

Clare Pattinson and Polly High

First of all, I'd just like to ask you how both of you became involved in Greenham? Don't worry, you don't have to keep your commentaries separate, we'll just go for it. Alright? So yes, how did you become involved, how did you become aware of the movement?

(Clare) Shall I go first?

(Polly) Yes, you go first.

(Clare) Well I used to live in Andover, which is about 15 miles from Newbury, and my parents were, well we were a Catholic family, and my parents were part of the Pax Christi peace group, so when Greenham became um, known about, in the media, er, the church would take food up. My mother used to make soups and we'd go up there after church - after mass on a Sunday and feed some of the people at the camp. Um, so that went on for a while, that I probably was about 14/15 it was '81. And then a couple of years down the line I was doing my A' Levels, and I decided to make a project on the women of Greenham because I was quite fascinated by what they were doing, um, and the strength that they seemed to have. So I then started to do, well I kind of knew quite a bit about it because I'd been going backwards and forwards with my parents, um, but independently, then I started doing my own research and used to cycle to Greenham and talk to people. I was writing to MPs and compiling a little booklet that I made. And then a couple of years later I, a year later, I left home and I went to work in Guildford with the homeless and it was kind of residential living - voluntary, social work thing, you know like you used to do, before you went off - sorry, I'm not looking at you, am I?

No, it doesn't matter, please just look whenever you want!

(Clare) I was planning to become a social worker, so I thought I'd work with the homeless, and I never actually became a social worker. But in my time off I would, er get the train to Greenham and go and visit and I stayed once. Um.

For how long?

(Clare) Only the night - it was February and it was, oh god, it was so cold! I remember waking up in this bender with four inches of snow on my feet. It was the coldest I've ever been. But yeah, I had to get back to work anyway, the day or two after. I was also involved in Cruise Watch, which was er, sort of, part of to do with Greenham. Well it was to do with Greenham.

Where was that?

(Clare) That was when I was living in Andover, so we'd get phone calls in the middle of the night and um, it, everybody would hook up with whoever had a car, and we'd make our way there to the Berkshire countryside and watch the convoys go through the villages, through the back roads. It was probably the scariest thing I've ever seen.

(Polly) Enormous big trucks, weren't they.

(Clare) Yeah, just went on and on, weaving through - in the middle of the night, it was so silent and so secretive. It was terrifying, like being in a horror movie.

What was the purpose of the watch? Was it just to know where it was going, or were you trying to do..

(Clare) I think it was, well we never prevented it, because it was army and police, but I think it was to say if a bunch of you know, activists could find it where it was so easily...

(Polly) Anyone could.

(Clare) Anyone could. So, yeah, that was it.

(Polly) That was the whole point about the demonstration really, wasn't it. To show how easily you could get into the base - that's why they kept breaking in. And then they reinforced it three fold, I think. They put three different fences up. And they still got in.

Gosh, I've never appreciated that. From the pictures it's always going over one fence.

(Clare) It was reinforced

(Polly) And I suppose the other thing about Cruise Watch was they used to take the um, lorries with the cruise missiles out at night - I don't know to this day if they were really on there, but they then took them to the Cotswolds and places like that in the middle of the night, and try and find a copse that they could maybe launch a missile from. So the whole thing was trying to draw awareness, to all those people that lived in that area, that this was going on. In the vale of darkness, these weapons of mass destruction were on the road.

Polly, how did you become involved?

(Polly) I, I, my parents - all my family had been in CND and I, from a very early age, I used to go on demonstrations with them. We were in Hanover Square for the anti-Vietnam demonstration when the horses charged, the police charged the horses. So I'd just grown up with those sorts of sentiments - no war, and pacifism sentiments. And then when Greenham happened I was living in Worcestershire, so it wasn't a million miles away, and one of my bosses, he was also very into CND and his wife went to stay at Greenham and Dave and I used to, I was a member of the Labour Party as well, because it was a design practice, I'm a graphic designer. After hours, when we'd done NFU Mutual and (inaudible) Insurance and all those other things - that bread and butter work, we used to get some beers in and do CND posters, Labour Party posters, the local um Gloucester CND peace group and things like that. And it was through Dave I was aware of Greenham. And as I said earlier, I was always hankering to get there, but at that time I didn't have a vehicle and I didn't actually drive. So then I passed my driving test and one of my very first trips was to Greenham. And then from there I used to go quite regularly and take vegetables, because I lived, well I didn't live on a farm, I did sort of live on a farm, but there was always produce - I could always grab a crate of apples or bananas, and go and visit. And go for those special days, when thirty thousand - was going to say thirty million, when we all held hands around the base.

You both were there, weren't you.

(Both make noises of agreement).

(Polly) I think there were more than one of them actually.

(Clare) She was on the other side!

(Polly) I took some photos. On one occasion we were at Main Gate, and I'd got up on the wire, so I sort of was able to direct my camera down on the women that were charged at the gate, and they were knocking all the policemen's helmets off, and I've got a photo of all these helmets lined up.

Have you still got that photo?

(Polly) Yah, yeah, and in one of the photos Clare said 'Well that could be me, that could be me'.

(Clare) You kind of forget what you look like!

(Polly) I've got them there, I'll show them to you. And I've got a photo of a woman going through the wire and soldiers marching up and down. They're not very good quality prints, but the legacies are there.

(Clare) Mine all went in the skip, it's a shame.

So in terms of roles, that you played, you've mentioned, Clare - that you were out on Cruise Watch, Polly - that you were there and took some photographs...

(Polly) And I was on Cruise Watch too, I was part of that.

Right. So what other sort of events were you part of? You've just mentioned the thirty thousand ladies, women circulating.

(Clare) Yeah. I can't remember now. Got those newspapers cuttings, so they would have been the things that I attended. We can go through that later and have a look. The main one I remember was the, you know, the holding hands around the base, and there were lots of lie-ins on the road, when they were trying to get the diggers to destroy the camps.

(Polly) And Cruise - part of the Cruise Watch was that you alerted everyone, there was a telephone chain and then people drove there, and although they obviously weren't there to see the vans go out, they would lie on the pavement, on the road, in front of Main Gate to try and prevent them coming back in. And I think someone got run over - I'm sure. Have you heard that? I'm sure a woman got run over because she wouldn't move, and they drove over her.

(Gasps)

(Polly) It's desperate isn't it?

Absolutely.

(Clare) There are lots of things I heard but didn't witness. Um like the benders being sprayed with freezing water by the council to get the women to move - this was in the middle of winter. Didn't witness it myself but, well.

Did you associate with any of the particular gates - the different coloured gates?

(Clare) I think some but again I can't remember, because I never stayed for a huge chunk of time. My visits were always short visits. I was young, and I was so shy back

then. I couldn't really you know, I wasn't probably relaxed enough to hang out at any at the time, and integrate with the people.

You did well in that you went and interviewed them, I think that's amazing.

(Clare) Talked to them yeah.

(Polly) For someone so shy.

(Laughs) So Polly, um, you were taking produce - did you always take it to the same place? How was it organised?

(Polly) Um, no I would just go and dump it at the nearest gate - whichever way I went there. No I didn't...(inaudible). So I kind of spaced it out.

Yes, were the women delighted to see you with the produce. Or did they see you as...did they see you as part of them?

(Polly) I think so. I used to get, have a cup of tea and things like that, and then go for a walk around. But I wasn't the only person, lots of people would take food and sustenance to them, so maybe - you know a crate of apples wouldn't go very far anyway.

(Clare) I don't think there as an 'us and them', because one week somebody might be visiting with food, and the next week they might be living there. It was all interchangeable.

(Polly) It was all inclusive. No-one was excluded - the sheer fact that you'd actually got there. And I think a point to make - it was only women that stayed there, but men used to go regularly to support the women. Although they weren't ever allowed to stay there because it was meant to be a peaceful, women only protest. But on all those days that I went there, there would always be men and children around supporting their women folk.

Did the men have a role?

(Polly) No, they probably just brought the kids - if their women were staying there. They brought their kids at the weekend so they saw them, and food, and anything that I suppose - any demands.

So they were very much back-ups?

(Polly) Well they were, but it was also - going back to the Cruise Watch, it was also the men that were involved in Cruise Watch, because obviously the women were there. Then they would alert whoever was at home, or, to get that chain going. And generally, it was like Dave - his wife Gaynor was staying there and she would ring him up and say 'They've gone out', and then he would start ringing everyone else and getting in the car and going there.

That's really interesting. That's an aspect I haven't appreciated.

(Polly) No, I think men - I read Clare's project and I think it's kind of highlighted in there that people seemed to, sort of - it was easier for the media to just say 'Oh it was a bunch of weird women, lesbian women who all just went there to live together'. But it wasn't like that at all. I mean the initial people that walked from South Wales, I mean they were married with children, admittedly there were some lesbians who got caught up in it, but that wasn't what it was about - it was just easy for the media to hit on that. And then with the local residents of Newbury they sort of, they got them to taint them as well. They were frightful to them. When they first started going there, and maybe going to have tea in the tea shop, or going to get groceries, it was alright. But after a while, after they'd been there for so long, the shop, shop holders wouldn't serve them.

(Clare) But of-course you're going to look grubby if you haven't had a bath for weeks.

(Polly) Well of-course yes.

(Laughs)

(Clare) And if you think about it in the middle of winter. But it's the same thing that travellers get, you know, get accused of things.

(Polly) It's anything that's out of the ordinary. I mean in 1980 that wasn't where women should be, is it - sleeping under plastic sheets called benders.

(Clare) Cutting wire.

(Polly) And it's interesting in Clare's project, um, she it put it a - what do you call it, questionnaire? Questionnaire to fellow 17, 18 year old students, and I found those really, really fascinating to get some feedback from her contemporaries.

(Clare) My target audience for studying politics.

(Polly) They were meant to be, but they were so unaware.

Was this when you were at school still?

(Clare) No, A' Levels.

Yes, so at A' Levels, so you're talking about 17 or 18 year olds that had no idea what was going on?

(Clare) Well they must have done, because 1) we lived - we were all in Andover, it was a college in Andover so it was only 15 miles away, and they were all my age. But I targeted my questionnaires at students that were studying politics and history, so I thought - because I thought they'd be the most savvy and interested. I didn't go for people that were studying catering, you know (laughs). So it was interesting, because I got the responses there, and we were looking at them the other day.

(Polly) I was, and I was, I was saying to Clare, 'Can you remember so and so? She was so pig ignorant!' How can she write such tripe. Yeah, it was interesting because not one of them - actually only one of them showed support towards the questions and the directions that your questions were leading, but she hadn't been there. A lot of them said 'Oh we drive slowly past, but keep going!'

I mean what size was this sample?

(Polly) Got them there.

It's at the back of that one.

(Clare) Probably thirty, I can't remember.

So it was yourself, Clare, that spent one night there. Can you recall what the facilities were for things like sanitation, toilets - what happened?

(Clare) I remember the, arriving, and there being a fire, and as I said - it was in February, so it was very cold. And being invited to join them around the fire, and there was a kettle, and getting a cup of tea in a really grubby mug! It was so filthy - it was wonderful. And then being asked if I'd like to stay overnight, and I said I would, I would like to. And somebody said 'There's a bender over there, so tuck yourself in, find your corner'. And I did, and I had a night where I probably - you're so cold, so you doze off for an hour, and then you wake up.

Did you have a purpose for being there? Because I understand there were some who went in to support the women so they could sleep and you did the night watch?

(Clare) No I just turned up. I was working in Guildford with the homeless and I had some time off, so I thought I must go and stay at Greenham, and rather than just visit, I need to go and stay there for a couple of days. So I just turned up really for the experience, to see what it was like. Um yeah.

Did you find because of Greenham you, that Greenham was an influence on yourselves, on your thinking? In what way?

(Polly) No, it was big strong powerful thing. My persuasion was always to go on these marches - I used to go on all the anti-Reagan marches, I remember one from Hyde Park to the American Embassy, and on the hour - was it every quarter of an hour? On the hour we all had to lie down whenever we were and pretend that we were dead. And I remember being on the hour in Marble arch - in the middle of the road, and lying down in the middle of the road in Marble Arch with all these other people. It was quite an amazing thing. So a lot of it was that sort of buzz, to be surrounded by people that all were the same way of thinking as you.

(Clare)...self-assured...they knew what they were doing

(Polly)...exactly because then we would all...

(Clare)...rather than being the weirdo!

(Polly) Yeah.

Safety in numbers?

(Clare) Well when you're at school with views that don't go in the mainstream, it really makes you feel like you're a bit odd. But suddenly you find it's okay to be odd, and challenge and question, and you feel stronger for it. Like finding - although there was mud and wet and cold, it was like finding your tribe almost. Yeah it was good. It was a shame that people had to find each other because of such a desperate situation, I think.

(Polly) But I suppose there will always be, won't there, people rising up with their principles. It's always against something, isn't it? Something that you see is wrong. Well at the moment it might be - well I won't talk about Brexit because I can't even stand the name - and deals, why can't they have an arrangement, why has it got to be a deal? But I'm thinking more of university fees and things like that. We're quite long in the tooth now, quite old and quite exhausted. All of my thought was about that and I kind of find it quite refreshing when some young things stand up now and take

up the helm, so to speak. Because I really am quite burnt out by it all. You know you get to a point where I just can't do it any more, so the young ones have got to come through.

Did you have any prejudices or preconceived ideas before you went to Greenham and met the people of Greenham?

(Polly) Only, no not personally, but as I was saying earlier there was a lot of prejudice and it was media generated. I don't know what you first thought when you went there - what did you expect?

(Clare) Well I was going there with the food from quite a young age, so I was fascinated by it. For me the biggest thing, not prejudice, but the thing that um, the thing that worried me or questioned me, that I questioned, was the people that worked there - the police, the people that had to put up a barrier. Because my brother - he's 2 years younger than me, and he used to come along to take the food as well. He then went off to join the police force and became a policeman, and I used to worry about people that were in this role, paid role, that had to do something they didn't necessarily agree with. I always find that intriguing, you know the people on the other side of the wire. And I wonder what their thinking is now - have they stayed - I don't know, it must be difficult, because you have to keep your opinions to yourself.

(Polly) It's an interesting thing because on those marches through London, when the various ones I went to - the police would line the roads but they were peaceful. They were CND marches or you know, anti-war or nuclear disarmament, but yet the police could touch hands, and I remember walking along after Marble Arch, for instance, on this particular one, walking along Oxford Street, and just the police were just lining Oxford Street, and I mean there wasn't going to be a riot. Admittedly you always had the anarchists that would do a bit of disturbance somewhere - maybe throw a brick in a shop window - I don't know what they did, but mainly it was a peaceful thing, and yet they seemed to have all these police and they would be PO-faced and people would say things to them like 'Do you want to take your hat off and join us?' And you know they'd just completely ignore us, but 50% of them can't have wanted to be there.

(Clare) I saw a lot of confusion on the faces of the police, especially when there were sort of threads of wool! (Laughs)

(Polly) They really didn't know what to make of that direct action, with the women, did they?

(Clare) We were doing things they considered quite bizarre, but they didn't understand where they were coming from and where they were going, and they were straight thinking people trying to deal with this - it must have come across as quite chaotic!

Did you, yes, you came in contact with - with the policemen when you were doing the CND marches. Did you have any contact with them at Greenham in any of the protests?

(Clare) Yeah.

(Polly) They were there. I took photos of them. They're there with the women, but it was more soldiers, and it was more American. I mean one of my most shocking things at Greenham, there was a woman and she was an American servicewoman, with a gun on her hip. And of-course we, we didn't see guns in those days on the street, and a lot of the women were saying to her 'You're on the wrong side of the fence', and you know 'Leave your gun and come over here', and you know how they would have banter - well not banter, but to try and, and she wouldn't - what's the word, converse with us, or she wouldn't engage with us in any way at all. I did take a photo of her and her gun. But that for me was quite shocking, because police never had guns - they weren't armed in the '80s.

So you were never near when the police - when there was any confrontation between the women and the police?

(Clare) Yeah. Yeah there was, but I think they probably - because I was younger they would consider the ring leader to be the older more competent ones, so I never got involved, in any sort of - I never got arrested. There was a moment - I remember the fence being pulled backwards and forwards and people were going in, and there was a moment, I was meant to be back at work the next day in Guildford with the homeless, and I remember debating whether to go in or not, because I knew I'd get arrested if I did. And I don't think I did go in in the end, because I knew I had to be on duty. So that was a difficult moment, making that decision, because I really wanted to, but I knew I'd be carted off, and I had my dog with me. So that was a difficult moment, yeah.

You just said that your brother went into the police. Was he a part of your church when you took supplies up to them?

(Clare) Yeah that's right.

And so in a way it seems a slight contradiction. What took him into the police - did he see himself being able to do something different?

(Clare) I think so. I think he originally joined the police with the intention of trying to make things better. Yeah, I think that was his original intention. I don't know, I don't see very much of him now, I guess you stay in and you get a pension, you get long in the tooth, and you get cynical - which is where I think he is now.

(Laughs). You were just about to say something?

(Polly) Yes, I was going to ask you on your list of women that you're interviewing, are you by chance going to interview any of the women who spent some time inside? You are. Because I think they...

Within the camps, or in prison?

(Polly) In prison. Because at the time...

Yes.

(Polly) Because I'd be really interested to know what they were arrested for. Is it righteous behaviour - I don't know, it always fascinated me, why there were women being banged up, so to speak.

No, we certainly, er, encourage those interviews, because it's fascinating, absolutely fascinating. It was interesting what you were saying about the men, that whilst they weren't in the camps that they would come and support at weekend, and also that they were part of the Cruise Watch. Any other roles, or were you aware of the fact that they were excluded from women's camps?

(Polly) I was aware that they were excluded from women's camps, um,...

Do you think they should have been?

(Polly) That was me of your questions, actually.

(Clare) It was a process they arrived at, it didn't happen immediately. When the women marched from Cardiff I think the men were at the camp to start with...

(Polly) They did, they marched with them. As families.

(Clare)... they worked out this process would be stronger if it was women only. And as I said in the book, somewhere, that um for centuries men have gone off to war, now women are leaving home for peace, and it was that kind of idea that women were making a deliberate, conscious effort on their own to do something in the name of peace, and that it would be stronger, I think.

Earlier you mentioned that you wrote letters to the MP, and you yourself you were making...

(Polly) Designing posters...

Designing posters for the Labour Party

(Polly)...and I was the press officer for my local peace group. There were other things - Greenham was just part of what I did. I was part of CND and also Greenham was - we used to invite speakers to come and talk to us, and yeah. So I was very active.

Yes, yes. What was the reaction of MPs, did they want to know about it, or was there a denial that it was happening?

(Clare). Pompous!

(Laughs). Is that the letters?

(Clare) Yeah, you can have a look through these afterwards?

Did you feel you were having any impact by communicating with them?

(Clare) No, I think for me I wasn't expecting anything, but I just wanted to get a balanced, two sided thing for my project. I was never going to shift the...yeah.

Did you have anything to do with the local council in Newbury?

(Polly) Yes, you've got your local councilor, haven't you?

(Clare) Yes I think it's one of these - he was ill...

(Polly) Yes, he was very conveniently sick.

(Clare) And then I got DavidMitchell.

(Polly) Is it David Mitchell?

(Clare) Stephen....on behalf of (noise of looking through papers). Anyway you probably don't want to look at them now, but they're all there. I haven't had a moment to refresh my memory.

Don't worry. So Polly were you working at the same time, because Clare was doing social work.

(Clare) I was a bit younger than you. Yeah, so you were...

(Polly) I was working in Pershore in Worcestershire in a design - graphic design place.

Oh yes, sorry of-course, you aid earlier.

(Polly) So I would work during the day and then go to Greenham at the weekends. Not every weekend - I couldn't really afford to you know do it every weekend, but when I could I would. Because sometimes, because my mother was still living in South Croydon, and on the weekends I went up to visit her sometimes, and sometimes I would go that way - it was a little bit out of the way.

So from what you were saying, your family were very sympathetic to this kind of movement. What about you, Clare?

(Clare) Yeah they were, because they were from this peace group. Think they were very much influenced by the Gandhi non-violent direct action sort of approach, which was what the women were doing yeah. Even my father was - an ex-military man, he was in the RAF, he was quite sympathetic.

(Polly) Being in the RAF...

(Clare) He was in the RAF.

Right, so actually he was very much for the peaceful side?

(Clare) Yes, I mean his role in the RAF was communications, yeah, so yeah.

Were there individuals that influenced you at that time? Or which individuals would have influenced you?

(Clare) From Greenham?

Yes, from Greenham or any of the movements at that time.

(Clare) I suppose Gandhi was quite important, well yeah. I remember my mother she was always on about Mother Teresa, but I'm not so sure about her! There were pictures of her all over the house, but yeah those were the sorts of things we had going on in the home.

Were there individuals for you Polly?

(Polly) E. P. Thompson was protest and survive, and his writings - who else was Julie Christie was a member of CND and Bruce Kent, then Joan Ruddock, Alastair Campbell was another one. I remember he had his house broken into, didn't he, and lots of the papers were removed - lots of things like that were going on.

(Clare) Tony Benn.

(Polly) Tony Benn of-course. I'm trying to think - no one in particular, but just the whole.

Just interested because earlier you mentioned the fact that you felt maybe your phones were being tapped. At what stage was this - later on?

(Clare) Early. Early.

At the beginning of the Greenham time?

(Clare) Yeah I'd say early '80s when um, when because later on I was going up on my own - cycling or getting the train, but in the early days when I was younger, when it began, I was going up with my family, and my father would drive up after church, and we had the registration plate and I remember seeing people coming round and taking them down. And then soon after that we noticed the phone was making some strange clicking noises every time we picked it up or made a phone call. So that was in the early '80s.

And other people you associated with at church or at the movement, were they having the same thing?

(Clare) I don't know there were that many people from church going, we were quite isolated really, a very insular family, so it's not like we talked to other people, but I've had this conversation with Polly, and you suspect later on, that you suspect a similar thing was happening.

(Polly) At that Coventry demo they were definitely writing - must have been number plates, I can't remember what else it could have been. Hence that question about you know, being termed a list of subversives.

(Clare) The other thing with me, with my family, is that my father did apply to work at GCHQ, um, in the '60s, so I wonder you know if there was any sort of - you start to feel paranoid, if there was any sort of surveillance going on with him with the GCHQ links, and the Greenham and his RAF background, and working for the Home Office as he was then, and clicks not the phone. I'm sure there was. Yeah.

Interesting. Yes. I think I said earlier, but how do you feel Greenham impacted on you in terms of the path that you followed?

(Clare) I think I would have followed the path anyway, the way I've gone, but it was good to meet other people that had a similar outlook.

(Polly) And to support the women. You know anytime anyone went there it was getting the numbers up, showing them support, with - there must have been times over the years when they felt so isolated and alone where sometimes it was quite sparse, because it was seven or nine gates - I can't remember. Was it nine gates? Can't remember how many. They were all colours.

(Clare) It was 9 miles.

(Polly) 9 miles, seven gates possibly, um....

Because it was the colours of the rainbow, was it?

(Polly) That's right, and I think sometimes there would only be a few at one gate. I think there were gates that people preferred. Because you asked that question - was there any particular gate I'd go to, but I think the women that were living there, presumably they had their preferences - where they were going to stay.

(Clare) But at the end there was a caravan, and a shoe-string of women that were hanging on until the very end until the missiles went. And they got next to no support.

(Polly) That's right.

(Clare) But they just kept going and going. Some of them were there for 20 years.

(Polly) An acquaintance, I can't say friend - someone called Caroline Blackwood wrote a book that, she went and stayed there.

Oh wonderful.

(Polly) I don't know if you've seen that book?

No. On the perimeter by Caroline Blackwood.

(Polly) She stayed there.

(Clare) Women At The Wire, you know that one?

That's right. Yes. But this is really interesting.

(Polly) That's her diary of her time there. She was a big drinker, she'd just arrive with a crate of whiskey, I think!

(Clare) Keeps everybody warm.

(Polly) So I read that. I can't remember when that was published. Reinforced things for me.

How interesting. I'll come back to that in a moment. Lovely. Thinking on - over the past 25 years, what do you feel have been the main societal changes for women?

(Clare) Oh that's a big question.

I know, it is!

(Clare) You can answer that one first!

(Polly) I don't know where to start.

What changes have you seen - there have been masses, I know. What comes to mind first?

(Polly) Well I suppose that women are working - that's the biggest one, because up until then, they weren't, really. They're working - it started off in publishing, I think. Lots of women would be in publishing - at the BBC, I did a spell at BBC in the early '90s and all the most of the editors, they were women. Um, yeah it is - that's probably

the biggest, biggest shift, there are so many more women in employment. I'm not saying there's equal pay or that...

No, but that is interesting. What about you, Clare?

(Clare) I think women are so much more self-confident now than they were. If you look at footage of interviews from the '80s, they were very in the shadows, they're much more, you know...

(Polly) They speak out more.

(Clare) Yeah. The latest things are the #me-too, and all of that kind of stuff going on, but it's a slow process of women being more happy to be themselves, really.

(Polly) I'm not sure, because only yesterday they were talking about how Superdrug, places like that, are offering botox surgery or something - have you heard about that one?

(Clare) The boys are doing it as well - the boys are suffering.

(Polly) Well it's identity, a self-identify crisis, isn't it? That they're not happy in their bodies, so I don't know - I'd kind of dispute it, what you've just said, I don't know that the confidence is there.

(Clare) Some.

(Polly) Well some, but there always were some. Look at Margaret Thatcher.

(Laughs)

(Polly) How much confidence did she have, and Theresa May now - the old drone. How stubborn is she, how arrogant is she? It's the arrogance and stubbornness of her. I don't know, so you always have some.

Do you feel any of these changes have been, that Greenham was the impetus for them?

(Clare) I don't know, because most of the people I talk to didn't go to Greenham, haven't heard of Greenham, um, yeah, so I wonder...

(Polly) I'd like to think so, but I don't think it can claim that as an accolade. I don't think so.

(Clare) Although it was a big movement I don't know how much impact it had on, I mean you'll read that project and I was directing it at politics students who lived 15 miles away, and most of them hadn't been there. Quite derogatory about it. It meant a lot to us.

(Polly) Clare and I have both got qualifications in construction, I'm a joiner - carpenter, and Clare's a plumber, and I went on to lecture at Canterbury College, and there's such a dearth of women, still to this day in construction, and they say in construction it's 0.5% are women, and they will be architects, presumably. But actually on the floor with the tools it's very very few - it's a rarity...

And is that the case still?

(Polly) Uum (agrees). More, more, but I can't imagine that percent has gone up by more than 1%. I mean it's quite rare to see a woman with tools. Might get the electricians and keen jobs, but women brick layers - have you ever seen a woman brick layer?

(Clare) Yes.

(Polly) She'll be one of the 0.5%. I did see a woman roofer once, and that blew my mind - although I'd been in construction for years, it was so shocking. That's an interesting statistic, isn't it. So although women are getting jobs, and they are part of the workforce - I don't know what percentage of the workforce they are.

(Clare) What was the question?

(Laughs). Well actually you know what...

(Polly) The influence of Greenham on the society, wasn't it.

Yes, but actually what you're answering which is something I was going to ask is what changes have failed to take place that you feel should have? And actually what you're talking about now is really, really interesting that there hasn't been a shift - a significant shift, into men's um...

(Polly) Domains.

Domains, yes.

(Clare) But going back to the question you originally asked, what do you think? I mean I know you're interviewing us, but what's your view on it, both of you?

(Polly) It's a hard question, isn't it.

I agree with you about women are working much more, it is completely the norm, whereas..

(Polly) It wasn't.

It wasn't. The other thing is you're expected now, if you have children, to continue or maintain your work rather than you used to be expected...

(Polly) You gave it up.

...the point that you gave it up.

(Polly) Temp...leave.

(Clare) Is that partly because they've cut benefits, that they'd changed, messed around the with age - it's not called (inaudible) support, or child benefit, I don't know, I don't know - I wonder if it's also, talking about working class families.

(Polly) I don't know - I mean women who have had children have to pay for child care, and I've heard so many - most recently say that there's no point, because by the time they've gone out to work, and they want to, and they've paid for their child care, they're working for nothing. So they have to look after their own children. So I think a lot, yes the female workforce has increased, but it might be that it's single women - the majority rather than, unless they've got big well-paid jobs - if they're a director of something they can afford their nannies and what have you. But for the sort of average woman on the street, they're having that problem now - aren't they, child care?

What do you think has been the - what has been the legacy from Greenham for future generations?

(Clare) That you can make a change by doing something yourself - not waiting for the decision makers to tell you what they're going to do. That should be the way forward. You can have an impact.

And do you think that came out...

(Clare) Well I do and I don't. It's a bit like um, you know I wonder why the NHS came into being, I don't believe it's because they wanted to make it a fairer world and look after people, I think it's because soldiers came back from the front so malnourished and in such a state that in order to keep the cannon fodder going for another war they had to put in a system to keep them alive, to stop whatever diseases they were coming back with. So I think often laws have invented not for just reasons - it's a bit like the Suffragettes - did they get the vote because they campaigned, or did they get the vote because they were useful in the war? Um, I don't know - what am I saying, I'm going off on one! (Laughs.) The impact of Greenham, yeah. I don't know whether...

(Polly) Well it's gone back to common land, so that's one good thing isn't it. We got those Americans out of there. We went back, actually together - what was that out 10 years ago, and it was really eerie. We drove around it and then we were able to drive through Main Gate into the base, and it was just sort of industrial units, but obviously the fences had all gone down, round the perimeter, but there was still the gate into the main bit where the silos were. And did we walk along the runway?

(Clare) Yeah.

(Polly) I think we did, yeah.

(Clare) Because in the '90s we had the whole poll tax thing and the poll tax riots, and huge opposition, and I think the confidence to do that came about from things like Greenham. I was involved in the Labour Party, socialist with a militant tendency in the '80s, so I was doing that kind of stuff, but most people weren't, so I guess one demonstration can lead to the confidence for another movement, if you like. So yeah, Greenham has to have had an impact. It may not be that they achieved what they set out to achieve, but it would have rubbed off in other groups,...

(Polly) Having the confidence to do other things.

(Clare) Jonny was involved in the um,...

(Polly) Occupy.

(Clare) The occupy movement, more recently. Um yeah.

Which is that - the occupy group?

(Clare) Well it was - can you explain?

(Polly) I can't really. They camped outside the Houses of Parliament, and we had one outside the Turner, the art gallery...

(Clare) Banking and...

And was that women particularly?

(Clare) That was anyone, but young people, not necessarily young people.

Why do you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

(Polly) Because we were actually on the brink of extinction. Um, and it was American base, and I can never understand when Tony Blair said we have to rub shoulders with America, um, that was later, wasn't it. It was, what did they call us - the 55th state or something, do you remember that? There was another demonstration I did which was Little Rissington and it was again, American base, and they had a hospital with over a hundred beds in the hospital, under dust covers, purely in time for a nuclear war, and then only American servicemen would be able to use these facilities. And they had a thing of a 20 miles cordoned off area, um that they could commandeer any properties or anything in that area - that's how much, what's the word - power? Not power, but what am I trying to say? Sort of, somehow at that time we were at the mercy - at their mercy, and I think one of the things Greenham did was highlight that it was an American service, it was an American camp, that they had their own supermarket, it wasn't like they were giving anything back.

(Clare) They weren't integrated.

(Polly) No, they were there with their guns on their hips behind three layers of fencing.

I was just interested - you made me think, you mentioned Rissington hospital, were you ever aware of people becoming ill in the Greenham area? Not colds and sore throats.

(Polly) I read something in one of your articles that they thought they were getting mild doses of radiation, is that right? No, it's in one of your newspaper articles. I didn't know at the time. I wasn't aware at the time, it was just something I read a fortnight ago, and it seems that quite a few women said that they were getting poorly since they'd been there. Why wouldn't it, leak, so to speak? Oh the other thing is

they thought that maybe they thought the soldiers had sprayed them with something. Was that it?

(Clare) I don't know.

(Polly) From the inside out, that they were patrolling round and possibly spraying something.

(Clare) I think living like that...end up with bronchial problems.

I accept that, but I didn't know if there as ever any feeling...?

(Polly) I did read about that. You obviously have heard word of it, else that question wouldn't be there.

Yes, I think when we were looking in the archive there was a suggestion in one of the diaries we were looking at.

(Polly) That they had been vomiting and things like that?

(Clare) (Inaudible)...chemical trials. Is there any truth in it?

(Polly) That they're spraying us at night?

We're just looking at a calendar that Sally was part of creating, I beg your pardon, Polly - just describe it Polly.

(Polly) You've got a big powerful photo of lots of the women, on one of the days, I think - at Main Gate demonstrating. And a few quotes, one from the Greenham common women that say 'We aren't going away, we'll be here for as long as it takes', and er, Mahatma Gandhi saying 'There are no roads leading to peace, peace is the road.'

It's very professional looking.

(Polly) Looking at the back, when you get to the end of the year is revealed 'We must learn to live together like brothers, or perish together as fools'.

Poignant. And then there's another poster here.

(Polly) Which is, it was found out, although it was under cover that there was a hospital in a US air base in, um, I think it was in the Little Rissington Cotswolds, very

near to Stove a little place called Little Rissington, and we marched from Stove to Little Rissington just to highlight that this hospital was there. It had one thousand five hundred beds under dust covers, and lots of medical, medicines, and things like that, but it was purely for American servicemen at the time of a nuclear attack, which was very haunting when we got there. Obviously it was a barred up base, but we did manage to get in there and walk round it.

Have you any idea this was in? We've got 14th April.

(Polly) It - what would that have been, it was about '83 I think, possibly '83, '84.

The heading says 'Hospitals for today, not the day after', and then the by line is 'Peace march and rally to stop the building of a fifteen hundred bed USA hospital for world war three'. Interesting. Thank you. Ah sorry, 'Speakers include Duncan Campbell...

(Polly) And Julie Christie was there, and I think Bruce Kent, I don't think Joan Ruddock was there, but Bruce Kent was there that day.

Excellent. Thank you.