

Christie joins anti-war protest

JOANNA VALLELY

SIXTIES siren Julie Christie made a surprise visit to the Capital to commemorate those who died in the war in Iraq.

The British actress, best known for her role in David Lean's film Doctor Zhivago, was a speaker at the Naming of the Dead Ceremony attended by 2500 people on Calton Hill.

Around a thousand names of people who died in Iraq were read out by about 70 speakers at the event organised by the Stop The War Coalition.

Ms Christie, who has been outspoken against the Iraq war before, said their deaths had been "wasted".

She said: "The troops should never have gone to war at all. Really the names being read out were wasted deaths. Sending troops to Iraq was just feeding the greed of Bush and Blair."

Julie Christie said she arrived on Friday and was staying with friends in Edinburgh, but doubted she would make it to further protests in Gleneagles.

The Oscar-winning actress, daubed the "British Jane Fonda" for her political activism, cast doubts on the government's sincerity about eliminating poverty.

"We shouldn't be deluded by thinking that because they are so pleasant with Bob Geldof and Bono, that Blair and Bush give a damn about alleviating poverty," she said.

Police said 2000 people attended the procession, which began at the Mound and ended with the ceremony at Calton Hill.

The evening was good humoured but more solemn than Saturday's Make Poverty History demonstration.

The march set off just after 6.30pm from the side of the National Gallery.

The crowd moved along Prince's Street to rallying cries of "Who let the bombs drop? Bush, Bush and Blair" and "Bush, Blair, CIA: how many kids did you kill today?"

Marchers came from all over the world to pay tribute to those who died in the Iraq conflict.

Enric Rodrigo Luelmo, 24, came from Barcelona with 23 other members of the "En Lucha" Spanish anti-war group for the entire week of G8 protests.

"It seems the majority here are in favour of the objectives of eradicating poverty and war," he said.

Petros Constantino, a G8 protest veteran, came with around 50 anti-war activists from Greece, whilst 55-year-old Angela Perry was fitting in the protest last night before travelling back to London by bus.

Briege Smith, 45, came with the Irish Anti-War movement, which brought three bus-loads from Dublin and seven from Belfast for the procession and the Make Poverty History march.

Ms Smith, who described herself as a "seasoned activist" having attended previous G8 summit protests in Genoa and Paris, said they had been spoken to by members of Special Branch on disembarking from the ferry in Stranraer.

She said they had been made to fill out ID cards under the Terrorism Act 2000 on the bus and then been obliged to step off the bus individually whilst being filmed by Special Branch officers.

They had also all had their luggage searched at the port, she said.

The Dublin woman added that the hour-and-a-half delay had made them miss Friday's G8 Alternatives opening rally and had made them late to their accommodation.

Rose Gentle, mother of Scots guardsman Gordon Gentle who was killed in Iraq, was at the head of the march, carrying a "Fight poverty not war" banner.

Ms Gentle was one of the first to read names at Calton Hill.

She said that many of the names on the list had trained with Gordon and were "his pals".

She said: "It's brilliant that high profile people like Julie Christie have come.

"I intend to keep up my involvement with Military Families Against the War until the troops come home and the truth comes out."

The Glasgow woman said Wednesday would be the first anniversary of her 19-year-old son's funeral.

"The day they are going to Gleneagles is the day my son got buried. I'll be at Gleneagles to let Blair and Bush know where they are."

Chris Nineham, from the steering committee of the Stop The War Coalition, was pleased with the attendance at the event.

"It was only supposed to be a procession, but turned into a demo," he said. Mr Nineham complained that the media had gone along with the Government's attempts to bury the issue in the past few months, but said that there was a growing crisis in Iraq and that the majority of people in the US and the UK were more against the conflict than ever.

Names of the dead were furnished by Iraq Body Count and included victims from all sides of the war.

Another surprise visitor on Calton Hill was folk singer Billy Bragg who read out a list of names.

Billy Bragg compered much of Saturday's Make Poverty History rally in The Meadows.



He said that he had been unable to get a flight to Exeter on Sunday evening so had decided to stay an extra night in the Capital and could think of no better place to be than at the Stop the War march.

The singer-songwriter said that the Make Poverty History rally had been "more than" he had hoped for.

"It was the biggest event in Scottish history and was so peaceful and yet they decided to close all the shops. It was a beautiful day, a great demonstration and was an expression of willingness to make the world a better place."

Police said both the Make Poverty History and Stop The War were peaceful and well-organised rallies. Deputy Chief Constable Malcolm Dickson, of Lothian and Borders Police, said: "Good liaison with the organisers from Stop the War allowed us to facilitate a safe and peaceful protest."

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