

# The Isle of Arran- a recovery adventure

**Our recovery adventure to the Isle of Arran for forest conservation and spiritual growth.**

The journey began by picking everyone up from Halifax and the surrounding areas. The journey to the ferry port took around 7 hours and everyone who attended was filled with anxious anticipation for what was in store. When we arrived at the ferry port in Ardrossan we had a quick trip to the local supermarket and interacted with the local wildlife before getting on the ferry for the crossing to Arran island.



Once all passengers were on board the ferry, as a group, we ventured to the front for some photo opportunities. The ferry embarked on its mini voyage to Arran where unknowingly our lives were going to change forever. After about 45 minutes the ferry arrived at the port in Brodick where we returned to the van. We frantically climbed in as we were holding up the line for other passengers to get off. Eventually, we were on our way to a small Buddhist retreat that we would call home for the next few days. After travelling up winding roads and gazing at the wonders of the local wildlife we arrived at our destination. We were greeted by Ed and Graham. Ed was a volunteer who had previously helped at the beginning of the project and returned a few days before we arrived. Graham was a resident of Holy Isle who had come over to Arran to offer his services and oversee the entire project.

When we were first shown our rooms and communal area there was no electricity. This was going to be an interesting trip. However, supply was shortly rectified and a sigh of relief was swiftly released. We sat down as a group and introduced ourselves and were briefed on the plans for the next few days.

Each day would consist of breakfast followed by planting saplings (downy birch and oak) on the hills of Arran. We'd have a short tea break and for the rest of the afternoon, we were free to explore the island.

Ed prepared a meal daily and signalled it was ready for us to eat by striking a gong that could be heard whilst we explored. After dinner, we would prepare canes for the next days planting.



The scenery on the island could only be described as a screensaver, the type of imagery you'd have to see to believe. The photos we took really don't do it justice.

Over the next three days, stories and experiences were shared, both around the dinner table and on our miniature excursions of the island. The bonds that were formed between us during our adventure will last a lifetime.

While writing this I can reflect on some of the things I learned throughout my time at Arran.

1. There are consequences for all my actions.
2. My actions affect everyone involved in situations or around me and I'm not in control of that.
3. If I didn't find a way to minimise the suffering of my surroundings my suffering wouldn't stop.
4. I am not my past and I have to learn to forgive myself.
5. Time is the most precious thing you can ever give someone.
6. There's more joy to be found in life from the simplest day-to-day tasks and spending time with people who love and accept me for who I am than I ever found in a substance.

We all had an amazing time planting trees on the Isle of Arran and getting outdoors. It was such a great way to get some exercise and fresh air while also enjoying the island's stunning natural beauty.

Planting trees on a hillside was more physical than I expected, but it was incredibly rewarding to see the saplings take root and know that we were helping to create habitats for wildlife, prevent erosion, and absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.



But the best part was how I felt afterwards. Spending time outdoors and getting some exercise was incredibly invigorating, and it left me feeling more energised and refreshed than I had in a long time. It was a great way to disconnect from everything and just be present in the moment, which helped me feel more grounded.

And the benefits weren't just physical. Spending time in nature has been shown to reduce stress levels and improve mental health, and I definitely felt a sense of calm and relaxation at the end of each day.



Overall, planting trees on the Isle of Arran was an amazing experience that left me feeling physically and mentally rejuvenated. On our last day, we were given a special opportunity to name the area of land where we had been working. After some deliberation, we decided to call it Infinity Forest, with a little area called Kessy Woods for a couple of the saplings planted in memory of loved ones who are no longer with us. Naming the forest was a fitting way to bring closure to our time there and recognise the impact that we had made.

This was all possible because of The Basement Recovery Project, a lifeline to all who truly want to change their lives.

*Callum*