is no mere philosophical standpoint. It's about what is valued and what we care for. To fell the Sweet Chestnut would be a loss to us all. The tree is home



Dear Tree

to wildlife, a source of pleasure to all, and a lung, filtering carbon and making for a greener Wanstead, London, UK, Europe and the globe. At the end of the day, the action at George Green is really what "Acting Locally and Thinking Globally" is all about. Keep the Sweet Chestnut for a sane and caring world. With best wishes, **Chester, Cheshire**

11-11-93

Hello, I saw you on the news tonight and I want to say that I hope your campaign succeeds as I think link roads spoil the landscape and chopping down a beautiful tree like the one you are living in at the moment would be a crime in itself. I am giving you my full moral support. (Sorry about the colour change but my pen ran out as cheap biro's always do.) Yours sincerely, [age 14]

11-11-93

Dear Occupier,

After seeing the BBC news about your campaign to save the tree and the environment, we would like to say well done and keep it up. We have lived in this area all our lives and have gradually watched it being carved up by motorways and link roads. Good luck. Yours sincerely, **South Woodford, London E18**

Dear Tree,

Good on ya! Keep up the good work. It's about time someone stood up and said stop this madness. Hope you'll be around for many years to come. We are all rooting for you! Chin up. Love, **Twyn, Gwynedd**

To All Link Road Protesters,

Good luck and best wishes from another admirer.
HOMES NOT ROADS! TREES NOT ROADS!
Oxford (but I used to live in lovely Leyton)

8

Dear Tree

picture of a Peace Banner that dates from Greenham days, and that we'd like to bring to the carol singing next week. As a Peacenik, I'm not surprised at the way you have been treated by more violent elements. But we are heirs to an industrial & militarised past, so this helps explain the problems you face. We loved the subverted, or rather, improved Union Jack. You are the last colonialised people (in the UK) to try and throw off the Norman yolk. We salute your courage. **Woodford Green, Essex**

6-12-93

Dear Tree and Tree Residents,

Hope you are still there and aren't feeling too scorched. Keep on avoiding the axe-wielding maniacs, and you should be there for a long time to come. Stop the M11!

6-12-93

Dear Tree (and all dwelling in you),

I am writing this on Monday morning, so I hope that you are still standing when this reaches you. The people who are protecting you are very important. They will be thanked in years to come. Likewise, you are important, tree. You are a symbol of continuity and permanence in a sprawling, polluted city. If you have lived 350 years you can, and must, live 350 years more. Good luck, Earth Defenders. We'll be thinking of you. Love and branches from across the country, **Birmingham**

6-12-93

Dear and Sweet Chestnut Tree,

Hi, it's me again. How's it going? I'm not sure if you'll still be around by the time you receive this. I obviously hope so, but we know what those Norwest Aggressors are like. I'll try and pop down again a.s.a.p. Luton's not too far away. Take care and stay green.

29

Dear Tree

Dear All,
Heard about the bombing on t.v. this morning. Hope you find another tent. Keep up the good work and good luck.
Thinking of you.

The Old Tree,
Gala will protect you (with a little help from the NO M11 Link Rd campaign and others) or avenge you (watch out DOT,
John MacGregor, Norwest Holst!) **Leytonstone E11**

5-12-93

Dear Tree Residents,
I have just heard about your brave stance to save the tree and to stand up to the establishment. Sometimes it seems a lonely, bleak task to speak out against the establishment, to fight for our earth and for all her people. There is such insanity in destroying trees, homes and established communities for yet another road. More concrete jungle. They'll probably put an electronic toll on the cars using the road. No one will be able to afford it and will use all the side roads. Destroying all for nothing -- and more pollution. There are alternatives to the petrol engine. What strength and power the oil companies have, the road construction companies have; what strength and power the people have. Thank you. Whatever the outcome, you have stood up, you have been counted. Every time people stand up, we move one step further. Our thoughts are with you. **Ynys Môn, Gwynedd**

5-12-93

Dear Tree Residents,
It was great to see you on telly and even better in your home, as we did yesterday while listening to all those inspiring messages. But no input from the Peace Movement, that was so strong before the Cold War ended. So I'm sending you this

Dear Tree

Dear Gentlefolk,
Best wishes and fight the good fight. **London SE15**

Dear All,
Keep up the good work. Save our common land. We want the cash in public transport NOT roads. My cat would like to live in a tree house. Yours, **someone choking on fumes**
Just a note to say, Well done in fighting for what you believe in! Keep up the good work -- it's worth it! **Bicester**

The Old Tree,
Thank you for helping our family in these days of madness.
Love + peace. **The trees of Oxleas Wood, London SE9**

Hello, We heard about your brave stand against the M11 extension and fight to save the chestnut tree. We support you wholeheartedly and have a battle of our own -- to save a woodland -- so good luck. Take care of yourselves.
Billingshurst, West Sussex

12-11-93

Dear All,
I thought you'd like this postcard [showing a boy with a sign: "What future for me if they cut down this tree?"] -- a voice of sanity! Hope the weather treats you well, and that you are settling into your new home! I hear the neighbours are nice.

12-11-93

Dear Tree,
Congratulations on your stay of execution. Long may it continue! They recently tried to force an M1-M62 link road on us but public opinion stopped them. If there is anything I can do to help, you have only to ask. **Huddersfield, Yorks.**

A. Donga, The Chestnut Tree,

Stay up there! You're doing a great job for all of us.

12-11-93

Dear people up the tree,

We hope you're not too cold, what with all this dreadful weather we've been having. It's jolly good what you're doing, and I wish we had more people living up trees. Why should it just be Tarzan? This is just to say good luck, and I'll be furiously spreading the word to all faithful followers of the world bunny cult to come down and save this lovely chestnut. Any who try to despoil it will surely be cursed with lots of rancid bunny droppings, love and fluffy cuddles, **from all the fluffy bunnies around the world**

To all concerned with the M11 opposition,

After passing the proposed route for the ghastly M11 and subsequently seeing the Newsroom Southeast report, I would like to say a big thankyou to you all for trying to stop the M11 and save a beautiful Green and the lives of many trees along the route that will be lost on a road that has no purpose and no support. If this letter delivered to the wonderful old tree will help, then I'm more than glad to help as it's not only Wanstead residents that will be affected, but all those who pass the little piece of green in a concrete jungle, and people who wish to breathe clean air everywhere. **London E3**

Brilliant! I really admire your actions. The TV report made my day. **Blessed Be. London**

The sweet chestnut tree(ouse).

I hope many influential people fly to your protection! Best wishes to all those who are fighting for you! **Rugby**

Dear All,

I am writing to say how inspired I am by your defence of the tree and the great victory you have won so far against the DoT. I hope your spirits are high because many, many ordinary people are with you and support your campaign. I hope and pray that this tree will be saved and this road will never be built.

The Old Chestnut,

Good luck with your campaign against another bloody road!
Yours, **London N1**

Dear Tree,

How are you? I hope you're OK and that none of those bastard security guards have tried to hurt you. Here is a picture for your inhabitants to colour in to decorate you.

Here's a poem for you:

Above the twisted branches of the chestnut tree
Lies a secret kingdom where the folk are free

They dance around the roots where their mothers gave birth
And celebrate life with the spirit of the earth.

Hope you like it. Love and respect, **from a happy elf.**

To all the protesters against the M11 and any other new road that is NOT wanted: Well done - keep up the good work. I think you are all beautiful and wonderful people. **Bradford, W. Yorks.**

3-12-93

Dear occupants of the old sweet chestnut tree.

This is a small token of moral support for your courageous stand to prevent yet more despoliation and/or depredation of our landscape. **Fellow ecologists, London SW15**

Sorry I'm not with you today folks. I'm thinking of you all. Together we can win! **Tonbridge, Kent**

Dear Tree

Thank you all for trying to stop the trees from being cut down. I hope you all succeed and when I come past, I always hoot at you. Best of luck.

28-11-93

The Residents,

The Old Chestnut Tree,

In Canada, on some occasions, citizen power has been successful in halting the bulldozing mania of motorway madness. Indeed, I live on an interesting multi-cultural street in central Toronto that almost became a divided motorway some 20 years ago. It was rescued by citizen action. "Stop the Spadina Expressway" remains a classic of Canadian citizen power and neighbourhood preservation. So, from someone who has lived through it, I say: Keep up the good work. Yours truly, **Toronto, Canada**

To the people in the tree,

"At first I thought I was fighting to save the trees. Then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon forest. Now I realise I am fighting for humanity."

--Chico Mendes, assassinated 1988

Your fight, like Chico Mendes', is more than just a fight for a tree. It goes much deeper. I wish you luck, and pray for your success. Be strong.

Dear Chestnut Tree,

I love you. I care! I hope you and the rest of Wanstead Green survive! Love from **Westonville, California**

I want the tree to stay there. I was upset that it was going to be chopped down. I don't want the road to [go] over the tree house. [age 6]

Dear Tree

12-11-93

Dear Tree Dwellers,

Well done. Shades of Twyford Down and the Donga tribesmen and women protesting against the desecration of the environment. The government says they go through extensive public consultation with inquiries etc, but in reality it falls to give the public the facts. The whole thing is sewn up before the inquiry. Nothing ever gets changed, except for at Oxleas Wood where they have been fighting for years and were due to take the government to court in the EEC. They had worked out a strategy of signing up well-known names to be chained to trees in Oxleas Wood, over 300 of them. They also made sure the issue got good news coverage in the same way you have. We are all behind your fight. **Cheam, Surrey**

12-11-93

Dear Tree,

Although you have probably had many friends during your 250-year life, I would be honoured to be able to see you in years to come. I wish you well. **Dorset**

12-11-93

Dearest Tree,

Thank you for supporting my friends over these difficult times. May you have another happy 300 years of life. Love,
London N1

12-11-93

Dear Tree,

Please don't allow the road builders to pull you down. You have been there 250 years. It is totally wrong to cover our few remaining green areas with concrete for motorways. You have our support. With best wishes for a very much longer and happy life, **Lancashire**

Dear Tree

12-11-93

Dear Tree People,

A note to wish you well in your struggle against government vandalism. We are fighting to save our 10-acre allotments, and we know what sacrifices and effort has to be made. Our local adversary - Northamptonshire County Council - calls itself "The Rose of the Shires". What we call it is unprintable. Very best wishes to you all. We will continue the fight! God bless you all. **Northampton**

12-11-93

General Council of Trees
Oxleas Wood, London SE9
Dear Chestnut,

I hope you are well and not too perturbed by all the yellow bellies. I hear through the grapevine that you have made a lot of friends, not all of them Wanstead residents. I read this morning's papers concerning the case of Tree vs. DoT. I wish your every endeavour to be filled with luck. You know what they say: "Don't let the bastards cut you down." Maybe we'll see you down at Twyford at the end of the month. Regards and congratulations. **General Hornbeam**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I was overjoyed to read the other day about your success in court. I hope future court action will result in you being allowed to stay in your home for another two hundred years. All the very best to you and all your supporters.

12-11-93

Dear Residents,

Good luck with your campaign. Long may you continue to be an inspiration for others. Best wishes,
[signed by 30 people] **Ipswich, Suffolk**

12

Dear Tree

The Sweet Chestnut Tree Sitters,
Tree-huggers of the world, unite!

London N13 (& Silver Birch Adopted Tree No. 177 at Oxleas)

24-11-93

Dear Tree,

May life bless you and keep you for all you have been and are being, for the eyes and ears and hearts your have opened, for being from and of our Mother Earth. Gaia be with you!
Leyton, London E10

24-11-93

Dear Occupiers,

Greetings, and reverence for your apparent return to one of the points where Man went wrong in his ignorant struggle for progress. To the trees! Back to the hunter-gatherer stage; may squirrels and chestnuts be the beginnings of a second chance at evolution. And may you last the winter! Yours very very sincerely, **London WC1B** To perdition with the M11 extension!

24-11-93

Dear Chestnut Tree,

My friend Jackie tells me that you are besieged and threatened by road contractors making a thing called M11, which not all of us think necessary. I know that you have good friends at hand who are trying to help you, but a letter or two from further afield can't do any harm. Long may you live! Yours sincerely,
Brighton, Sussex

P.S. My friend William of Walthamstow sends best wishes, too.

To the protesters in the ancient chestnut tree,

Congratulations and thank you for all the good work you are doing on our behalf. Please let us know when you need donations. **Bath, Avon**

25

Dear Tree

Dear All,
I drive past every day and really do admire what you are doing. It's very easy to say "No Link Road" but to campaign in the way you are and to spend days and nights in the freezing cold up a tree!!! takes guts and determination. If it wasn't for people like you, everyone would just sit back, shake their heads and say "that should never have been allowed to happen". You all are stopping it from happening. Thank you and well done.
Yours, **London E7**

21-11-93

Dear All,

Just a short letter to say thank you for making people aware of the Chestnut and the Green. We all admire the stand you are making and think you're doing a wonderful job. We were in a stream of traffic passing by on Saturday so weren't able to get any information. Can you please send leaflets or a petition or anything relevant to your cause? Can you please also enclose a sprig off the tree or a chestnut? We do so love it, and have passed the Green weekly for over 35 years. Best wishes to you all. **Bastidon, Essex P.S.** Anything we can do from our area?

Hello Tree folk!

Hope you like this card. Hope you stop the M11 Link Road. Hope you save the tree. Hope you don't freeze in the process. Hope you are warm and dry. Good luck.

23-11-93

Dear Treedom Fighters,

Nothing wooden about the response so far, eh folks? You're doing a great job keeping those buggers out.
Best wishes, **London NW8**

Dear Tree

12-11-93
The occupants,
Greetings from the Hackney chapter of the London Cycling Campaign. We support your efforts. Keep up the good work. They shall not pass.

12-11-93

Dear Tree People,
Good luck from the whole population of Kent!
[signed X and X] "spokespeople for the people of Kent"

Dear Mr Chestnut,

Just a note to say that I hope you're still standing and this note doesn't arrive too late for you. I hope the decent protesters manage to hold off the police and security for a while longer. Give us a ring if u get the chance, but I'll understand if it's a hassle to walk over to the phone box after 250 years of standing in the same place. Yours evergreen.

12-11-93

Dear Tree,

I am appalled that anyone would plan to chop you down, so naturally I abhor the construction of the M11 link road, and I offer my support to those who are involved in the struggle to save you. Having never written to a tree before, I am curious to know what your response might be. All in good fun. Yours faithfully, **Birkenhead, Merseyside**

Dear Friends,

We were delighted to hear of your success in the courts. We hope that the decision will be confirmed at the full hearing and that your actions will lead to the complete halting of this unnecessary road-building project. **London NW3**

Dear Tree

Dear Tree,

I hope you stay for many more years. We need more trees not motorways. Thank god there's at least one judge with some sense. **Tywyn, Gwynedd**

Dear Tree Dwellers,

Happiness in your new home! Thanks for keeping up the fight against the destruction of our lands!

Dear Tree,

Are you thinking of opening a branch near us? Take a leaf out of my book and have no truck with trunk roads. **MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU** and congratulations, Judge Tuckey! Good luck with the motorway, and let us know if you want us to stand in the way of anything. With love, **Islington, London N4**

12-11-93

Dear Chestnut Tree,

You are beautiful! I hope you will be standing for many years to come. Down with the motorway!! Trees not cars! Love, (35 & never owned a car) **South Ruislip, Middlesex**

Dear Tree,

Keep up your brave fight against those M11 tyrants. We are all with you and we will fight the Department of Roads & Bribery.

12-11-93

The Occupants,

So pleased to hear that you have been granted official status as a dwelling. Power to all tree houses. **Tonbridge, Kent**

Dear Tree,

May your leaves be green and brown for many years to come. **Tywyn, Gwynedd**

14

Dear Tree

18-11-93

Dear Tree and Treedwellers,
Stand firm. We stand for something better and older and we're going to win! Good luck. **A fellow anti-roads campaigner, Lancaster**

Dear Tree,

Greetings from "Oxford Sellouts Say No M11 Link" society. Sorry for lack of inspiration but Oxford is bollocks-boring. Hope your campaign is going "awfully well". We are behind you in spirit but struggling to get off our lethargic arses. We have our academic reputations to consider. Love and laziness. **Oxford**

20-11-93

Dear Chestnut Tree House People,

I heard about the problems being made for you. I thought I'd drop you a line at your house and wish you well in your campaign to save the old Chestnut Tree and to have your home recognised as a house! Is your local postal delivery person OK about bringing your mail? Does the Post Office recognise your address? Is your MP on your side? Is the local press helpful? Is there anything further people like me, from afar, could do? We have to fight sometimes to preserve trees up here. But we haven't had to fight for such a special tree as yours. I expect you're using all your resources to try to keep the tree, so I enclose some stamps to help you. **[A vicar] Cheshire**

Hello Tree Dwellers,

We hope you haven't been finding it too cold in your chestnut abode, or you haven't been blown away in the rainy wind. We'd like to send you a cake but it hasn't been made yet, so in the meantime here is a letter of warmth and encouragement because we think you have vision and strength in your endeavours and we know you'll succeed because everyone wants you to.

23

Dear Tree

which she wrote about her "veterans on the Green". She meant you and your Sisters and Brothers on the Green. Many years ago she took me to the corner of Her Road and introduced me to you. From that moment, I was determined to get to know you better, and I decided to put into pictures what she put into words. I have such a lovely collection from your budding spring through leafy summer, until each year in autumn when I said "Goodnight, Sleep well. See you next spring" -- and so it happened, year after year. I have taken my place amongst your many friends during the past few days. I have used my camera when the sun made it possible. These pictures will be precious. Goodnight once again -- see you again in Spring 1994. Your admirer,
Leytonstone, London E11

Life: a restless journey across the high sierras & sweltering valleys of human experience = mission impossible

Stardate: 17-11-93

Planet: Earth

Weather: bitter, chill, crisp and clear

To the tree people,

I think you are terrific. You set a wonderful example. There are many laws and rules and not enough examples!! So plant a seed for Good Deeds and, like a tree, Kindness and Enlightenment will grow.

With love, a local resident for 30 years

18-11-93

Dear Mr. Men in the Tree,

My mummy says that some bad men are going to build a smelly motorway near where I live. Please don't let them do this becus I dont want any more motor cars becus they are not nice and my mummy says I wont be able to breathe if there are any more cars. Luv, **Wanstead, London E11** [age 3-1/2]

22

Dear Tree

12-11-93

Dear Friends,

We saw the postman climbing the ladder to deliver letters yesterday. So here's another to add to the postbag and a cheque to help with funds. It was a great idea to occupy the tree, that symbol of life on which we ultimately depend for our survival. Did you know that Michael Heseltine is very proud of his arboretum? He is fortunate enough to have an estate attached to his country mansion. Years ago, if you constructed a house between sunset and sunrise and had smoke coming from the chimney, you had the right to stay put! Nowadays, "liberty" is reduced to the right to obey the police -- a fact that your actions in defence of ecology and the natural world (as well as those who ought to have a roof as a right) expose. The combination of Capital and state power is a formidable foe. Twas ever thus: yesterday the Levellers and the Luddites, today those who challenge the motorway programme. **Woodford Green, Essex**

12-11-93

Dear Protectors of the Old Chestnut Tree,

I'm writing to make sure you get more mail to prove yours is, indeed, a dwelling, keeping the bailiffs at bay. I am really proud to know there are still people around who have the sense to put the planet first. Yours is an unenviable task, but I wish you all the luck in the world. If I were a bit younger, braver, etc., I'd be there with you. I am with you in spirit. I'm sure more people than you know about probably feel the same way but are too apathetic to write. Please believe you have the support of the silent as well. My husband turns trees felled in the storm into nice objects and this is his way of salvaging something beautiful from nature, so you can see our love of the planet and its trees is a real one. Never give up,
Cheam, Surrey

15

13-11-93

Dear Tree,

Many, many congratulations on winning your injunction against being bulldozed. I admire you very much indeed, and support you in every way. Please spread your branches for at least another 250 years. Yours lovingly, **Twickenham**

13-11-93

Very best wishes to everyone concerned in your heroic struggle in difficult conditions!

13-11-93

The Tree House,

Thank you for trying to save the tree. We hope you're successful. We admire your spirit in this cold wet weather.

Two Wanstead residents

13-11-93

Thankyou for everything you have done so far to delay (and hopefully STOP) this crazy road scheme from destroying Wanstead. We admire and totally support this peaceful protest. Good luck with this and any future projects.

[From a family & friends] **Wanstead, London E11**

13-11-93

Dear friends,

You are doing a fantastic job. I congratulate you on your courage and spirit. Hold the fort! Yours for trees and survival, **London N16**

there is a tree that is going to be copped down. but I dont want the tree to be copped down I am going to stop them from cuting down the tree and stop them from buldging the rode throo the tree [age 10]

14-11-93

Dear Occupants,

Just a small note to wish you all the best in your new home. I hope you are settled in nicely, without too many problems. Try to keep your spirits up and don't let them grind you down. We all know that you are right. Best of luck. Yours admirngly,

Warrington, Cheshire

15-11-93

The very old and very threatened tree on George Green, G'luck Tree. G'luck People. **London EC**

15-11-93

Dear Beautiful Tree,

Another note to say hi. If you receive this one, it means you are still standing after a couple of days, which is very good. If u still exist (I bloody well hope so) in two weeks, are u going to Twyford for the gathering? I suppose it might be a bit hard for u to hitch-hike down to Winchester as you'd be too big to fit in most cars. Be good.

Dear Tree Dwellers,

Thank you for saving our 300 year old tree. You have all my support. I think what you are doing is very worthwhile. I came to see the tree last Saturday and I will come this Saturday. I love Wanstead Green and would hate to see it spoilt. Keep up the good work. **Leytonstone, London E11** [age 9]

16-11-93

Dear, dear Tree,

Do you remember a lovely Lady who once lived in Spratt Hall Road, Wanstead? I'll refresh your memory. This talented Lady was an authoress who adored Her Wanstead. Her name, Winifred Eastment; her book, *Wanstead through the Ages* in

Dear Tree

13-11-93

Dear Tree-Dwellers,

Thank you so much for what you're doing to try to save the tree, the green, the houses and the area. It really distresses me to see what the contractors and the DoT are trying to do, and I wish I could do something more to help, and feel guilty that I didn't do more 22 years ago when I first heard about it, when I was living in Leyton. I'm filled with admiration for your efforts and I really hope you'll be successful. With best wishes, **Wanstead, London E12**

Toke and be happy.

To the righteous brothers + sisters in the tree,

Congratulations on the success in court. It's so gratifying to see protocol backfire on those who thought they had it all sewn up! It's an excellent job that you're all doing. I've lived in Wanstead most of my life, but I never actually thought they'd go ahead and build the soddin' thing! Just another big pile of money-making corporate horseshit! Thankfully, you have the guts to tell them where to go, and I'm sure that the more support you can gather, the better the chances are of sending 'em off with their tails between their legs! Make sure the press stay there. National opinion is already starting to side with you. Big hugs all round, "Spokesman, Woodford & Walthamstow Crafty Puffers Association", **Walthamstow, London E17**

Dear Tree People,

I feel that I must write to you and congratulate you all for saving this most beautiful tree, which has stood on the common for many years and would be sadly missed if it was to be cut down. I sincerely hope you continue to win your case, because the world is becoming a very sad place, not only for us, but also for the wildlife that live in the tree. **Barking, Essex**

20

Dear Tree

13-11-93

Re: Saving Trees

Dear Friends,

I was intrigued to learn that my friend and fellow Tree Warden had written to you, with such unexpected and fortunate results. I immediately phoned the head of the Tree Council which organises the Parish Tree Warden scheme throughout the British Isles. I asked whether our members could help in some way. There are, after all, more than 4,000 of us now. He had not heard of your campaign, but was very impressed when he learned the details. He will contact the Dept of Transport at the highest level on Monday. I hope he has the desired effect. Some of us are keen to come and visit you next weekend. I believe there are no Tree Wardens within 40 miles of you. If there had been, they would have been involved at the first whisper of the link road. I would be interested in back-numbers of the local papers, outlining the history of your campaign. It will be invaluable in similar situations in the future. Meanwhile, congratulations and sincerest best wishes for your continuing success. Yours sincerely, **Warrington, Cheshire**

13-11-93

To my dear friends,

I would like to offer my thanks and support for your efforts to save our tree. I understand that the tree is not just a tree but a symbol of whether our world, too, will be destroyed in the path of the construction industry! I am often in the area and enjoy seeing nature's life on view in the form of these trees. You don't bother the people there, only the destroyers -- so keep up the good work. God will be proud of you; so will Mother Nature! **A friend of the cause**

Dear Tree sitters,

You're doing a grand job. **Wanstead, London E11**

17

13-11-93

Dear Tree People,

You do not know me. I am an old M3 and Twyford Down campaigner. I got involved in anti-road campaigning back in 1975, when in my mid-30s. I suppose I am from a generation that thought it could start to change things by argument, fighting inquiries with professional evidence, lobbying, etc. The Twyford Down experience has fundamentally altered my perception of things.

Although we have lost the Down, and it was a terrible experience to lose something as wonderfully beautiful as the Dongas (or the "old valleys" of Twyford Down), I have nevertheless experienced such an uplifting sense of faith in what you younger people can achieve, that I feel really grateful for the past two years.

I have spent years, decades even, sitting in dull committees. And then I met the two founding members of the Dongas Tribe, just after they first camped at the foot of the Dongas. I also met, at around the same time, some EF [Earth First!] activists. This was all before the last General Election and before the European Commission decision to drop Twyford Down, for "pragmatic reasons", and I suppose most of respectable, middle-class Winchester, including myself, was still expecting to Save the Downs through the institutional process. But I was still intrigued to meet such enthusiasm and self-belief in these young people.

As the months went by, however, I came to realise that a serious force was to be recognised here. The love and companionship and real sense of life in the Dongas camp was translating into determination, at first desperate and heroic, but later into something potent and effective.

I really do believe now, that things are going to change. You young people, whether Dongas, EF, Roads Alert or whatever, have had an impact on the public consciousness. It hasn't died with the death of Twyford Down, but is growing in strength and ambition. Twyford Down was of huge importance. It had a huge amount going for it: landscape, rare and precious historic sites, flora and fauna, five designations of protection. Nothing was more obviously in need of defending. Yet because a major citadel has fallen is no reason to stop defending less famous places. Every field and hedge, house and tree in the way of the roads juggernaut is important.

When I was 5 years old, a family that had just purchased a neighbouring house began their residence by felling an ancient oak tree in the garden to make way for a drive into a garage! I remember that day more clearly than I remember anything else from that age of childhood. I remember people begging the tree cutters to stop, and I remember even now how I couldn't believe it was not possible for it to be stopped, if people really wanted it to be stopped. I think I was more heartsick then, than when I watched the trees stripped from the Dongas.

So I feel so strongly for you in your chestnut tree. You are doing the things that my generation should have done when we were young. And you are splendidly inspiring the next generation. I do not know whether or not, by your efforts, spring will ever come again to your tree. If it does, than that is a triumph over darkness. But even if you fail, other things will be defended by people following your example, and someday somewhere, trees will stay alive that would have died, had you not done what you are doing now. With gratitude. Good luck, **Winchester**