

Fenja Hill

And given that your family were military, how did your, do you think you were seen as sort of rebellious or were you?

No, because as a child, I was really, really well behaved. And that was how I survived childhood, I suppose. Um, I was just always really good and everybody thought that I was really good. And there was loads of crap like at home. But yeah, I was always really, but then I, I think the thing was that what you see as a child in the forces is all you see around you are nuclear families, because you live in - we always lived in forces accommodation. And that's always for the families, because the single men and women were in barracks. So we, we never met anyone who wasn't a couple with children. I don't even know what they did with couples who didn't have children. I mean, there must have been some, but they obviously they were somewhere else. But everywhere that I lived as a child, the only thing I ever saw was nuclear families. And so I don't - and it's not that I'm stupid, because I'm not, I've got a really good brain. But it never occurred to me that there were other alternatives and other options. And so I think from very young, I thought I had to get married, because that's what everybody did. Um, and I think I was quite, I mean, I was quite immature at 20 when I got married, but I got married. And the man that I married actually applied for and joined the MOD when we were engaged, because it was - it looked like a job with prospects, and money, and accommodation. And so he so, he actually wasn't in any kind of thing when we when we met, but so he joined the MOD. So I was back in that same kind of structure, although more peripherally, because you didn't live in great big camps and things you just you know, but, but yeah. I just, I just followed the pattern that I thought I was supposed to follow. But then um, we moved to Newbury and he was based at Greenham. And Tamsin was at camp. And I knew, I mean, we were related forever, but our parents - neither of our mothers who are sisters, or were sisters - mine's dead, neither of them ever made much of an effort for us to know each other. So we'd seen each other as kids a couple of times. Um, but we had got back in contact again as

adults. So she was at camp and I was really unhappy. Um, anyway, so I used to go and visit her camp. I didn't first go there for the politics. In fact, I was beyond a-political because I think I'd just been living in a bubble all my life. I mean, I was 28 when I was first at camp, and I hadn't ever really been interested. Um, and I remember as a child if the news came on, we all went 'Oh, god, news', and buggered off somewhere else. Um, but I went to camp, and I started to meet women, and get involved and, and I was already on the brink of separating from my husband. And it was difficult because the local media - well it wasn't even local, it was national - I don't even know how they got hold of it - but somehow they got hold of the idea that there was a woman who was married to someone who was working on the base, who was living at camp, and I wasn't even living there at that point - I was visiting. And also Tamsin used to come with her daughter.

Cara.

And she would have been 2, and it was really weird, because this is another example of that whole military thing. It never occurred to me - I was a separate person from my husband, and it never occurred to me that because he worked at Greenham, I couldn't have my family or friends - because other women occasionally came around - in my house. It just didn't seem that that was an okay thing - that I should be forbidden from doing that, because of what he did for a living. So um, they used to come around - anyway, somehow or other, the press got hold of it. And I had like, journalists on the doorstep. And these two guys turned up and they said, they were freelance, and they were writing, you know, and they'd heard that I'd got, like a peace camp in the back garden. And I just was so cross, and I just said 'Look', and I took them around to the back garden, where there was a sheet where the kids had been having a den. And I said, you know, 'It's a den, the kids have had it. And I don't have a peace camp in my back garden.' And they - to be fair to them - they went away, and they didn't write anything. They realised it was rubbish. But I made the mistake - some other guy turned up from the Daily Mirror and said 'Oh, I hear blah'. And I said 'No, even if I was ever going to talk to the media, it wouldn't be the Daily

Mirror, go away.’ And so they went away and wrote their own story. And they just made it up, and you know, put quotes in that I'd said, and I went and spoke to a solicitor in Newbury, and said ‘But they've quoted stuff I never said,’ and they said ‘Yeah, but you can't get legal aid for libel and slander, you have to pay for it.’ And obviously I've got no money. So that's why, that's how the media gets away with that. Because people can't afford to. But so...

What did your husband...

So he, he got, he got some stick at work.

Like, like, official stick?

Yes. Well, I think I'm, he is - this is such a very long time ago. He definitely was, I think his boss, or somebody said to him ‘You know, you need to sort your wife out.’ And he came home and told me this, and I was really pissed off. And we were already on the verge of separation anyway. And I just said ‘Look, if you want me to come in with you, and speak to your bosses, and say to them,’ and I - my language was much more polite in those days, which is just as well, but basically, tell them to sod off and leave me alone. So I went in with him. I don't even know who I saw or what the rank of this guy was. but I just said to him ‘I'm his wife, I'm not his possession, you know, this has nothing to do with his job. And this has to do with me and my friends and my family. And you know, he can't tell me...’ What I was basically saying to them was, he can't tell me that I can't go somewhere. Because what I realise now when I look back, is they all probably thought he was really pathetic, having a wife who just - and I was not in any way at that time, I wouldn't have identified as a feminist. It just never occurred to me that some other person could tell me what I could and couldn't do - it never ever had, which is quite interesting, given that I'd grown up in a military background where everybody tells everybody what to do. But I just went in with him and said, ‘You know, it's not for him to tell me where I can go and where I can't go.’ And now when I look back, and I think - I hadn't thought about that for a long time, but I think they probably

thought he was really hopeless because they would have expected him to keep me in line. Um, but I, I actually left anyway quite soon. Um, and was at camp for a bit.

So you left to live at camp?

Yeah. And then I was probably there for, I don't know, maybe -I was definitely in July for my birthday. And I was there till...

So what year was that do you think?

80... um 4.

Right.

And then, after the Christmas - I know I was there at Christmas because we did some fun stuff. And then after the Christmas, the beginning of '85 I moved, I left camp um, with my then partner who I'd got involved with at camp, and moved to Plymouth because Tamsin was living in Plymouth at that point. And we went down and stayed with her, and then found a flat down there. Because I wanted to be able to have my kids with me. But er, yeah, and then being at Plymouth was too far away really, so that didn't work. And so we moved up to London in '85. And I've been - I was in London then 'til I came here. But, but yeah, I mean - it's so weird because I don't think about this very often anymore. But Tamsin and I were talking about it the other day, and saying that, you know, lots of women - the first reason that they went to camp wasn't always the politics. And they might later have absorbed that or whatever. But for lots of women, that wasn't necessarily what it was about. And in some ways, the, the people with the politics were the ones who would visit and bring food, and money, and firewood, and feel guilty that they weren't living there. But if they'd all been living there, we'd all have starved. You know, if there hadn't been women bringing stuff, then yeah, we wouldn't, you know, it wouldn't have functioned. You had to have people who didn't live there. But yeah, so...

So what do you think - what was, what was the reason, what were the things that brought women to camp?

Well, sometimes - I mean, there was, there was something about um, there was something about the ideal for a start, of having this non-hierarchical, even though it wasn't really, but technically it was - having this whole non hierarchical thing. And for women who maybe had quite negative experiences with men, or not necessarily even with men, but where they'd been oppressed, genuinely oppressed, or experienced violence or whatever - to be just around a whole load of women, where everybody was terribly supportive, and nice - and not everybody is nice. Just because someone's a woman doesn't mean they're going to be nice, but it was such a big deal that everybody even if they weren't really very nice, pretended to be nice, so it was quite nice. But I think part of it for some women was just a space to get away, and be different, do things differently. Um, a lot of, I think, I mean, there were women there, there were women there who were passionate about the politics. And they were there because they believed that they could make a difference. There were some women there who were there deliberately to scam. There was a woman whose name I can't remember, who um, told everybody that she'd got cancer, and she'd got all this stuff. And she had to have all this treatment and all these things, and was constantly taking money from the communal pot for all this. And it turned out to be a load of bollocks. Um, you know, so, women aren't somehow magically better than men in - I mean, in lots of ways, yes. But not, there's - we can do things badly as well. Um, so there might be things like that. There were - I mean, some of the women had come from other countries and stuff. There were women from Canada, and oh my god, why was Leanna from she was from, like Norway or Sweden. Sweden, she was from Sweden. There was a woman, I was just thinking the other day there was a woman called Yoka who might have been Japanese or something. There were women from all around the world. And I think the ones who'd come the furthest probably did have very strong political reasons for being there. But women came for different reasons. And then they stayed for different reasons. Things changed about how they felt or what they believed, and I, and also, um, the

atmosphere, and the feeling, and the type of women each gate was different. So although everybody said it was non-hierarchical, and no-one was in charge, the women at Yellow Gate thought they were in charge. Um, the women at Blue Gate were all very young, very anarchist, didn't train - they all had dogs, and they didn't train them because that would be oppressive. So their dogs would get run over in the road because they would run about wildly. Um, but they were young and they were idealistic and hopefully, they kept the - that those ideal, but they learned to manage them in a different way. The women at Green Gate were what we all called very cosmic, so you know, but very impressed. And probably the women at Blue Gate were vegans, I remember. And we were just - I felt that at Red Gate, I felt that we were just really normal, that we weren't any of those things particularly. um, but it was interesting because yes, there was that whole thing - I met, there's a woman called Emma, who teaches yoga here, who was at camp and I didn't know her there. But I met her at a thing here, and we discovered that. And she said 'Oh, you wouldn't,' she said 'I was at Orange Gate. We were just always drunk.' So it you know, everybody had their own - each gate has its own sort of, I don't know - ethos. But women came together to do things together, and supported one another and stuff so, but I yeah, I think if you interviewed 50 women, they'd all have a different trigger that got them to camp.

We are interviewing 100.

Right. And they will all have a different thing.

Yeah.

You know, and some of them, yeah. But I think what's, what I find more interesting now is looking at what women have done since they left. Because we were all there for different amounts of time, and some women were there for years. And some were there for weeks, and some were there for months or whatever. But I know that there was a woman called Karen, who was she at Red Gate? Red Gate or Violet. I was at both so I can't always remember. But she um, went up to London and

became a solicitor, and um, did a lot of stuff in the late '80s and early '90s um, around the way that the police treat young people - and particularly black people, when they do stop and searches and things like that, and was really, really active doing that. The woman that I was involved with when I first left camp - Katie, she's a solicitor now, and she does family law and stuff. And then, and like, I don't know, there are lots of - Tamsin says now, the reason that she's got involved with being a membership officer for the Labour Party, is she feels she's not political enough. But that's because we were so political, that you don't realise that you're still doing stuff when it's at a much lower level. Um, and you don't have the energy for anyway, but, you know, we've all done, we've all come away and done amazing things since then. And just the fact that, you know, I can get up in front of any group of millions of people and talk to them about - as long as I know what I'm talking about - but I can do that. The fact that, you know, when I left camp, when I went to London, I somewhere or other during that time had acquired a much better understanding of who I was. And a much more confidence to be, to say what I thought, and not - I mean, when I was a kid at school, I nearly always knew the answers, but I never put my hand up. But as an adult now I'm running quiz nights, and doing stuff and organising the world. And, you know, I, a lot of that is a leftover from that experience, basically, of being made to feel valued. There was something - there was something very supportive about the environment. And I think women have gone away and done all sorts of things. I mean, Rebecca Johnson, who the police always thought was the leader, our great leader, but I'm um last I knew she was working for Greenpeace. You know, everybody has gone away and taken something that they did get from camp, and gone away and used it in the world. And so, we did far more than any - like if somebody said 'Oh, what was the outcome?' 'Oh, there's no cruise missiles at Greenham anymore.' That isn't it. That's a long way from being it, because we've done huge amounts more than that.

And would you say that's the legacy of Greenham?

Yeah, I would say that it's, you know, anybody looking at it historically, they'd be going, oh, yeah, well, you know, they were there for this amount of time, and then the weapons went and then blah. But actually, it's still going on. And it's going on in the way that we raise our children and the way that we do everything we do, because we, we've taken it with us. And I don't think about - I mean, the local, god, that must be over a year ago now - the local Labour group, the women's group was being reestablished and we had this big meeting and there were loads of us there. And we went around saying who we were, and um, somebody was obviously facilitating, because the idea was to say who you were, and then to say something about yourself that other people that didn't know, or wouldn't know, that most people didn't know. And I hadn't thought about camp since the dawn of time. And I remembered that. So I said 'Oh, you know, my name's Fenja, and I spent 6 months living at Greenham common in 1984.' And one of the younger women said 'I don't even know what that means.' And so that's important, because then other women were going 'Oh, that's really exciting. And that's this. And that's this. And I feel like...' and what I really hate is women going 'Oh, I feel like then I've done nothing', because that's not what it was about. But I don't think about it very often. And I don't think - I think anyone who does this, they've got something missing now in their life, but when I do, I realise that it has informed almost everything I've done since, and that's what matters. But when I first left camp, there were a few - I was still in touch with some of the women. And obviously what we had in common at that point was that we'd been there together. But for some women, that was all they could ever talk about, and I stopped being in touch with them. Because you have to, you know, that's like never stopping talking about when you were 15, or the job you were doing when you were 20. You, you move on, but you take what you - the experience with you. So I don't think about it very often. But after we were, I knew you were coming and that, and then Tamsin asked me something about photos, and I went and fished out some photos, which - none of them are very good because they were all taken...

Let me - in exchange, a woman gave me a photo album from Green Gate.

Oh, wow. Oh, that's beautiful.

And I brought it with me, because you might want to look through some of those photos.

Oh, that's such a lovely book as well. So a lot of these involve my smallest child, actually. But - come and sit on here, and look. I'm gonna have a look at those. That is such a lovely book.... I like those of the women. That's my son who is now 36 and living in America with three children on his own. God...

It's this that dates it. This could be us today but...

There's another picture of that somewhere, actually, I think, but um, this was, it was obviously when there was about to be an eviction, so everyone was picking up all their stuff ready to go. Yes, exactly. I had no idea. I really don't even know who that is. She could have been a visitor. But I'm pretty sure that's Veronica, who now is in Ireland, and you might have been in touch with. I think that's me. I'm sure that's me in that one. That's - I don't think I even took this, this is, there was obviously there was a convoy going out that day. And so women would - when you saw the convoy starting - women would rush to the gates to try and blockade it, but I just took photos.

Very, very sweet looking child.

He was, yeah, he's now 43 and he has boys who are 22 and 20. And he's got another one who's nine months old one.

Wow! Good effort.

Yes. That, Mel, I've just recently reestablished contact with Mel after all those years. We - our birthdays are on the same day, but she's exactly 10 years younger than me.

Right.

And so we had our birthday party together. Um, and this obviously is taken somewhere else in London, and I don't know how I got hold of it even. But she's living on Dartmoor running this amazing centre where they run all sorts of courses, about self empowerment, and yoga and all sorts of very cosmic stuff that whilst I think it's all very laudable, I wouldn't go to. But I went down there to see her and stayed for a couple of days and it was absolutely amazing.

Fantastic.

And what she, and again, a lot of what she's doing is - I don't know who that is. But again, a lot of what Mel's doing must be informed by stuff that was going on in her head.

This doesn't look like it's outside a prison, that building looks far nicer than that.

No, I think that was in London somewhere.

Looks like it.

But I don't know where. That's not from camp.

The kids look very happy.

They were very happy. And I think one of the reasons we took a lot of pictures of them, was because a lot of the media tried to say that all the children were miserable and depressed, because it was muddy and wet and horrible. But they weren't. This pram, that was our kitchen at Red

Gate, and all our food and that went in that, and then when they came around to evict us, we put everything in it and wheeled it away.

Fantastic. God, those big coach prams you could get a lot of stuff in them.

Yeah, it was brilliant.

So how, what were the evictions like them? Were they fairly constant?

When I was there - before I was there, some of the evictions were really nasty. Like, they wouldn't happen all the time. But when they did, they would like come around and just, you know, grab everything and take it all away. By the time I came, it was more of a sort of daily ritual. And what would happen is - that's Mel again, and I think that's Lynn in the background. Um, but what would happen is they would come around with this thing we called the muncher, which was basically a bin lorry. But it was always the same one that they came around with - an orange one. Oh god, I was going to look for those photos. Or they are just so funny. Um, and then there were these two men called Willis and Sharples, and Willis was total asshole. He was really nasty. And if he'd been allowed to he probably would have been quite aggressive. But they weren't.

Were they bailiffs then?

Yeah, and Sharples was, Sharples could easily have been just as horrible, but he didn't want people not to like him. So he just pretended to be slightly nicer. But what would happen is they would come around, they'd always get to Blue Gate first. And what happened is you just packed everything up, and drove away - every gate needed to have a vehicle of some kind. And as long as you packed everything up and drove away, then they didn't take anything. But if you didn't pack it all out, then they would take it and put it in the muncher. And sometimes they didn't have the muncher, they had like a flatbed truck, and they would just chuck it in the back of that. And what would happen is, at the

first gate, somebody would set off and come to the next gate and say 'The bailiffs are coming', because there were no mobile phones in those days. Um, so we would know that they were coming, and we would start to pack up, and we'd pack up all the benders and everything. And so every single day, you had to pack everything up that you lived with. And then we would - someone would go round to, from us they'd go around to Orange Gate and say 'The bailiffs are coming', and then you'd like drive around, and then once the bailiffs gone you come back and unpack it all - it was a really fruitless exercise, but they did it every day.

Fruitless except that I guess they're trying to wear you down and you know.

Yeah, but it became so much of a routine that yeah, I mean, that's, that's definitely Red Gate when basic - no, it's not Red Gate, it's Violet Gate, when, when everything was out, clearly, there wasn't an eviction pending at any point there, because there's stuff hanging - washing hanging on the trees and...

So was Violet Gate different character to Red Gate?

Well what, Violet Gate was between - it wasn't even there initially, there was just Red. And then Violet Gate sprang up between Red and Blue. And I'm not even quite sure why. And some of the same women were Violent and Red at different times. Um, and then when there were less women, I think we combined ourselves and we all went to Violet, because there weren't - as women - as the winter came on some of the women went. Oh my god, that's me with very dark hair. And my little boy.

Pretty serious There, you both look pretty serious there.

Yeah, obviously someone's pointing a camera at us, and we don't like it. Under a great big Red Gate banner.

Oh that's lovely. That banner's, fantastic.

I don't know where that is now. Tamsin might know.

She, she was saying to me that somebody's got the Red Gate diaries and she said...

Yeah, 'cause we used to write in them every day.

Yeah. She said...

All sorts of drivel really.

Do you mind if I take a picture of some of these?

No, that's fine. That's quite nice as well. That's quite a good picture of...

That is great! So yeah, I think I think we're going to see if we can, you know, track them down.

I remember at one point knowing who had the Red Gate book, but I, that was years and years and years and years ago, so.

I knew the woman who's got the Blue Gate diaries.

Right.

If you're interested in making contact with her.

I didn't know any of the women at Blue Gate, so, um, Tamsin says that she always kind of wished that she could be a Blue Gate-r, but she couldn't because she wasn't a vegan and wasn't 12 (laughs), basically, she couldn't really.

Yes. That's, that would....aww, he looks very proud.

Yeah, I mean the kids, they had a lovely time. But um...

So what was the - so I can see here the sentry box, there was somebody in there?

Yeah, but there wasn't always - there must have been something going on because that was at Violet Gate. And there usually wasn't anyone in there, but there may have been something going on, so they put somebody in there. I mean, we would, we used to chat to the soldiers. They were told such a load of crap about us - how we all wore razor blades inside the collars, the, the, the um, collars of our clothes so that if they grabbed us, they'd rip their hands to pieces. They were given so much disinformation, to make them frightened of us, basically, because if they saw us as human beings and normal people, that would be a problem. So some of the women put huge amounts of effort into just chatting to them at the fence, and be - getting to know them.

Did you?

Um, not very much. No. But, but I recognised how hard it was for the women who did, which was - yeah, because they were just told so much crap.

Why was it hard for the women?

It was just really hard work, because you were starting from a point of where if there were two of them standing next to each other, neither of them want to be the first one to admit that maybe they were having doubts about what they've been told, for a start. Because then their friend might go and grass them up. You know, it was it was it was quite hard work. These are lovely pictures.

Aren't they. So the woman who...

See I recognise her, but I don't know where her name is. I mean, quite often, but there would have been I mean, I'm crap at that anyway, I can meet people today and not remember who they are tomorrow. Um, but

and I didn't go around - I did go occasionally around Green Gate, but not very often. That's beautiful.

Isn't it?

That is really lovely. But yeah, I made efforts to try and find Mel again, and failed. And because the reason I've discovered since then, it's the reason that I eventually found her, um, well, the reason I couldn't is because she doesn't do Facebook and all that crap. And I do, and I'm all over there. So I was like, has anyone seen this woman? And nobody had, because she's living up on Dartmoor. But I self published my first novel last year, and I had done a separate Facebook page for my writing. And somehow - somebody or other must have been staying at the place that she is running. And they were on Facebook, and they had found that page, and she saw it and thought oh, my god, that's Fenja. And she sent this message, but it came from their Facebook account. So it was from this name I'd never heard of and it said, 'Oh my god, Fenja, is that you? It's Mel from camp.' And I thought oh, Mel's changed her name. And I replied and said 'Yes, it is me.' And we were talking to each other, and then the woman whose page it was, came on to the message and said, 'What am I doing in this thread? How did that happen?' But we are now in touch and she's going to come and stay in a few weeks. But yeah, I mean, what she's doing is amazing and is - I've no idea where all those bikes...

So they had a - they decided to cycle on the base, so they got a load of bikes donated, um, which they did up and made work and all the rest of it. And then they dressed up - some people were in their normal clothes, some of the women dressed up as witches, and they cut through the fence and, and then rode their bikes on the base.

On Christmas - was it Christmas Day? It was definitely over the Christmas of 1984, um, and I was at camp and Rebecca came round in a car, and wanted to just - they, there was another woman with her and I don't know who that was. And we just wanted to do something interesting. And it was always nice to do something morale boosting, so

it didn't have to be political - just had to be fun. And what we did was we so with these fences, I'm just trying to see, yeah, so if you cut down next to that post, and then next to the one over there, and you just let it fall down, you've basically you've created enough of a space to get a vehicle through, because it's huge. So what we did was we went round passed Red Gate to a place where there probably had once been another gate, but there wasn't anymore it was all fence. And we got the bolt cutters and we cut down both sides and let the fence go flat. And then we drove the car in. And then, so then we were on the runway, which wasn't really used as a runway anymore. And we drove all the way around the runway, until we came to the bit where - because then they had like, you know, the commissary and housing and all sorts of stuff, then got onto a proper road, and then drove down - there were four of us in the car and I cannot remember, I know Rebecca was one of them, but I can't remember who else, and we drove all the way down to where the main gate was, where their gate box and everything was. And because they didn't even look at who was in the car because we were going out not in. So they just waved us through. So as they opened the gate and we drove through, we were like waving and cheering and they were going 'Oh my god, what have we done?' And it was just brilliant. It was just really good fun. And we didn't do any harm other than we chopped the gate down, obviously. But it was really, yes, because you can see there where it's sort of falling down, just take the whole piece out. But it was, it was just because we - it was Christmas and we wanted to do something interesting.

I think that's the, um, the, the character of the protest seems to have been incredibly, almost light hearted, you know, good humoured, like clever things that were that were funny and not, um, not not aggressing people. I mean, I know it was non-violent.

No, but part of it was about actually, I mean, we could have been anybody. We we took that down and we drove around the base. We could have been terrorists. Anybody could have done it. And part of it was saying, look, oh my god, I went with this woman and I again I can't remember what her name was, I just remember she was blonde. We

wanted to do something - I know, I had some American coins. And I can't even remember why I'd got them. And we thought it would be quite fun to get onto the base and see if we could find like a chocolate machine that we could use our coins in and buy chocolate. So the two of us that night, we cut a hole and we went in, and we went, it was very dark. We went across the runway, and we came to this hangar, and the hangar was full. Oh, and I don't know why we took loads of wool with us. But we obviously thought we were going to do something interesting, we had loads of wool in our pockets. And this hanger was full of all these military vehicles and things. Um, but there wasn't a chocolate machine. But anyway, we thought what would be quite good fun and it was about 2 o'clock in the morning. We webbed this wool - all these different coloured wools across, between all these vehicles in this hangar, and we were wandering backwards and forwards for ages and ages. And then we heard someone coming, and obviously we must have been really tired because our brains didn't function, because we rolled underneath a vehicle, but we took the ends of the wool with us so that obviously then we could just be followed. And we were lying under there for ages. And we could see these feet that these couple of American soldiers like walking around and we could see the ends of their guns hanging down, because they all were armed, and like looking for us. And she kept poking me because I kept falling asleep. I was just like, really tired. And I was well, you know, I'm laying on the floor under a vehicle. And eventually they did find us and hoick us out. And they gave us a telling off and put us back outside of the front gate. But it was things like that what, what that did show was if we'd been carrying explosives, we could have blown up that whole hangar. It was so easy and we were in there ages before they turned out, and yeah, you're right, we didn't, we didn't do anything violent. But what we what we were doing was showing them just how badly organised and protected these really, really, really dangerous weapons were.

It was a - I mean, um, Leah called it 'Mocking', she said 'We just constantly mocked them.' And when I read the Hansard transcripts of the MP for Newbury, he I mean, the men, because obviously they are all men, are just beside themselves with frustration and humility at the - at

being laughed at by a group of women who clearly are not doing anything that they can really get them for. So, you could be arrested and charged but it's only breach of the peace. So yeah, it was, I just think it's, you know, it's, it's brilliant.

Oh this must be when we reclaimed Salisbury Plain.

That's right that's Salisbury Plain.

I was there. And it was ace. I had sex under the stones with my partner. I have to say it was with my partner, it wasn't with some random stranger, which is also a claim to fame and I hardly ever tell anybody that, but I've just remembered. We - what was so wonderful was that we set off, and the all the police that had been sent along, were absolutely panic stricken, because they'd all been told, but there's lots of live mines and stuff along, laid here because it's where the military do their exercises. So they would stand across the path to try and stop us walking. So we would go round them and then that would really freak them out, because we'd be on the bit where they thought we might blow up. And obviously they were going to be in a lot of trouble if we got blown up. So then they would move back and then we would go back onto the path and move forward again. And in the end, they just gave up and let us go, and by the time we got to the carpark they'd organised permission for us to camp out in the carpark.

Fantastic.

But what we did, was a few of us crept across in the night, and went right into the stones and um, slept in there. And then when they found us in the morning, they kicked us out.

So were you ever arrested?

Yes. I spent a week on remand in Holloway.

And what was that like? What was the whole process like, I guess?

Um. Oh my god, I was arrested, I was arrested for criminal damage, and I can't remember what I'd done - it must have been spray painting or something. And while I was in, in the police, no, yes, and then I had to, you know, they take you before the magistrate - I've been a magistrate since then. But I at that time - they take before the magistrate, obviously in the morning to be charged. And so I was in the cell in the magistrate's court waiting for that. And they came down, they had contacted my husband, and I had not told them to do that or anything. And they'd contacted him and he came down and he said 'Look, they've said that they'll just let you go if you come home.' And I said 'Well, why would I do that? You know, why would I? You know, that would be like denying everything.' You know? So I didn't, but I couldn't believe that the police have done that. Anyway, if you didn't have an address, at that point, if you didn't have an address that wasn't camp, they wouldn't bail you to just like, come back in a few weeks or whatever. But you could only be remanded for a week at a time, so they remanded me for a week to Holloway. And to be honest, I mean, it was it was sort of okay, it was a bit weird. If you were - I don't know what it would have been like if I'd been actually sentenced, because being on remand was a different environment. And it was like, Holloway prison - it's laid out, when I think about it, and I remember noticing this time, it's very like the way that hospitals are laid out. So you've got a central on each sort of area, you've got the central bit where you'd have the nurses and things, except that you've got the prison wardens, and then you've got all the rooms except that they've got doors and locks on and there were four beds in the room that I was in. And I think there was only one other woman in it, though, and she was a bit mad. Um, and I was really not - I'd never, I mean, I was just probably not prepared for that kind of environment or whatever. But it was very weird because I remember her saying she was in there for stealing a policeman's hat and trying to hit him with it. But I think there were probably some drugs involved. And I remember her saying to me 'I think I'll just beat you up.'

(Edit in recording)

And I forget, again, I forget. It's only when you said were you arrested, that I remembered that I've been in prison. Because I don't remember. But yes, that is quite interesting, because I was a magistrate for 4 years at Highbury Magistrates Court in London. Um, yeah.

Yes, that's, I think, I think it's a good thing that a magistrate has had an experience like that.

Yeah. And actually, the other thing I think - I was thinking about what I took from camp, is an absolute inability to believe anything I read in print. Because I know that we were lied about all the time, I know that an article was published in the Daily Express, in the Daily Express that - not the Express, the Mirror, that quoted me as saying things I've never said to anybody, you know, so I'm - I came away from that much more skeptical, and much more ready to check things out. I mean, I've got a friend in Bristol who is forever posting things on Facebook about um, there are awful things going on with the DWP, and they are awful things about benefits and people with disabilities. But if you're going to post that stuff and you want people to pay attention, you've got to filter what you're posting. You've got to look at the pictures and think, has that one been photoshopped? I only want genuine, and she's completely indiscriminate. But I see that, and I would never say 'Oh, George, that's a load of rubbish,' because in principle, the issues are real. But then she needs to, but I pick and choose all the time. And I always think about what - when people say something, I listened to what they didn't say. And yeah, and that that I definitely got from that experience.

So what was the um, relationship like with the media, do you think?

Well, there were, there were a few media people who I think, perhaps would have liked to be more - to just be more um, truthful, and so, but there were, an awful lot of it was about what they were being fed. And there were a lot of the time things would happen, and we would do stuff that in any other circumstance would have hit the news in one way or another. But there was such a blanket on that. And quite often, they had clearly been instructed that they weren't to, they weren't to

publicise it, they weren't to do that. So we were very suspicious of people from the media if they turned up, because we knew we, lots of us have had experience of them, asking us the question and then going away and writing their own thing. So, and there was what's her name? She wrote an awful piece about - she went to Yellow Gate one day, and it was all about these terrible, there was a kiddy there. And oh, how awful it was. And he was just trailing around in the mud with no clothes. And, and it was all - it was all very twisted. And there were probably six different ways of looking at that. But very often, they chose the most negative. But a lot of the time naturally, there was a lack of media coverage. It was more that when something happened that we would have liked to see covered, it just wasn't.

So, so do you think that was deliberate?

Yes. And it wasn't, I think the media were being told not to, and I don't know who by, but I just think yeah, yeah, there was just a, yeah, so either there would be nothing, or what there was would be very distorted. And that, that, that was frustrating. But it was also one of the reasons why I felt quite often that it was important to do things that didn't have any obvious political aim. But were about morale raising. I mean, we had a brilliant time, the day we drove around the base, it was just really good fun. And even the night when we webbed up all the tanks and armoured vehicles and stuff, it was just, it was quite good fun. And it didn't, didn't hurt anybody. And it was - because we used to say to the, when they arrested us, we used to say 'Well, what if we'd been carrying bombs? You know, what if we were terrorists, you just don't get this.' And they still didn't they still, but no, the media, you know, if we'd set - and part of it also it just seems ridiculous to think that a couple of women could do that. So if you'd told the media, they wouldn't have believed us. There were a couple of women and I can't remember who they were, but you might have come across them while you're doing this, who lived inside the base against the fence. They made a whole and got in and then they found a place where they were like trees and bushes. And they built a bender, and they lived in there for about a week. But nobody - part of the problem was that's so stupid and far

fetches that they wouldn't have believed us if we'd told them. So yeah. I was just thinking that after we left camp, and we were living, Katie and I were living at Tamsin's for a bit in Plymouth. And I said to Tamsin the other day 'Oh my god, do you remember this?' We went out and it was snow, right, so this shows how stupid we were. I think we might have had a drink. Um, we were younger then.

You're allowed to have a drink now if you want to.

But we went out drink now.

No, no, not if it leads to this kind of thing. Because what we did was we had pink spray spray cans of pink paint, and in the middle of Plymouth right in front of the police station, and I've no idea what it's like there now, it's probably all different. But there was this big grass area and there was a tank in the middle of it. And it was obviously there to advertise some military thing. But the police station was - it would be like, if the police station was in that garden there and the tank was here, and there was nothing between it. And we went out in the night in the snow, which the issue there is the footprints, obviously. And we spray painted peace symbols and women's symbols and stuff in pink all over this tank, and then walked back to her flat through the snow leaving - I mean, god knows why they never found us, because we left footprints all the way. But, but we kept on - that was the thing, we left and we carried on doing those things. And when I was in London, um, the following year with Katie, and Katie's sister was very, very, very active in the anti apartheid movement and lived on the picket at South Africa house for a long time. And we got involved to some extent in that, and we were living near Highgate and there was this Barclays Bank, and it was the kind of a very village-y area with just a couple of quite nice shops and a posh cafe. And this Barclays Bank on the corner. And when we went down there one night with spray cans, and we painted anti apartheid slogans all over this Barclays Bank. And um, and we went home, we lived very close, we went home, and it was there - or we used to have to walk past there quite a lot. And it was there for ages because obviously they were arranging to get it cleaned off and stuff.

And we noticed the actual day when they took it off. So we went back that night and did it again. We didn't do it any more after that. But we thought that would be really cool because it was exactly the day that they'd actually cleaned it off. So it was only gone for half a day, and then we went and put it all back. But yeah, we carried on doing stuff after we left. And I think everybody did. And even if it wasn't like deliberate actions, like spray painting a tank or whatever. We've all done stuff with our lives. I just really believe that we have, even in the day to day stuff, the way we bring up our kids, the way we talk to people, I think I, probably before I was at camp would have assessed people very much on the face of their immediate interaction, and not thought about motivation and things that might have happened to them to make them do the thing that they're doing. And like you said, as a magistrate, I was really aware of that. And I was really aware of the way that someone can be perceived by people who've never, ever shared their experiences. And yeah.

Do you think your, you being at camp made your husband think twice about what he was doing?

No.

No.

No, I think that what he, what he was doing was a job. And he would do what they told him to do, because that was the job. I don't think he ever thought beyond that - I don't think he thought about the politics of any of it. And because - until he was at Greenham, politics would never been an issue. You know, he'd been based in other places where they weren't really doing anything, particularly - the MOD doesn't really do anything anyway, they're a bit weird and I don't know why we keep, why we have like MOD police like lurking around, but it was just kind of - no, I don't think he ever thought about it.

What, what were the relationships like with the local residents?

They, they didn't like us, mostly because we smelled, because we didn't have showers, and we smelled of wood smoke. Now when I smell wood smoke, I just, oh, I just go right back there. And I just want to smell of it all the time. When I was in London, I had a big garden and if I burnt wood and stuff in the incinerator, I just didn't ever want to go and have a shower, because I - that memory takes me right back. But I can totally understand that if you walk into a little bakery shop or something and you stink of wood smoke, and you haven't had a shower for a fortnight, people are probably going to be quite put off. So, and there was a lot of negative media coverage, really a lot. So a lot of people didn't like us being there. And those that didn't mind didn't say anything because they're neighbours. But there was a pub, and I've no idea if it's still there, and it was called the Rokeby Arms. And they didn't give a shit - most of the other pubs wouldn't have let us in. But we went to the Rokeby, that's where we went. And that's where I learned to play pool. And they didn't care, as long as we behaved like everybody else, they really weren't bothered. And so it was the only pub we went to. And there was a room, sort of off the back with a big pool table in it, and I really, really wanted to play, and I probably played like a handful of times in my life and I was really rubbish. And these guys, you know, like you put your money on the table and you play the winner, and I would put my money on the table, and I would go around, and I would play, and I would lose. And then I would put my money back on the table, and it would go around again. And every time I went, I would do that. And eventually I beat this guy. And nobody ever - we never chatted, I never talked to any - these were all middle aged to older, white working class men who just went down the pub to play darts and play pool. And when I finally, and I did get better, when I finally beat someone, they all applauded. And they were really pleased for me, because I've been going back and going back. And it turned out he was their captain of their pool team. So it didn't matter whether I ever beat anyone ever again. But it was really nice, because they didn't care where we were coming from. We were just coming in, and having a pint, and for me I was just playing pool. And I learned to play there. We were talking about that the other day to someone because I was thinking pub's probably not even there anymore. But that was better than - and the

Friend's Meeting House used to let us use their showers some of the time and stuff like that. But, but that was better than the Friends because it was not treating us differently, or giving us something special. It was just not treating us differently. And yeah, it was great. And, yeah, we didn't have loads of some money, so we didn't spend a lot of time in the pub. And when I was there, all my money went on, just playing pool. But I did get better. And I'm, and I haven't played for years, but when I do play, if I play a lot for a few days, I get better again really quick here. But yeah, I just, people didn't - I can understand that people didn't like the smell. And people locally felt that having Greenham there, brought some jobs and stuff as well. And they just didn't like - there was a guy who lived on the side of the camp that we were on there is Bank Road. So you've got the camp there and the fence and then the road, and us. And there were big houses behind there - people with lots of money. And there was a guy there, who rang the fire brigade and complained that we were a fire hazard because we obviously we had fires and stuff. And they came out and did an assessment and said that we were doing absolutely everything right, and that there was no risk at all, which was lovely. You know, and they just did their job. And they could have come out and really tried to cause a problem. So I think the people who weren't that bothered about us being there just kept quiet because they would have been under pressure from neighbours, and I can understand that. And we smelled, sure we smelled awful. I mean, when I was, you know, everywhere that I've worked when I've worked in social housing, every now and then you'll get someone coming in who absolutely stinks. And everybody sort of takes five steps back and tries to deal with them from a huge distance. We probably were like that, although we didn't smell of pee. But you know, we did, we of wood smoke very strongly, and we didn't have a lot of showers and baths and things.

So did you, did you feel that it was a safe place? I mean, you know.

Most of the time, um yes. But sometimes local youths would get a bit pissed and come up at night, and slash tyres and things. But we had people called Night Watches - so there were women who couldn't live at

camp for all sorts of reasons. And they might come once a week and sit up overnight while we slept, and sit around the fire. Although there was a group of women who came to do a night watch for us once, and all fell asleep and our tyres all got slashed, so we weren't very happy. But um, most of the time, it was fine - occasionally, oh, there was a guy who tried to sexually assault me. I kicked him. That like men would - men visited, and the Bristol wood men were amazing. There were two young guys from Bristol, who turned up every Thursday in a white Transit with loads of wood - it would be pallets and all sorts of crap that they'd collected. No idea where any of it came from or what they did the rest of the time. But they came every week without fail, and they always came around to us. And we really, really appreciated that. So we weren't, like if a man turned up to visit, we didn't immediately think ooh, this is dangerous. But a guy, there was a guy who came once when we were at Red Gate, and I can't remember - he just - I don't even remember why I would have been anywhere close to the trees with him or whatever. And then he sort of grabbed me and tried to grope me. And I told him to sod off, and basically men like that thought that because there were only women there, we were desperate for a man. And we just wanted you know, we wanted a man. But I never felt unsafe because there were always all those women there. And to be honest, you know if a man had arrived, unless it was a big group of men, if a bloke had arrived and been aggressive, plenty of women were there to do something about it. And to be honest, if something had really kicked off, and the soldiers on the inside have seen it, they would have done something too I think, because they - we had, we had a relationship that sort of vaguely almost bordered on respect, but not quite - with those who worked there all the time, because they had learned to understand that not everything they were told was true, and that we were just human beings. It was if there was a really big action, and they brought police in from other places, then it was really difficult because they were coming in from other places, and their only experience of dealing with someone who was not obeying the law was that the only way that they thought people would behave is either to do as they were told, or to fight back. And we didn't do either. And they didn't know how to deal with that, they could be quite aggressive. But because they were in their uniforms and having to

comply to some extent, I never felt that that was a threat, but they would - so if, it was like when we did the Salisbury Plain thing, they would say 'You've got to stop', and we wouldn't stop. What they were used to in other environments was like, people fighting them, but we didn't fight them. And then if they took hold of our arms, we would sit down. So then they think, oh, well, she's sitting down, I'll go and get another one. And then we'd get up and walk around them. So they weren't very good at that. And they used to get quite angry, but the ones that worked there all the time learnt that that was what was going to happen. You know, if they arrested us, they'd get really bored because we'd sit and sing the same songs again and again and again in the corridors while we wait for them to sort us out. And none of us, I don't remember anyone being a particularly wonderful singer. But you know, but so I think I never felt at risk. I never felt like I couldn't just go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning everything feel right. But that might just be me, because I never felt like that all the years I lived in London. And I don't feel like that now when I walk down a dark street. And that may, you know, there might be women who say well, yeah, they didn't feel safe, because of the local people or whatever, but no.

So what difference do you think made it being a women only space or women's safe space let's say?

I think that did - there were women who wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been women only, for a start. So it would have been either smaller, well, there would be less women. And then the whole - the dynamic is always different when there are men there. I mean, it's not about whether they're good or bad men, but any group of women on their own, and any group of men on their own will be different if they're mixed. Because we, we respond to one another differently. Um, I knew a woman called Jill who'd been at a mixed peace camp, and had been really unhappy and had been sexually assaulted there by one of the men who thought he was really right on and cool and everything. Um, and I think there are some women who would have felt less safe. But also it just would have - men have a tendency to want to be in charge. The thing is, it was much easier to, although really the authorities never quite

got to grips with the non-hierarchical thing. It was much easier to try and persuade them of that when it was all women. If there had been men, it would have been more difficult. Because the, there just is, there's more of a tendency to want to be organised and structured and have somebody at the top. I mean it never, I never really thought about it, it was a women's space. And men were really welcome in the daytime, they would come and visit and sometimes just men on their own, and sometimes men with women attached, and you know it was it, yeah, it wasn't - they were never made to feel not welcome in the daytime, but we wanted to feel safe at night. And I suppose lots of women wouldn't have.

And do you think it would have been - you said that there were women who wouldn't have come...

Yeah, there were definitely women who probably wouldn't have lived there, they might have visited but wouldn't have lived there. And so then the balance would have been completely - a) well, I was going to say there would have been less people, but there wouldn't if some of them were men, but they, it would have been very different. I don't know, I haven't really ever thought about that. But I just think - also, I think whether the men wanted it to or not, what would have happened is the people on the inside of the fence would have looked to the men, and would have asked them the questions and, and would have assumed that the men were in control. And the kind of men who might have wanted to be there wouldn't have wanted that to happen. It would have been quite difficult, it would have made the dynamic very, very, very different. Yeah.

Do you think men would have been more err, provoked by...?

Yeah, I heard that before I was there, the women there used to collect money to support the miners when the miners were striking. And busloads of miners would sometimes come up to support the women. But they always turned up and like wanted to beat everybody up. And the women would have to say 'No, that isn't what it's about'. So yes,

yeah. I mean, 'cause that's more of, and not for all men, but it is more of a male response to a perceived threat - is violence.

Yeah.

And, and also, regardless of the fact that, you know, it's appallingly sexist, we probably came out of it better because we were women and some of the squaddies wouldn't want to hit a woman. So they were more careful about violence. They wouldn't have minded thumping a bloke. So actually it was probably less violent, because there were no men, even if the men - even if there'd been men, and they'd been really non-violent, the guys on the inside would have felt more okay being violent towards them because they were men. So in lots of ways, it probably was a good thing.

A couple of people have told me the squaddies were really young as well.

A lot of them were very young. And they just, you know, they'd been through their basic training, and they'd done whatever they'd done. And they'd just been given all these lies about us, and how we were evil witches, and we would cast spells on them and we all wore all these razor blades in all our clothes and that, so that if they tried to grab us, they'd rip their hands to pieces and all this crap, and they had just believed it. And then you could see that with some of them, some of the women put a lot of energy into talking to them, that with some of them, they began to question that, but they were not in an environment where that was encouraged, so it was quite hard for them, I think.

So how did you know, did they tell you? Did they tell some of the women that this is what they'd been told?

Yeah, I mean, I think really early on, they said things like, you know, they, they told women things like that. Well, before I was even there. Um, and, and it was - also it's quite scary because we used to say things to them, like, you know, if the button gets pressed, you guys are, there's

nowhere safe for you to go. You might have been told that you are going down into a bunker together, but that isn't going to happen. Well, if they were going to believe us, that was going to tear at the roots of everything about their lives. So it was quite hard, I think anyway, for them to believe us, but they were learning not to believe everything they'd been told from the other side.

Right. So the influence wasn't just with the women, it was probably with some of the soldiers as well?

Yeah, yeah, because if they decided to believe us, when we said there's not going to be a place in the bunker for you, they would have had to rethink their whole life. But if they could make me believe look, feel my shirt, there's no razor blades, and they could go that far. But who were they going to talk to? You know, because everybody they knew was part of that, especially for the Americans, they were like there in their bubble. Everybody they knew was part of that. If they started to express doubts, they were going to be in real trouble.

Did you ever speak to the American soldiers?

Yeah, I mean, you know, they - all it was very weird. Like, they try, I think they tried to keep them away from us a lot. But inevitably, it happened. And we just, you know, it was - I suppose that's part of one of the things that I learned, because they were doing that job, but I was really aware that they were doing it because of all, because they'd been told a lot of stuff. And it's like, it's what happens anyway, when people go into military training. You know, they have - in order to bond, and in order to know those people are going to obey every order that's given, they're brainwashed, they have to be brainwashed into that. So they'd been through all of that. And it would have been much too much to expect us to be able to fix that. But I, that, I kind of, that has helped me in the way that I respond to people on a daily basis since then, because I realised that, you know, if someone's conditioning for 30 years of their life, tells them this thing, than me saying that isn't right, isn't going to change it. There has to be - there have to be other ways of doing it. But I did, I

mean, I know that I influenced - when I was magistrating, I know that I influenced some of the other magistrates, just a little bit in terms of making them look at things from a different way around, instead of assuming stuff about somebody.

And so, um, it's - bearing in mind that it was to a certain extent non-hierarchical, how did that work in terms of deciding on how spend the money, or conflicts or?

What happened was, someone each month, I think it was monthly, someone would volunteer to be money woman. I mean, they were usually women from Yellow Gate, I think - although I never got involved in that. So what would happen is when money was donated, I mean, if someone gave us a tenner at our gate, we'd have just used it for food. But if someone donated more, or, yeah, then it would all go into a pot, and then there'd be a meeting, I think the meetings might have been monthly, but it could easily have been weekly.

So this is for the whole camp?

Yeah. And so somebody from each gate would probably go and would say, so for example, when our tyres got slashed, we said we need money for new tyres for the car. And then whoever was being money woman would sort of dole it out, and you'd get the money or, or somebody might need money to tax the vehicle that they'd got, or somebody at the gate might need shoes, and not have any or whatever, and whatever it was, this is where this woman who said she had cancer, got loads of money for loads of stuff and didn't have anything wrong with her. Except clearly she did, but it was in her brain not in her body. Because she obviously had a need to do this. But yeah, so then money would get shared out and whatever. Um, but apart from that, really, the women at the different gates - unless there was a big, some kind of really big action that was being organised, and then I really have no idea how that ever happened. But it did. We just did our own thing, at our own gates. So like, when we went in and webbed up all the vehicles, or at that Christmas, when we went and drove round camp, we would just do the

things we wanted to, you know, just do stuff. And that was probably better because it meant that it made it much more difficult for them to work out what we were doing, because none of us knew what we were doing either, and we weren't organised. And they would have really liked it if we'd been organised, because they could have listened in then and sort of worked it out. But no, I mean, I, I know, I can't remember how - I think the money woman thing must have happened on a weekly basis. We couldn't have waited a month for money. But people used to donate money. And then yeah, they would sort of say, right, okay, this is how much we've got. And then we'd say, we need 30quid for tyres or whatever, and then you'd get it. I mean, the reality is, there was no way to prove that you needed anything. So you just went along and everybody was supposed to it was all supposed to be on trust.

And what about conflict?

We - I think there must have been, and I'm sure there were some conflicts, we generally at our gat, we all got on okay, so that was fine. I think if you if you fell out really badly with someone, you might move to a different gate. But that would be quite hard. That would be like me suddenly moving in with somebody else here, because once you were at camp and settled at a gate, it was really your community. I'm - I don't know, I mean, there must be people you talk to - some of the women will say, yeah, there was a massive fight. I'll tell you what was a big problem, though, and it wasn't to do with conflict. There were a couple of women at camp who had really serious mental health issues. And there was a woman who lived at Green Gate, who had very serious mental health issues. But there were women there who believed, and they might have been right, but I - sometimes they weren't, that admitting her to hospital and treating her with drugs was oppressing her, and not allowing her to get better on her own. So anytime that she got sectioned, and was taken into hospital and treated in any way, they would go and get her signed out again. They would just get a solicitor or someone to come along and say, you know 'You've got to let her go', and they would find way to get her out. And then she would come back to camp, but she was really seriously mentally ill. And whether she needed to be

sectioned is a whole separate thing. But she certainly did need help, that she couldn't get. Because what they'd do is they get her out because they thought that was right. But they wouldn't look after her. It was like the women at Blue Gate with their dogs. You know, they didn't want to oppress these dogs by training them, and making them do what they wanted. But dogs got hit by cars and things. But I believe that she needed help, and that may not have meant she needed to be sectioned, but she certainly needed something that she wasn't getting there. And, I think the thing was that there was this thing about women have been oppressed for millions of years, and we shouldn't be doing that anymore and stuff. But in some cases, that was too much - it went too far. Because caring for her would have meant putting her into a safe environment where she could be properly looked after. And there was someone else who had - but she was the really, really severe one. And she had all sorts of hallucinations and stuff. And yeah, just, she just really wasn't well, and it wasn't right for her to be there. But nobody would have - when these women went and got her out each time, no-one would challenge them. Because what they were saying was all terribly politically correct, but it just wasn't right. So I don't, there wasn't a huge amount of direct conflict, I think it would have been much more passive aggressive, I would think. And I never really needed to think about it because I didn't fall out with anyone while I was there. Yeah, I imagine there was a lot of passive aggression going on.

Yeah, I mean, I think the, the conflicts that have been mentioned haven't really been amongst women at the, um at the gates, but there have been - there were sort of big fractures later on there's - were groups of women that came up from London, as I understand later on. And, and the camp kind of fractured almost irreparably at that point.

There was a group of women who lived in a squat in Caledonian Road near Kings Cross. And they - like when people talked about them, it sounded like this was a really great place 'cause like, if you went up from camp, you could go and stay there and things and, and get support. But actually, Katie and I, when we first went to London, we thought ooh, that would be really nice, because there were these women and they're part

of the community. And we were, we felt really, really unwelcome and they were really quite - they weren't aggressive, but they just were totally not welcoming. And we went away again. And the, yes, there was a thing that was happening around them. And it was, they - this group of women in London had a picture of how they thought all women should behave. And it was just as oppressive as anything any man had ever done. And yes, there were problems. And I, basically we moved away from camp while that was happening, not because of that, but that was just when we were moving away, and so we were only ever peripheral to it. And I was never involved. But I know that it was very damaging, and it was just so stupid. I, it, you know, when there's so much else to fight that you shouldn't have to be. And I, I know that there was a period when I thought ooh, these women are just so politically correct. And I wish I could be as political as them. And then I started to realise that they were being just as oppressive as anybody else in their absolutely rigid definition of what it meant to be a feminist. And so yeah, I don't - I have no idea what ever became of any of them. But yes, so that would have been that, but I wasn't involved. So I didn't know much about it. Except that we went down to Cally Road that one time, and just felt really unwelcome and left again. Yeah.

So one of the things that we're going to try and do is get some funding to put together a, err school's module, secondary school module. And is there - if you have to think of the three things that are the most important to come out of Greenham, obviously you've mentioned one which is the the sort of the legacy.

Yeah.

Are there, for kids these days, who may not know and certainly don't have an opportunity to go to a woman only space, um, what do you think are the important messages for them to hear what you think might be something that they...

God, I don't know.

And, and obviously, don't worry, lots of people have felt that's a very pressured question.

Yeah, I just I don't - I haven't really thought about it, but I think what I learned at camp was how to look beyond what's presented to me. That's what I think. And I think it's a very difficult thing for young people to do because they, they have advertising thrown at them all the time. And it's finding a way to learn, to automatically look beyond whatever is put in front of you. And that, that has made a difference to everything I've done since then. And, yeah, so and now, I mean, initially, like we grew up with all this stuff, and then all of a sudden you look beyond what you've grown up with. But it's not for kids at school now, it's not just what they've grown up with, but it's what's being constantly put on the television and on their phones and, and, you know, everywhere that they look, there are messages telling them what they need, and what they should want, and who they should be and what they should look like. And it's about looking beyond that, to see who's saying and why they're saying it. And I think I got a lot of that from camp, I got a lot of, you know, someone would turn up, who had nothing, and just bring us what they'd got, because that was all they'd got. And then people would turn up and pretend to be really supportive, and actually, you know, would just be there to, almost to reinforce their negative opinions that they'd come with. And it, I just think, particularly young women, but actually young men as well, they need a chance to look at what's being shown to them and see what's behind it. So that then they can decide what they really want. You know, if they're told that this is how - they must have a phone that looks like this and does all these things. And then they realise that actually, they could have that other one that's half the price, but isn't made by that manufacturer and then they've got money for something else, you know, then if they really want that one, that's fine. But if they don't, they shouldn't worry that people are going to sneer because they haven't got the right you know, it's, it's so it's really insidious because it's everywhere and with the growth of, and I love social media but with the growth of social media, there's so much pressure on young people, girls and boys to conform to all sorts of weird things. And they're being also, at the same time they're being told that

they've got so many more choices. But that doesn't, that still doesn't make it easy because then you've got a million choices, and you can be anything you want and that's all going to be okay. But also at the same time, you should be this, and you should like this, and you know, I just - so I don't, yeah for me, there's something very empowering about not taking anything at face value anymore. And I, that's what I tried to do with my kids - to teach them not to take things at face value. But that's something I learned there, because I think I just accepted everything I'd grown up with until then. And it has made a difference in my jobs, you know, working. I mean, I spent quite a lot of years working in homelessness. And um, you know, people get, you get all this stuff in the media about how, oh, yeah, well, you know, yeah, he's homeless, but he's still got this mobile phone. Well, yeah, because 6 months ago, when he didn't know he was going to be homeless, he signed a contract, and he has no choice. And he's got to have that for another 18 months, because he's going to have to pay for anyway. And he didn't know that his relationship was going to break up, and then he was going to lose his home and he was going to be sleeping on a bench. And it's those things is - I would have just believed the same things. I would have thought the same stuff. And, yeah, I was pretty dim as a kid. But what you have to do is you don't just throw yourself at something you, you have to research it, you have to actually know. So if you are going to have an argument - not even that - if you're going to talk to somebody, if you're going to talk to your parent who is telling you that this is the right thing, and you want to say to them no, actually, that's not the right thing, you don't throw yourself into it and scream and shout. And that's a very hard thing to learn when you're 15. But it's what we did, we didn't scream and shout and, and attack people, we just sat down. And it's that - it's learning that - weirdly, so a friend of mine, who's in the Labour Party, she's been posting about - she's been she's really excited because she's been to some nonviolent direct action trainings. And I'm like, well, we did that. We did that ages ago. And she thinks it's really exciting she's doing it.

So did, were there training?

No, you just did it.

From the women around you?

You just basically knew not to react with violence. And the best way to do it was almost always to sit down, because then they think they've won, and you're out the way, and they'll go and look for somebody else, and then you get up and carry on doing the thing you were doing. And it's really easy. But it was so funny to see Holly posting and going 'I've been on this NVDA thing, and it's really exciting.' And I thought but we didn't have training. And anyway we did that, and it was in the '80s. And yes, still do it. But also, I think NVDA is quite a useful - for teenagers, it could be used as quite a useful conflict resolution thing. Because they don't know how to resolve conflict in their own peer groups or whatever. Or if they have, if they want to argue with a teacher or someone in authority, they don't know how to do that. But actually, probably the principles of NVDA might work very well for them.

Well, I think they are incredibly effective. I mean, from what I've seen, and talking to the women, is I think that's one of the things that has impressed me the most, is how incredibly confusing it is for the authority.

Yes, they've got no idea. They are just not trained to deal with people who don't either do as they're told, or fight. And that's the only two responses that they know how to deal with. And the minute you do anything different, they just can't do it at all. And you do something to the wiring in their brain, it is really interesting. Yeah, but that's, I mean, I do think that's something - that that kind of thing could be really useful in schools, it could be - and it's almost like, it might even be able to be used in some ways to help to work with bullying and stuff as well. It's, yeah, it's not the same as being passive aggressive. You know, there is a difference.

Yeah, and it's definitely not passive.

No, no, it's not because you, you're thinking about what you're doing. But yeah. Oh my god, Katie and I, we were in London, and there was a big anti-apartheid demo in Trafalgar Square. And I don't even know why - because I don't think we were there, maybe we were there specifically to be there for the demo. There were loads and loads of students had come from all around the country in coaches. So there were millions and millions of very young people lurking. I was only like, 30, so I wasn't that much older. And there were all the people who were on the South Africa house picket. And it was because there was a guy who was in prison, and he was going to be executed in South Africa, and I can't remember his name. Anyway, we were there and they had a PA system and a stage thing all set up in the middle of Trafalgar Square. And they were doing this like, 'Ooh, we hear that there's a whole bunch of you here from some University in Newcastle or whatever.' And then all these kids would cheer because they'd come down on the coach from Newcastle. And then 'Oh, we hear those people from Loughborough University', and they'd all cheer. And we were like, what the hell? This isn't Radio 1. This is not a radio roadshow. This is somebody who's going to die today. And you're - that's why you're supposed to be here. So it didn't occur to us not to do it. We got up on the stage. We just went up the side, and of course, security's bollocks at these things, they just do not think. And while they chased Katie around, I got hold of the mic, and I just said 'What are you doing? I hope you're really pleased with yourselves, you managed to get on a bus and come to London. And that is not something that we're - we're not here to celebrate the fact that you know how to catch a bus. We're here because this person is going to be executed today.' And loads of people went and lay in the road. It was really wonderful. And we didn't tell them to go and lie in the road, and they got the mic off us in the end and packed us off. But actually then there was this really peaceful protest, because loads and loads of these young people went and just lay down in the road until the police came and picked us all up. And it was, I would never, I mean, I might have seen something like that and thought this is outrageous, that's not what they're here for - never even thought about getting up on that stage. But actually, it didn't occur to me not to,

because I'd been at camp and because you had to do something. You couldn't just watch something happen and not do something.

That's, I mean, that's fantastic. I'm very jealous of that. Very jealous of that.

I mean, it's not - you don't think about it. I learned. Yeah, it's just just something that I mean, it never occurred to us not to do it. Yeah. Weird.

Good. Good. God, I wish all women felt like not - wouldn't the world be a different place?

Yeah, I mean, it feels - I mean when I, it's such a long time ago now and when I look back, and there's lots I probably don't remember, but I, I do know that coming away from there I was definitely very different from the person I was when I went into, into that. And I don't think it mattered what the reason was why women initially went, because everybody got something from it and came away different.

And do you think that there were um, do you think the camp was kind of infiltrated by either MOD or MOD police, or police police?

People always said, you know, women were always a bit suspicious of anybody new just in case. But I didn't experience that, but I can't see why it wouldn't have happened, because they wanted to know what was going on. The trouble is it didn't help them, because nobody knew what was going on. And if they like say some new woman turned up and joined one of the gates, all she'd ever find out was, how many sugars people had in their tea, or whatever. But you know, she was never really going to find out anything more than what that gate was doing. So yeah, maybe she'd have known that I was going to go in through the fence that night with somebody or other or do whatever. But that would have been it, it wouldn't have been anything bigger. I think if they did do that, they probably stopped quite quickly, because they would have realised that they weren't going to find out what they wanted. What

they wanted was to find out who was organising us all, because they were convinced that somebody was.

You mean like externally to the camp?

Yes, yes, they were convinced that someone was in charge. They also were convinced that we were all members of CND. And there what-do-you-call-it of CND, he used to visit, which didn't, didn't help - I mean it was lovely, but it didn't help that that perception. And they would, so they just assumed, and we used to say things like, but we're not joiners, we don't join things. But they didn't get that either. They had a picture of how it would be if it was them organising it. And they could never understand that that isn't what it was like. It was really disorganised. And that was the best way.

Yeah, but, it was and, it wasn't.

Yeah. But it's like when you - if your watch TENKO, they got into real trouble if they went off and did a thing on their own without telling the bosses. And that's when everybody finds out what everybody's doing. It wasn't like that, you could do your own thing, provided you didn't put somebody else at risk or whatever. And yes, some of the big stuff was very organised and the sharing of the money, and all of that, but small actions and who did what - we did, oh god, I wish I wonder if I know where these photos are? We just did the most amazing thing, um - I told you about the evictions and they would come around and we'd pack everything into the car and whatever. Well, one day our car Amelia died, and she was never going to go again. And so we thought we'd have some fun with the bailiffs. So we loosened all the wheel-nuts. And then when the bailiffs came, so we left her alone. And then when the bailiffs came, we were like, oh god, the bailiffs are coming, and we stuffed everything into the car the way we normally would. And they would only ever be room for like one person to then get in and drive, and drive it all away. And um, I can't even remember who did it - one of us got in and then got out again and said 'You know what, I'm sick of this. If you're going to tow the car away, just tow it away. We just don't care anymore.

We're not we're not moving for you.' So they tied up the rope and everything on it. And of course, the minute they started to try and tow the car away, all the wheels fell in, and the look of horror on their faces because they thought they'd damaged the car. And then we were laughing so much, but they were furious. And it was, it was just wonderful. And it, yes, but again, you know, no-one, however much they tried to spy, no-one could have known that was going to happen.

Yeah, and I think those things are, you know, they're not Embrace the Base type actions, but they're just everyday things that just you know tell them.

Well it helps - it boosts the morale for the women. And it, yeah it really pissed the the guys off, I mean that was an occasion when Willis would have beaten people up if he'd been allowed to get away with it. He was not happy. I, and just recently things - like I remember once we packed the car up, and I had - no, we hadn't even packed it up, and I was driving around to Orange Gate for some reason, and I'd put my cup of coffee on the roof. And when I got to Orange Gate, it was still there. I driven around there with a cup of coffee on the roof of the car. But just yeah, I mean those things mattered because it was light relief, and if it was pouring with rain and we couldn't cook properly because it was putting the fire out, and we were miserable and whatever, then just to do something like that. This woman Jez and I, because a lot of women, all the women at Red Gate were vegetarians. Um, but I wasn't - but I ate veggie when I was there. But Jez I used to go into town and buy chicken fried rice and sit in the car and eat it, so that nobody would know. I remember telling Mel that when I met up with her the other day, just you know, because we didn't want to upset the other women, but we wanted our chicken.

It was, it sounds like a very creative environment as well. I was just looking around your, your flat, and there's quite a lot of creativity in here, too.

I do think a lot of the women probably, I mean, Veronica, who's, she's half Italian and half Irish, and she lives part of the year in each place now, but she's an artist. And I write now. And I do think a lot of the women went away and did all sorts of creative stuff, because we had a chance - we had a chance, because it didn't matter what you did, no-one was going to criticise and tell you it was rubbish. Um, and it wasn't good enough. And so I think women felt more able to find out what they could do, and to go away and do it so yeah, you're probably right. I'm sure. You just need people to just, they don't even have to like what you're doing very much, but just not to tell you it's rubbish, really - to be able to get on and do it.

Yeah, I mean, I've seen - the woman who gave me this showed me some handwritten poetry. And, and it's really good, you know. And I said to her, had you written poetry before? And she said, 'No, no', she said it was just you know, people were doing it. Everybody was encouraged to have a go at everything. And then we just did.

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, when Katie and I left camp, we had a series of the oldest cars in the world. Um, but we always did - we just bought Haynes manuals and did all our own repairs. And I would never have thought I could do any of that before that. I remember when I was married, we were painting a wall somewhere, and my husband kept saying 'Oh, there are brush marks'. And it was years before I realised that there were always brush marks 'til it dries. But he just kept saying that about the bit I was doing. And it's one comment like that can stop you ever trying, but nobody did that there. No, you could, you could have a go at anything really. And people were quite inventive as well, just with the, the clothes they wore and the way that they put things together and everything.

But I think your, the actions, big and small were inventive, too.

Yeah. Yeah. Always. There was always something to do with dressing up or, or I mean, there were a couple of things on Hiroshima day when women would be naked and covered in like, ashes and whatever. But,

which was not morale raising in any way. But it was still, it was really powerful. But it was also very creative and inventive, because it's not the sort of thing that - also the men never wanted to touch naked women, because then they'd have been in lots of trouble. So they really struggled to deal with those kinds of things. Yeah.

So is there, is there anything else that you want to go through? I've kind of gone through a lot of the questions that I had.

No, I don't think so. Like I said, I don't think about it very often. So now when I do, I surprise myself and I think, oh, I did that, or I did that. And I think a lot of the things that I remember were small things that were done to raise morale. Because, you know, it might have been a bad day, or the weather might have been cold or whatever. The other thing I remember - Mel and I were talking about this was like, if you're sitting around the fire, and it's a really, really, really cold night, and you're all sitting around the fire, so you're really warm because you're - the minute you stand up to go for a wee, you are absolutely fucking frozen. And it was, we just were remembering that - like, you forget those really small things, you feel so warm, and you get up and take one step away and you're so cold. But um, and we had a knicker bush, which was basically where we used to - after we washed our knickers out, we used to hang them all over this bush to dry. And there was a bush that was covered in toothpaste because that's where everyone used to clean their teeth and spit on the bush. But just all those, just really - we had, when I first moved to live properly at camp, I took a couple of things with me. And one of them was a battery operated, little battery operated record player. So we could have music. And I also brought some um, well I don't know where I got them from because I wouldn't have had them at home. But we got hold of some net curtains - maybe from a charity shop. And we were actually using them as mosquito nets, because it was the summer. But we used to refer to the net curtains and we, so we could have like a soiree because we had a record player and net curtains and things. And none of it was as it sounded, but it was lovely. It was really nice. And the thing, the little things you learn, like, we'd have to fire going most of the day 'cause you'd make cups of tea and things and whatever anyway,

and then in the evening, you'd have it going till quite late. And eventually it would go out. But, whoever woke up first in the morning, all you have to do is put a bit of kindling on the very - on the ashes because they'd still be warm. And we called it wafting. And we usually had a wafter, which would be like a Tupperware lid or something, and you could get the fire going, just like that. And little things like that, that I remember that I think that could be a useful skill one day, not that I've ever needed it, but you never know. But no, I don't, I don't think about it a lot. And when I do, those are the things I remember. I remember sitting in the car with Jez eating chicken fried rice. And the fact that there were women there who were vegans and oh my god, the dietary choices in those days for a vegan - you could just basically, you could have baked beans on toast with no spread and that was it, really. Because there was just so little that you could have.

Yeah. Somebody said the, the vegan diet consisted mostly of err chips and beans.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely because, and even then they had to be careful about what kind of fat the chips had been cooked in. But yeah, really difficult.