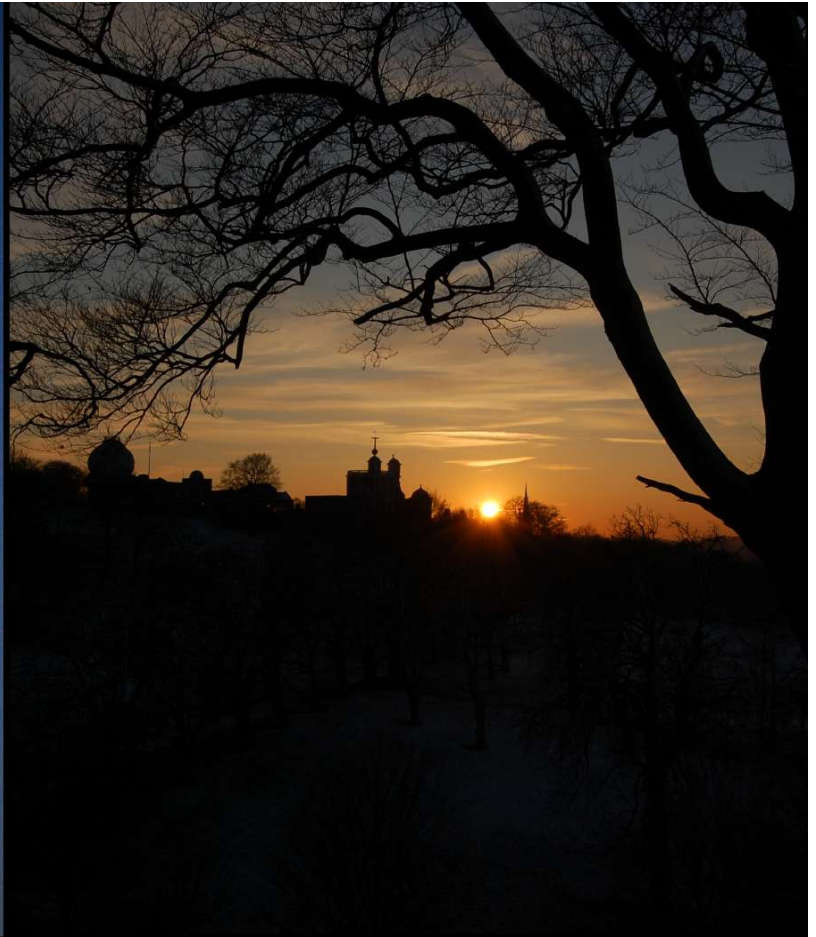




Prime Meridian (119) December 31, 2019

As 2019 closes and 2020 begins, we look back to the climate campaigns in 2009. Ten years on, how effective have these actions been and what is the message for the future?

Above: A very English rebellion: On William F. Woodington's Battle of the Nile (the relief on the north face of the plinth of Nelson's column). Horatio Nelson raised an Extinction Rebellion flag on October 7, 2019.



Ten years ago: A few reminders to set the Earth's journey of 2009.

Above left: April 26, 2009. A view of the Moon lit by both the Sun and Earthshine. There is a faint reflection of the Moon through a window. Underneath the Moon is Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun and visible in after sunset and near dawn. Higher than the Moon are the brightest stars of the Pleiades cluster in the constellation of Taurus. The cluster, which is about 100 million years old (meanwhile on Earth, that was about the beginning of the Upper Cretaceous, the final part of the age of the dinosaurs), lies roughly 400 light years away.

Above right: In 2009, the Winter Solstice took place on December 21. These pictures were taken at Greenwich, London on Dec. 19. The view at top right was the Sun sinking beside the Old Royal Observatory on this snowy evening. Below: The setting Sun was caught by the buildings at Canary Wharf, the 235 m One Canada Square, the third tallest building in the UK.





Camp for Climate Action.

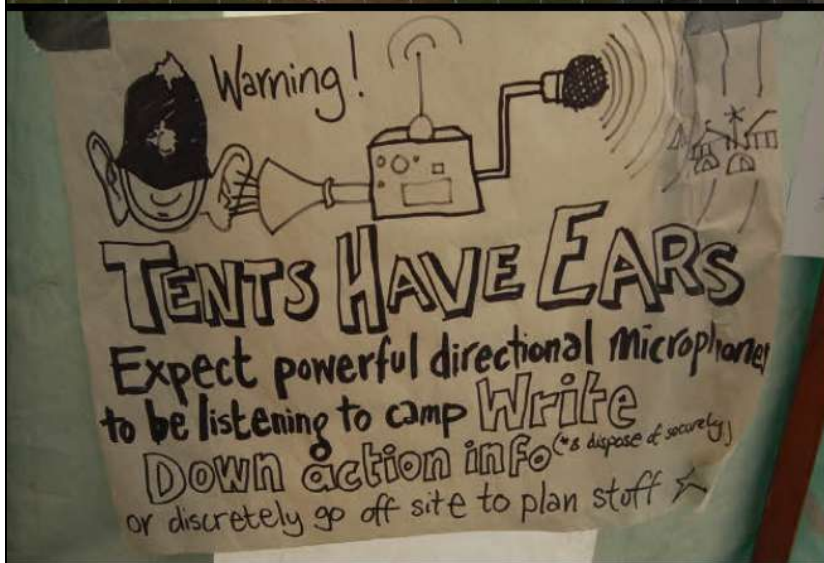
The background in 2009 was the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Copenhagen in Denmark from Dec. 7 to 18.

The Camp for Climate Action took place in several countries around the world. It began in 2006 at the Drax power station in North Yorkshire (UK's largest coal-fired station).

The Camp in the City responded on April 1 to the G20 London Summit (April 2).

August 2009, the Camp occupied Blackheath above Greenwich. The lengthy history included the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 - so that protest is no stranger here.

Needless to say, these events of 2009 are just a selected history of climate protest, rather than of the entire 10 years. Clearly, Extinction Rebellion raised the intensity of protest from 2018/2019.



Left: Climate Camp at Blackheath 2009.

Trafalgar Square has been the focus of numerous actions over the years, with Extinction Rebellion occupying the Square in October 2019.

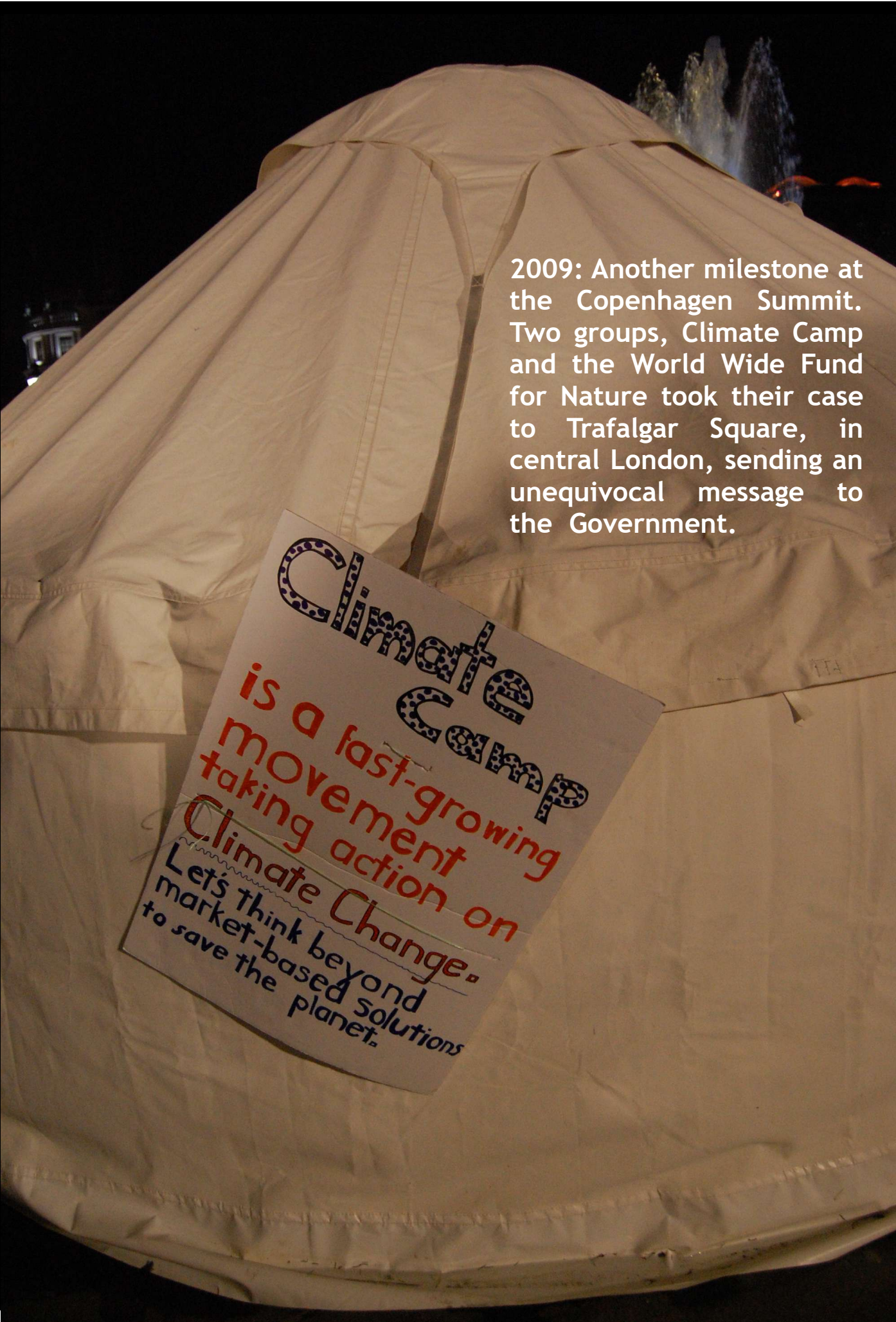
Concerns about forests joined the agenda in the Square late in 2009.

Artist Angela Palmer decided that the most effective way to bring home the ongoing devastation of the rain forests to the British public was to bring the stumps of forest giants into the heart of Trafalgar Square.

She had negotiated with a legal logging operation in Ghana. After the loss of 90% of the country's forest, logging was now strictly controlled.

Below: The "Ghost Forest" was on display in November, 2009, and it was attracting numerous visitors.



A large, white, conical tent is set up at night. In the background, a fountain with several jets of water is illuminated. A protest sign is attached to the side of the tent. The sign has the words 'Climate Camp' in a large, stylized font at the top. Below that, it says 'is a fast-growing movement taking action on Climate Change.' in red and black text. At the bottom, it says 'Let's think beyond market-based solutions to save the planet.' in black text.

2009: Another milestone at the Copenhagen Summit. Two groups, Climate Camp and the World Wide Fund for Nature took their case to Trafalgar Square, in central London, sending an unequivocal message to the Government.

Climate
Camp
is a fast-growing
movement
taking action on
Climate Change.
Let's think beyond
market-based solutions
to save the planet.



2009: The Climate Camp occupied London's Trafalgar Square and grabbed the headlines.

Looking down from the steps of the National Gallery, into the Square, visitors could see the Climate Camp set up to publicise the climate change issues during the days leading up to the December 2009 Copenhagen Summit. Protestors' tents sprawled around the bases of the famous Christmas tree sent every year by Norway, and the Nelson's Column, which was completed in 1843. That other iconic London landmark, as they looked down Whitehall to the Houses of Parliament, was Big Ben. The officers of the Members of Parliament were just a short walk away.

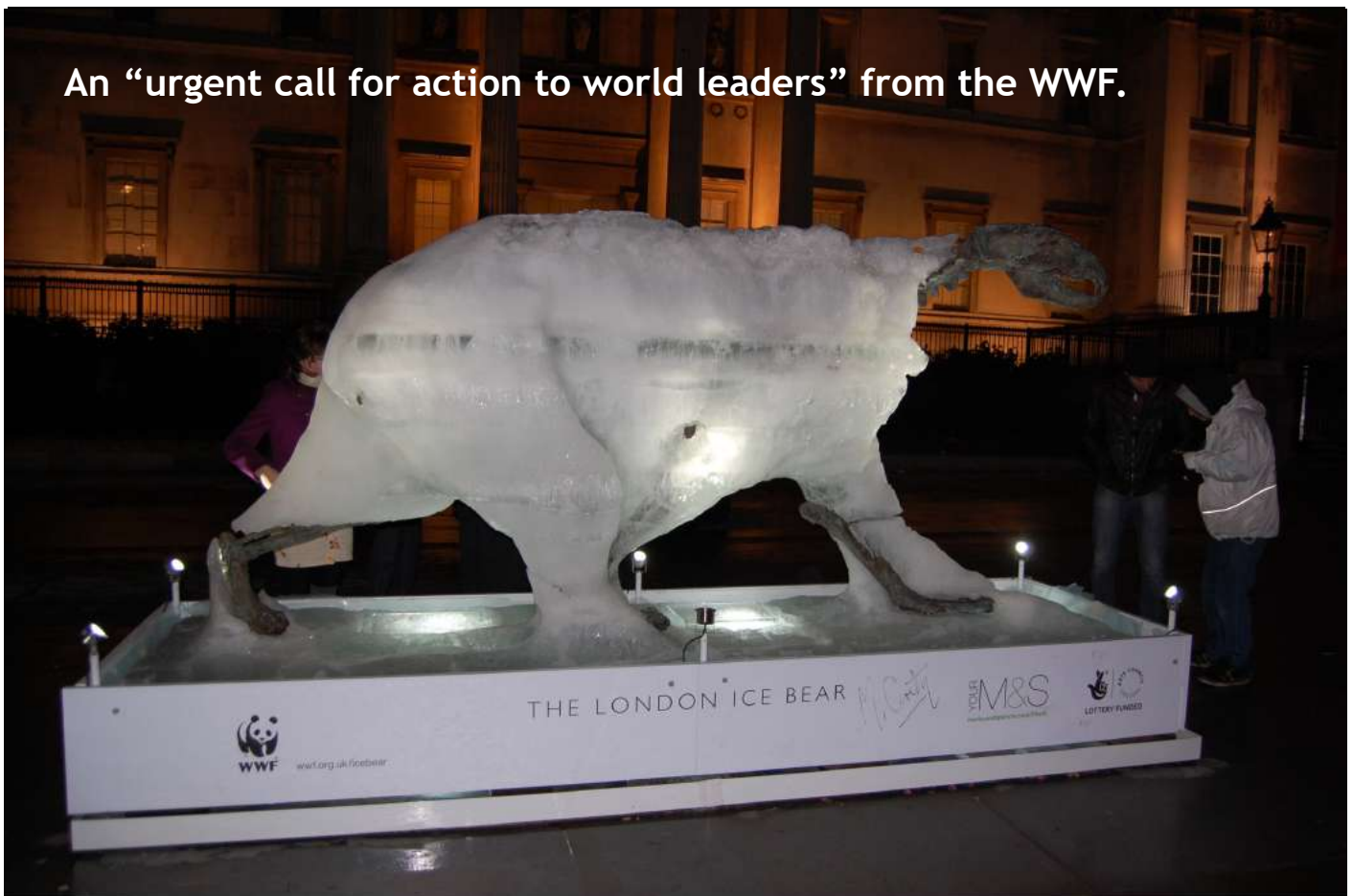
The climate protestors were determined that neither the public and politicians should forget the urgency of the global climate threat.



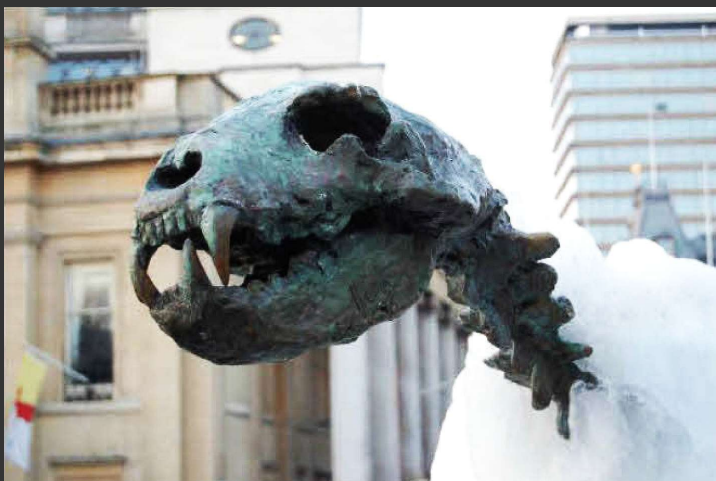
Protestors were in defiant good spirits as they clustered around a fire in makeshift brazier made from an old spin dryer. An old protestor asked that his face should be blanked out, but the rest were eager to be on camera. The determined protestors camped out in the Square, braving bitter cold nights, and pitched their tents on the hard flagstones. The cold days of winter are more difficult to persuade people about climate change. The psychology has been explored at length [Li *et al.*, (2011). *Psychological Science* 22: 454-459]. The general warming trend caused by CO₂ emissions does *not* mean the immediate end of cold winters, but the clock is ticking, and now is the time to act before the warmer weather of future years harms humans and ecosystems alike.



An “urgent call for action to world leaders” from the WWF.



We have been here before. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) commissioned Mark Coreth and Duncan Hamilton who cast a bronze skeleton of a polar bear, which was immersed in a tank of water which was frozen at -25°C . The 9 tonne block of ice was set up in front of the National Gallery, overlooking Trafalgar Square and was then sculpted into the form of a polar bear. As the ice melted, the bronze skeleton emerged, symbolising the fate of this species if the Arctic ice should melt. The project was sponsored by M & S.



The Ice Bear was 1.8 metres high, the average thickness measured by sea ice on the Barents Sea, by the 2009 Catlin Arctic Survey, backed by the WWF. Such ice is vulnerable to summer melting. The disappearance of the reflective layer would permit more solar energy to be absorbed by our planet, thus accelerating the warming trend. Polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) use the sea ice as a platform for their hunting activities, and from which they obtain their principal prey. There are an estimated 20,000-25,000 polar bears supported by Arctic habitat. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has placed *U. maritimus* on its Red List of Threatened Species.

The Catlin survey compiled thousands of measurements of snow and ice in the course of a 73 day, 434 km expedition across the northern Barents Sea. In a press statement, Dr. Martin Sommerkorn of the WWF International Arctic Programme, warned that the findings “provide yet another urgent call for action to world leaders ahead of the UN climate summit in Copenhagen this December to rapidly and effectively curb global greenhouse emissions, with rich countries committing to reduce emissions by 40% by 2020.” The survey underlined fears that Arctic sea ice would disappear completely during northern hemisphere summer by 2030. The WWF stressed that the Barent's Sea contains the world's largest deep-water coral reef, highest density of seabirds, exceptionally large fish stocks and unique habitats, with seals, whales, walrus, perhaps 5,000 polar bears and around 100 bowhead whales.

In 2006, the UK's *Independent* had published an article from Andrew Grice declaring: "Seven years to save planet, says PM". It said that: "Tony Blair has warned world leaders they have less than seven years to save the planet. But he ruled out a "ticket tax" on British airline passengers to combat global warming.

The Prime Minister was accused of double standards over climate change after he urged the US, China and India to join a global offensive to tackle the problem.

Mr Blair told the liaison committee of senior MPs: "I think that if we don't get the right agreement internationally for the period after which the Kyoto protocol will have expired - that's 2012 - we are in serious trouble." Grice, A. (2006). *Independent* 8 February 2006 01:00 .

In 2009, Mike Swain in Scotland's *Daily Record* reported comments from Prince Charles in response to the Copenhagen summit: "We've got seven years to save the planet, Prince Charles tells world leaders at Copenhagen summit PRINCE CHARLES warned world leaders last night they had just seven years to save the world. . . ." The statements were familiar: "Our planet has reached a point of crisis and we have only seven years before we lose the levers of control." Swain, M. (2009). *Daily Record* 00:00, 16 DEC 2009.

Half a decade ago, our own newsletter (PM (34) December 6, 2014) drew pointed attention to the fact that time was running out for books and press releases that had warned the world that we had a mere years to save the planet.

British scientist Bill McGuire argued in 2008 that we had: "Seven years to save the planet." McGuire, W. J. (2008). *Seven years to save the planet: the questions and answers*. (London, UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

Also in 2008, environmental writer Mark Lynas explained (p. 256): "if our target is two degrees . . . global emissions of all greenhouse gases must peak by 2015 and drop steadily thereafter" Lynas, M. (2007; updated 2008) *Six degrees*. (London, UK: Harper Perennial).

A decade has come and gone and the seven years are long behind us. However, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) alerted us in 2018; article in UK's *Guardian*: "We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN" Watts, J. (2018). *Guardian* 07.23 BST 8 Oct 2018.

On October 7, 2019, Prime Minister, Boris Johnson spoke at a book launch (concluding volume of Mrs Thatcher biography from journalist Charles Moore) at Banqueting House in Whitehall. Whitehall was in the midst of a demonstration by Extinction Rebellion in the UK's (Oct. 7), but the Prime Minister dismissed protestors as stereotypes.

The Telegraph was among papers reporting the response from the Prime Minister: "Boris Johnson has described climate change protesters as "crusties" who live in "hemp-smelling bivouacs", following a day of action across the capital." Hayley Dixon and Izzy Lyons 7 OCTOBER 2019 • 9:48PM. According to *The Spectator*: "I am afraid that the security people didn't want me to come along tonight because they said the road was full of uncooperative crusties and protesters of all kinds littering the road. And they said there was some risk that I would be egged." Steeroike 7 October 2019. Johnson emphasised that Thatcher had led climate as a global issue, but Thatcher's retraction was well-known. The *Ecologist* noted: "She attacked former US vice president Al Gore directly and argued that "Kyoto was an anti-growth, anti-capitalist, anti-American project which no American leader alert to his country's national interests could have supported." Montague, B. (2018). *Ecologist* (the journal for the post-industrial age). Who drove Thatcher's climate change u-turn? October 17, 2018.

Meanwhile, while people in the UK took in items from the TV, newspapers and internet, they will have realised that the climate issue raises questions about faith. "Critics have blamed the spike in fires this year and deforestation on the easing of environmental rules by Brazil's right-wing president, Jair Bolsonaro, who openly criticized plans for the Synod and the Vatican." Also, "Brazil has the largest population of Catholics in the world, and Brazilian media have reported that the Bolsonaro administration is concerned about the Vatican's "leftist agenda" and is monitoring Synod documents." Gustin, G. (2019): As Amazon Fires Burn, Pope Convenes Meeting on the Rainforests and Moral Obligation to Protect Them. *Inside Climate News* Oct 6, 2019.

As 2020 arrives, this is an appropriate moment for policy makers, media and campaigners to have a profound self-investigation of the most effective methods to pursue their goals in future years.

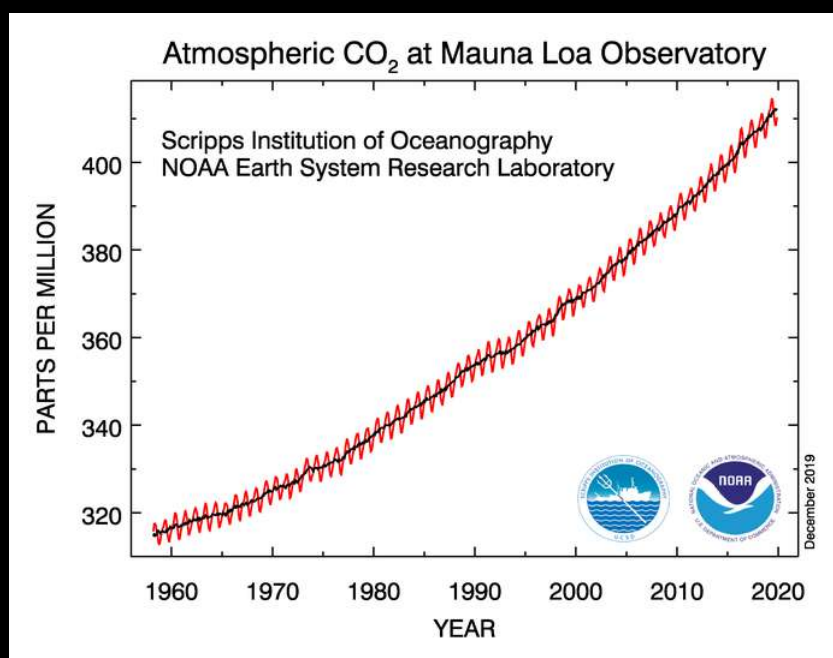
The message from Trafalgar Square, back in December 2009, was unequivocal; our species needed to take strong and determined action to save its world. We were warned that there were a few years to save the planet. However, as of 2019, CO₂ emissions continue to rise. The NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory and Global Monitoring Division collect data from Mauna Loa, Hawaii. According to its Monthly Average (latest update December 5, 2019) that the CO₂ in November 2018 was 408.02 ppm. By November 2019 it had risen to 410.27 ppm. <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/>

Arguably, commentators could stop warning the public of dates by which it is necessary to save the planet. Many of these are now well beyond their sell-by-dates. A *succession* of such dates is at risk of climate agencies and campaigners being accused of crying wolf - which in reality, they are not.

An alternative way to present the threat might be to indicate how, as the years role on, it will become increasingly more difficult for the world to avoid its headlong rush into self-inflicted catastrophe. Every year that we neglect to deal effectively with the problem, the greater will be the ultimate impact and harm to human communities.

The Banqueting House issue reminds us that the world's understanding of climate concerns has become inextricably tied up with politics, economics and - from that news item from the Amazon, faith. It would be naïve to imagine that we could escape from these fundamental human activities, even if scientific research itself should be pursued as objective, not sectarian.

During recent years, there has been an accelerating emphasis in the media on climate and other environmental issues. We welcome this, but, at the same time, all of us concerned with climate must take a long, hard look at how it may be possible to communicate the science without it being lost in a confusion of politics. That will be an essential task, but it will be no easy undertaking.



In 2019, we coined the name "Earth Crisis."

There is a Climate Crisis, yet, beyond this, there is a wider range of dangers, problems and complexities, created by human activity, that threaten our living planet. They are immense and cannot be expressed in turns of Climate alone.

In 2020, we shall respond to this expanding "Earth Crisis."

Editor: Martin Heath.



Above: The Old Year approaches its end. The low Sun fell to the horizon in the afternoon of December 30, 2019. It would leave behind in the sky, the planet Venus and a waxing Moon. From the fields at Ash, Kent, England.

Prime Meridian.

Prime Meridian is published by the Ecospheres Project, a research and media collaboration. It follows global environmental issues alongside the cycle of the seasons in South East England. It steps back to look at the Earth in its astronomical context and it pursues the search for other habitable worlds.

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