

Helen Moore

So, er, the first question I wanted to ask you was how long you were at the camp for, if you did stay there, or if you didn't stay there, um and how did you find yourself there in the first place? Does that make sense?

Okay, I was part of the gay movement in London and also part of the women's movement, and there was a fair bit of awareness of Greenham common that was going around within those groups.

Okay.

And that's what took me down there originally. And when I first started visiting, it was for the day events.

Okay.

And then after becoming more involved I just stayed for weekends, and then I ended up commuting (laughs) between Greenham common and my job in London, so - I only worked part time, I worked for the steering committee that was setting up the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.

Okay.

And when I wasn't working for them and wasn't doing um, sets at the London Gay Switchboard, I was down at Greenham common.

Brilliant.

Um, I think that lasted quite a, quite a good few months.

Did it?

Yeah.

Just going back and forth?

Yeah.

And staying at weekends?

Yeah. Um, I stayed at Green Gate, I had a bender underneath the holly tree and um, although I was never present for an eviction, I did turn up in the aftermath of a couple.

Okay, wow.

Um, yeah. Made life interesting.

Yeah, that sounds amazing. Um, what sort of evictions were they - people that were being taken out?

Um, no not, not arrests, but um basically they - I think it was injunctions that got taken out against women that were living there and um, towards, against the camps - the permanent camps that were being erected at certain gates. So the same way they can get eviction orders against gypsies and travellers nowadays - they were making mass evictions against the camps at various gates. And they just used to take everything, so any shelters that had been made, cooking stuff, sleeping bags, the lot - it just used to be taken, so they were kind of dramatic (laughs), dramatic evictions. I wasn't actually caught up in one of those, so I consider myself quite fortunate. But seen the aftermath.

Wow, and that was... when you were there then?

Yeah, but not present, not during. Afterwards. Most the things I took part in were day to day living there, which could be difficult, but not always. It was very close, and very um, family - not blood family, but family, you um, related to people who were there, and there were a lot of good discussions over the fire at night. But most of what sticks in my mind is obviously the actions, um things that happened during and after and because of that.

Exactly. Okay. So you said you were part of the gay community there, was there a lot of gay people there? Or women?

Well, as I said I was part of the gay community in London, and there were a lot of women who identified as gay who were down at Greenham. Green Gate specifically was women only. The other gates, er tended to have visitors of both sexes, although the protest was mainly women only. I think way back, when the protest first started there, back before it was known as the main Greenham common thing, there was a mixed camp there. And then women decided to ask the men to leave. And then the follow on from that was that it became a big women only protest, which gave it a lot of media interest, and also kind of guided the type of protest that happened there. For example the circling the base and the holding hands and a lot of the um passive

protest. Um, so although some of the women there were lesbian, that wasn't the important thing about it. The important thing about it was that it was women supporting women, and a lot of the people who came down to Greenham had never been involved in any form of political protest or political activity previously. Obviously with my lifestyle I had been involved in protest marches through CND and um, some things with um the Gay and Lesbian Movement, but this was different - this was the whole spectrum of people, that were people who were just part of normal life as well as people who were more politically aware, and it was seen as a concern that was just important to everybody, and that transcended whether you were gay, whether you straight, or anything like that. It was women coming together about an issue that was really important. And I think it really made a lot of people extremely aware of other things that could also be taken into account. And it also gave women the opportunity to understand their own strength, and that they could stand outside of what mainstream society said they should be doing. And a lot of men did a lot of child care and support to enable women to become that. So, yeah. It was across the board, it was beyond what your sexuality was, it was a coming together of women.

Of-course yeah. You don't really think about the men having the child care. I didn't really think about it. Not that I didn't want to.

(Laughs). It's just not obvious, its just not an obvious thing. I know some women left against objections of their partner, but I also know women who had people who were really supportive of them, and gave them the space, and took care of things that normally they would not have done - stuff that's seen as women's work, and made people realise that things could be changed.

That the sort of, er, the men also had a part in it - well not a part, I don't know if support is the right word, but the fact that they looked after the children in the house and let the women do that, they also let...

I think the word 'let' is a dodgy one there. Some men were supportive and facilitated the women in their lives, um, to be able to come down to Greenham common. Other women had harder options, um, and I think the word 'let' is loaded, um, because um, you're talking about a hierarchical society, and women should not have to be 'let' to do their own choices about what they do with their life. Um, I think noticing that some men were supportive of those choices and some men were not is the point. So sorry, I jumped on your language, I do apologise.

No, that's fine. That's fine. I know what you mean - they let- they wouldn't be able to do it without them, is that what you meant?

I think being 'let' to do something, um implies that you have someone's permission to do something, whereas I think coming to Greenham common was a positive choice women made. As I said, I think sometimes the men um, were supportive of that choice, and other times they were less supportive, but I don't think it helps to say 'The men let the women come'. So that's the language I jumped on. I'm sorry. (Laughs)

No it's fine, that's absolutely fine.

I think part of it was taking your own power.

Right, yeah.

And um, I know nowadays that is seen as quite often not necessary. Because women are more aware of their own power, and their own ability, and their own freedoms to do things. Um it was less obvious.

Okay. Makes sense.

Even in that short time period things have changed a lot. Probably not enough. But a lot (laughs).

Yeah. Um, so er, I was just thinking about the fact that er, with the Suffragette movement beforehand, um, a lot of the men back then, um, didn't want to look after the children, and the children would go into care and things like that, and the women would have to be homeless and live in churches. I'm not sure if a lot changed - not a lot, but some things changed, um, when the Greenham thing, when the Greenham common protest happened, so a lot more men were supportive of it?

I think a lot of men were taken by surprise at the strength of unity among women, and I also think that it's difficult for me to comment on how men felt. But I know from, anecdotally, from women that were there, some of them felt very supported, some of them felt that they were doing this even though they weren't being supported because it was a important issue. And the issue of family is incredibly important, because people felt they were doing this for their children so there would be something for their children, because you have to put the time frame in context with what was going on - there was that whole generation that grew up with the threat of nuclear war - it was there, it as obvious. You're looking at the Cold War when it was that threat, and the idea of um, allowing another country to have weapons in our country um, was almost like 'Why? Why are you doing this? Why are you facilitating this?' It was like the whole idea were the First and Second World Wars were fought in Europe, and now what you're doing is encouraging somebody

has to fight the next one here. But it was also 'We don't want nuclear weapons in our country, we don't want our own nuclear weapons, we don't want other people's nuclear weapons. Nuclear war is stupid, and that's what it was about, and I can't chant the songs at you now - I've been trying to remember them, but there are whole chants about cruise and various labels for nuclear weapons that were called out, and those were chanted during the protest, because it was just seen as this whole idea of nuclear war is stupid. All other issues just shrank, so that there was still a world for our children, and that was very important for the future, for the coming generations. If this wasn't stopped there would be no future generation.

No, it's weird, when I, before I started the project, er, I had an email, because I go to UWE in Bristol, the university, I had an email from this woman saying we've got this project that's happening, and UWE were supporting it, and er, would you like to be a part of it? Not me personally, but they sent us all an email in the university, and I'd never even heard of the Greenham common protest before in my life and it was difficult.

It's part of women's history, and like a lot of history that isn't mainstream, or isn't seen to be mainstream, it gets forgotten - because it's not taught. Um, yeah my daughter knows about Greenham common because I speak with her about it. I have quite a lot of younger friend who are fairly politically aware, and it was quite surprising how many of them didn't know about it. And I think although there are a few books - probably out of print now - about the whole concern, I think the anti-nuclear protest as a whole are seen as less important, less relevant. Because it's like, have you heard of CND?

No.

Major, a major London group - Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Um, there were mass protests on the streets of London over a large number of years, and Greenham women and the Greenham common protests were a part of the larger anti-nuclear movement, which seems to have just disappeared into the realms of yes, that went on. But people don't know about it, and I find it really strange that such an event that had such an impact on so many women's lives just has disappeared. (Laughs). It's gone, it's vanished.

I was like, I said to my mum, I said um, because it would have happened when she was in her 20s, I said 'Did you know about it?' She said 'Yes I did', and my grandparents knew about it and everything but it just hadn't been passed on, because as you say, it doesn't get taught, things like that don't get, things like that, like Greenham hasn't been taught. I didn't get taught about it in school, and it was

happening when I was born, um, and it was weird to think that they - not weird, but it was um...

Strange?

Yeah to think that you did that for my generation, yet I didn't know about it.

It made the mainstream news.

Yes.

I mean, my sister turned off the television and distracted my mother because she saw me on the television and just went 'Arrrgh!'

(Laughs)

Because she saw me on the news and didn't know whether I'd told my mother or not. I wasn't living at home at that point, so I just hadn't thought to tell her - it was just something that was part of my life, but my sister kind of went 'Hhuuh!' She sent me a letter saying 'I turned off the television - what were you doing?' (Laughs). That was quite interesting. So yeah. My mum knows now. (Laughs).

Did she know at the time?

Yeah, I did tell her, I'm not sure whether she approved or not. I think she probably approved of the fact that I was making my own decisions, but my mother's politics and I have never always been on the same page (laughs), really.

Yeah, okay, no. Did you tell many people that you were part of it?

Oh yeah. All my friends, all my chosen family, rather than my blood family. Everybody knew about it. It was the same as taking part, it was the same as participating in other protests. Around that time in London there was a lot of political activity, um, around mainstream politics, um, and around gay politics and around the peace movement, and it was something that was spoken about a lot. And yeah, everybody knew what I was doing - in some of the alternative press there was a small alternative newspaper that friends of mine published. One time I was writing a small column for them about that was going on at Greenham. There was also, I think it was Gay News in London, um there was a letter to the editor saying 'We're employing somebody to set up the Lesbian and Gay Centre, what's she doing down at Greenham common?' And so there was some comment within um, the London community about what was going on. I should say that was rebuffed by my saying

'Look, I'm only paid to work part time, you know I do this in the other part of my life', which was published, so yeah it was all very, it was very well known. It was spoken about, it was in the awareness of the alternate community as well as the mainstream community. Um but I think unless you were there, unless you knew about the mainstream impact of it, a lot of people don't know about it. And in, in various jobs that I've had, I've declared that I was, I went to Holloway - I have a criminal record, or I did have - I think it might be spent now. Um, I've declared that, and people say 'What for?' And I say 'Greenham common', and people go 'Oh, that's interesting', and then that opens up a whole um, another conversation. But people did end up with criminal records because of it.

Yeah, we had a bit of a discussion about it - before the interviews, we all sort of met up - all the interviewers met up, and there was a women there who was at Greenham as well, and she had sort of had six or seven hours in Bristol, and we were looking at videos, and talking about what we remembered of it, if we didn't remember of it - they were teaching us things that happened there and things like that, so a lot of stuff came up abut criminal records.

Yeah.

So you had yours from Greenham?

Yeah. (Laughs).

Were you arrested?

Several times. I bounced in and out of Holloway prison on several occasions, because the situation was that they would fine you, because it was usually considered to be breach of the peace or criminal damage - that was mainly related to cutting down the fence, um and um, I was also arrested for um taking part in a protest that happened on the top of Holloway prison, because we climbed up the scaffolding and held a protest on the top of Holloway prison, because spaces were created in Holloway before women that were arrested had had their trial, so before they'd been proven guilty, space was made for them in Holloway. At one time there was a permanent presence of women outside Holloway prison in support of women who'd been arrested and held in Holloway prison, and because I was in London it was easy to come along there. And one evening it was just - we heard this news, and it was just like several of us just got together and said 'There's scaffolding around there', and it was just a case of yeah, and that's one that was on mainstream news.

Oh was it?

Yeah.

Oh right.

Yeah, so yes, I think it's because it was easy for the press to get to. But other people down outside alerted the press that we were up there.

Right.

Yeah, at a pre-arranged time, you've got to remember this pre-dates mobile phones, and we stood up and did a whole thing about 'Why are you up there?' And came up, and so that was kind of a linked protest to what was seen as part of what was wrong with the whole thing - with the whole bias against the popular viewpoint, because the number of people who turned up there - at Greenham, sorry I'm back at Greenham now rather than outside Holloway - the number of women who were turning up to those protests showed that the anti-nuclear feeling was really important, and that it was a mainstream viewpoint. The majority of people felt that there shouldn't be nuclear weapons there, and it brought the whole issue into the mainstream. It made people discuss it, because who'd heard of a women only protests since the Suffragette days you know? So it was a really, really good thing, because it brought the whole thing into people's awareness.

Okay.

Even though the nuclear weapons ended up being brought there, now they went. And the protest continued until they went.

Okay, so they did end up there, but they just didn't stay there?

Well the base got opened, the American base was there and the whole thing was going on about how weapons were going to be brought in, the weapons weren't brought in, the weapons were brought in. The base was being invaded to show that it was not a secure place for such weapons to be kept, and it was almost like well if we can do this, what happens if troops got landed? They could get there quite easily - if we could do this, anybody could do this. This is not a secure place to be keeping a nuclear arms arsenal. The runway was painted on to stop transport planes from landing, because if you paint on it with paint that you're not suppose to paint runways with it has to all be removed. And it was that whole idea to prevent the weapons being located there. And I think there was a great deal of 'Eurgh' when we found out that in a way it had all been a failure. But I don't think it could ever be viewed as a failure.

No.

Because of the attention that it provided to the whole debate.

Did it also provide a platform for women only protest?

Yeah. And I think it showed that you could protest, it didn't matter if you were someone who's never done something like that, and were a woman from an upper or middle class family who'd never been involved with group protests about anything, could come down and make their viewpoint known. And the number of women who were there for the Embrace the Base, the number of women who were there to - to just walk into the base - all we were doing was taking down the fence and walking in. And all the other protests that happened, all the other days that were mass attendance days to show support, they were just phenomenal with the amount of support that was there. Absolutely phenomenal.

The previous woman I was speaking to last week - I was talking to her about the police and how she viewed them, and she said she actually felt sorry for some of them because they were very young - boys. And they actually, she said they looked scared to be there because the women were - they sort of I guess, they maybe viewed them as overwhelming, what did you think of the police when you were there?

That was varied. That was varied. Um, when they were trying to move vehicles in and out of the base, women would link arms, and you also did, um, the kind of protests where you let yourself flop. You link arms and you just flop - it's passive protest. You're not struggling against them, you're just making yourself heavy, so being dragged out of that by police officers was scary. There were people who just stood by and bore witness, and again, pre-mobile phones, so taking photographs was a bit more difficult, but taking note - bearing witness. There were police horse charges. Staring down a row of horses charging at you is scary. Didn't happen often, but it did happen. Police officers who were obviously out of their depth, yes - you can feel sorry for them, but they weren't all like that. I have been part of some creative processes where we just linked hands and danced - like a chain dance, in front of the vehicles, because there were not enough of us, so you chain dance. And when part of that group knew they were going to be dragged off again, you just sat down. And I've had - you know the big police riot vans that have these cattle grid things on the front?

Yes.

I've had one drive up to me there, so my feet were under the vehicle. That's scary! (Laughs). And I knew if I moved they wouldn't know where I was, and I didn't know if

they knew where I was anyway, but then you get dragged out and you got taken to one side. And you're either arrested, or they let you go and keep you behind police lines, and it's really, really scary. Although it can feel - you can feel really strong surrounded by a lot of other women, when you're taken off it's you on your own, and that is scary. And some of the police were not gentle. Because at the beginning they were, but when they realised people were not just going away, um, then they - they I think they lost patience, um and it can be difficult on protests in London when you might get kettled, but it's more scary when you're separated from the group of protestors that you were protesting with. And that can be scary. Something also, I did feel sorry for some of the American officers - I know they're army, but when you were picked up inside the base, they didn't know how to deal with you at all. You had British women talking at them, not taking them seriously, and you were taken - I on at-least one occasion was taken into an interview room on the base to be held for the police to come and take us away, because the American army had no right to do anything. So they had to wait for the British police to come, and that did cause them some confusion, because they didn't know how to handle the situation at all. So yeah, I have mixed feelings. They were not all bad, but some of the were really heavy handed.

Yeah, yeah good, not good - but that's a good - that's a lot of information.

(Laughs). I'm not gong to tar everyone with the same brush. Like any group there are good and there are bad, and there are situations that are beyond people's experience and they don't know how to deal with it, and there are times when everyone loses their patience, and there are times when everyone is afraid.

Yes. It's just good to get different views. Whether you had different responses to that. So it's good to build a sort of big picture of it.

Yeah.

I haven't asked you any questions yet!

(Laughs). Sorry!

Which is good I suppose.

Me talking for England!

It's funny how you think of questions that you never thought of before from what you're saying, um, okay, not that I want it to be a Q&A but there are questions I wanted to get in because they're quite good ones. Okay, so a lot of us wanted to sort

of know how the day to day running of the camp happened, like sanitary products, food, things like that - how they got into camp? Was it shared?

Um, you took what you could. There were people who turned up with donations. In some of the - you know there was gates all the way around it?

Yeah.

So when I'm talking about Green Gate, or Red Gate, or Blue Gate, that was a way to kind of, so we knew where we were taking about, and so other people knew. Different camps organised in different ways. Some of them only had um, this is my - I might not have this right, it some of them were I think only, I don't think all of them were permanently covered by women - and I might be wrong about that - but I know some were bigger than others. Um, some had more obvious permanent. But you did get people turning up with donations - I don't mean money, that was kind of irrelevant, it was things like sleeping bags, it was things like food, it was things like sanitary products. Um, I know there was um, toilets were dug.

Okay.

I think the colloquial term is shit-pit! (Laughs). Toilets were dug, so it was there were - same as any encampment, those were managed. Sanitary products were provided, and they were used, and yes sometimes it was difficult. But it was just like any other campsite in a way. I don't think there were any chemical toilets there permanently. There may have been temporary ones on big protest days - I cannot actually remember, to tell the truth. It's not something that has stuck with me, so it obviously wasn't a difficult situation to deal with. Um, I always took food down with me when I could. I know people donated stuff for me to take down with me when I went down. Um, people were supportive in their own way. At one point when I was going between London and Greenham, there was a guy who was a not quite a white van man - might have been a white van, but he didn't have a white van - but that type of person, he had a regular route and as soon as he figured out that I was commuting at a regular time, he would give me a lift to and from. Um, and a couple of others, if we could fit in the van - we got a regular lift to and from, so you got support in different ways. Um, cooking was um, interesting. There were camp stoves and there were some open fire cooking, so it was kind of, some time it was done all communal, other times you did your own thing, there were no hard and fast rules for it really. And it was just keep the space tidy, because it's - yeah, you look after your space, you look after the place you're in. Some of the photographs I know, places looking trashed, and that trashing was not always done by us, it was done by evictions.

Yeah.

So a fair bit of time clearing up afterwards.

Did you, did the local residents - what was your relationship with the residents around you?

Um, some of them were supportive, for example I know my person who have me a lift on a regular basis lived locally. I think a lot of them felt very annoyed because their quiet area had become overrun - like a tourist attraction becomes overrun with a lot of press, a lot of people turning up on certain days for events. And it was an inconvenience. And quite frankly they were probably justified in that some of the time. It was, when there were large protests (laughs), yeah, it caused chaos in the local area - not just at the camp. So I think, I think you could say although some people were supportive, some people were not.

Okay.

I never had any specific bad experience. I know sometimes things got trashed by people that said they were local, and whether they were or not, I don't think I'm fully aware of. These things happen. But yeah, I could understand people getting upset with us being there - not so much when it was quiet, but I know when there were large protests, people got annoyed by it.

Yeah. Do you keep in touch with anybody you were there with now?

Some of them, yes. Some of them I know. But some of them I knew already, and it's quite interesting sometimes because I'll come across someone and I'll think 'I know you!' Or a conversation will start and Greenham will come up, and then it's kind of 'What Gate were you at?' and 'Did you do this?' And we'll go ding, ding, ding ding ding, and it's still a connection there for a lot of women who remember things that went on, and it was like 'Oh yeah, you were the one who always wore that coat! Ah yes, I remember you - you used to stand at the edge and bear witness.' There's a Quaker friend of mine who came down quite regularly, and although they would not participate, they would stand there and bear witness, and made sure they knew which police officers were making arrests and where women were being taken, and were they going to the local police station, or because there was a big event going on were they - and making sure they let track of women were so they could be brought back - collected at the end. So yeah, there was a lot of different ways that people became involved, and yeah I still have friends who I made there.

Because you're close here to Glastonbury and Wells... there maybe is - I don't know if there's a lot of people, but the areas that have large sort of Quaker - are they, are they around these areas, Quaker - I don't know how to say it - Quaker...

Community.

That's the word I'm looking for. That's what I've heard, um, I don't know if there was a lot of people from these areas around here?

Um, there's yeah, there's a Quaker meeting house in the next village over there, and there are Quaker meeting houses in Strood because whole of the Clarks family was Quaker, and in Glastonbury as well, but I think it goes beyond. Yeah. I think it crossed boundaries. I mentioned Quakers because a couple of my friends were, or I made, because you were never - it was never obligatory to lie down in the road and link arms, and there were people who could not, or did not, and they were never criticised for that. It's just stuck in my head, and I made friends with someone who would never take part, but who would always make notes and take note. And I thought that was a really interesting and positive action to take, because they kept calm, they held space and that was difficult for everybody to do. Because such a lot of it was strongly emotional, was very heated, and to have people who you knew, who were taking note of who was going where, was one thing you didn't have to worry about. (Laughs). So...

No, that lady I was speaking to before, she said to me she wasn't involved in any sort of - she was never arrested or anything like that, she was just going for the big movements, big protests that were happening at the time, she never really wanted to be involved in the other side of things, she just wanted to be there when the big protests were happening.

Yeah, because that was important. And I think that those were some of the most important times, and those were some of the most empowering times for a lot of women. But, um, yeah, they were also some of the most interesting. But yeah, the smaller events around the different gates were always supported.

Good. Er, try something - different directions now. (Laughs). Questions that people have wanted to ask, um.

That's good.

Yeah it is good, it's really really good. It's amazing how far it has come in the last month or so. Just from people having interviews and things. The day that you left for, I don't know if you knew it would be the last time you were there, how was it leaving

the camp? If that makes sense? Did you know you weren't going to go back, or did you know you were going to leave and that was it?

I didn't know I wasn't going back. I had stopped living there. Um because that had got really difficult to juggle with everything that was going on, and um having been in Holloway because of it it was like I need to get my life back on some sort of, um, level. Because I found that very difficult. But I still did go back for one off events. I did still go back to show support and to catch up with people, but I didn't realise that the last time I went there would be the last time. Um, yeah. Interesting.

Yeah, that is interesting. When you, I've just written an essay about how criminal records affect women going forward in jobs and things. Has it affected you? If you don't want to talk about it that's fine. Has it affected you going for jobs and things in your career?

Having to declare it is interesting. Um I think it is different when you explain what it was for, and people are aware that it was political rather than criminal. But I think you have to be brave enough to explain that, and that was something I always did. I don't know how many times I didn't get the interview because of it because you're not told. Um, but taking part in Greenham common was never something I felt ashamed of, so it was nothing that I wanted to hide, so I was always fairly open about it. I have quite strong views on things, um and being already fairly in the alternative community, like working for the Lesbian and Gay Centre, I did have mainstream jobs - I work in mainstream work now. Um, I don't think that it's impacted things for me, but it may well have had impacts that I'm not aware of. So.

Yeah, of-course. That was just a question I was interested in because I was learning about it at uni.

I know for people it does. It does for people, for sure. But I think if you have the opportunity to clarify, if you can get past that first step, then I think it has less of an impact, but I think also nowadays it has a great deal of impact because I think having a criminal record is seen more negatively nowadays than it used to be.

Right okay, that's interesting. Um, sorry if it seems like I'm just asking questions - there are so many here.

No, that's cool.

Thank you for that by the way. It's really interesting for me as well. Um what was the, the big one that people wanted to ask was why do you think the Suffragette

movement was largely celebrated, but the Greenham common wasn't as - the awareness of it?

Because the Suffragette movement affected all women eventually. And because there was a change of law. And because there was an ongoing mainstream interest and impact that caused major social change. Um, I think what Greenham achieved was not seen as visibly something that created such a change for women.

It wasn't like this is going to cause a change in law?

Precisely.

Every woman can vote, and it um affects, like you said - every single woman in the UK, so it wasn't, I don't know how to explain it, but I had the same answer as you - we asked each other it at the meeting, and I said I think it's because there was one goal and it affected everyone - every woman, and that was a very local - like the voting registration, everyone was very aware of it, whereas the Greenham...

I think, the relative the things can't be really be compared.

No they can't.

Because the women's Suffrage movement achieved a legal change that has impacted not just them but onwards, and was specifically about women. Whereas the Greenham common event was part of a wider campaign for nuclear disarmament, and it was all about a fixed period in time. And although things have changed, and although women have become more empowered because of it, I think that it had less social impact than giving women, some women, the right to vote.

Yes. Makes sense.

Yeah. And I think the right to that is incredibly important.

Yes, like you say it's interesting that when it came through it was only women that were married, or women that owned their own home or something...

It wasn't for all women. Um, it wasn't for the majority of working class women, and so many, um, disempowered. But it was the start of the change.

Yes. I feel the same.

Yeah (laughs).

Did you think feminism back then was...(inaudible) like Greenham camp - (inaudible). Did you think that feminism has moved forward a lot more since then? I mean I know it has moved forwards since then, but...

Ooh, um...

I'm just interested how...

...it's difficult, it's difficult to say because a lot of the same arguments are still going on. Um, and there has always been the thing about feminism is - it's very self reflective, so you become reflective on what's going on within the women's movement, as well as the impact the women's movement has on wider society, and I think women felt they had gained quite a lot, and therefore feminism wasn't needed any more. I think people are now realising that isn't the case, but I think as some things were achieved, something was gained - everybody breathed a sigh of relief and thought 'Oh we don't have to fight this anymore,' - before suddenly realising 'Oh yes we do!' (Laughs).

All these other things?

Yeah. So I think it got stronger, then it waned, and was given a bad name by mainstream press, with people saying 'Oh no, no, I wouldn't call myself a feminist, but...' - I think there was a lot of that going on, but I think it did achieve some things, and then people stopped thinking it was needed, and again, it's coming back up as being needed. But I think there has always been also the situation - the women's movement has always been split on a large number of issues, the same as mainstream society is split on a large number of issues, so I think it's gone through times when it has been a very cohesive movement, and it's gone through times when it has been less cohesive.

Yes. It's interesting for me, like I'm a feminist now and I don't always feel...

Good to hear someone your age saying that! (Laughs).

Is it?

Because there was a big time with people saying feminist was a bad name.

I still think it is.

Yeah?

I still think, I'm still getting used to saying different words, but scared to say I'm a feminist to people, like if they - I don't just say it to people randomly but if they ask about why I'm involved in the things I am, and I say 'It's because I'm a feminist,' I feel like it creates a wall between me and some people.

Try using the phrase 'I'm part of the women's movement'.

Yeah, okay.

I think that's something I defaulted to for similar reasons. 'I'm part of the women's movement'. 'What does that mean?' 'It means that I support women's rights'.

It's similar, like you said your mum had different views to you, in some respects my mum has the same, she still respects gender roles and things, traditional gender roles, and doesn't always respect what I sort of feel, and it's difficult because I was brought up in such a different way to how I act and how I actually um, ended up now.

Oh, been there, done that, bought the t-shirt! (Laughs). I know where you're coming from - it's not always easy.

I know it's not necessarily about Greenham, but it's just interesting to know, to sort of - each if you think it's changed. I don't know. Just talked to me about it, that's been there.

Yeah, it has changed, it has changed, but then some of the questions are still the same, so it's obviously still needed.

Definitely.

A rose by any other name is still a rose.

That's true.

(Laughs).

Just check this is still...(checks microphone). Because I think we've had about an hour already. Thank you for that by the way.

That's okay. It's interesting to talk about it.

It is interesting, yeah. That's why I did this project, because I just wanted to speak to women who had the same views as me. Yeah, it's quite emotional as well. You get home and you think about it.

It's brought up a lot for me.

Yeah, definitely. Okay, so, I think you've answered most of these. What do you think the police, if they have learnt anything, have learnt from Greenham?

Ooh, that's difficult.

Yeah it is difficult isn't it.

That's a difficult one. I know during the whole process - process? Time period of Greenham, they became more confident - the local police became more confident in their ability to um manage larger protests. I also know that a large number of officers were drawn in from outside forces to cover the larger events at Greenham, and maybe they weren't so sure how to deal with it. I think people did learn - police people did learn. Whether that learning and knowledge and awareness is still there, I don't know. But did they do things differently afterwards? I don't know. I don't know. I think one of the major things that had an affect on how large protests were dealt with was the miners.

Okay.

The miners' strike. I think that changed policing far more dramatically than Greenham common did.

Okay. And then you talked about the um, women only spaces earlier on, and the LGBT community. There's a question here I wanted to ask, tied in with that. Um, do you know if there were any preju...can't say that word.

Prejudices?

Prejudices which, I don't know if that's the right thing to say actually, in the camp, or if people took it in with them? Or you don't know?

I never experienced - I was very much out as a lesbian at that stage. I never experienced any Greenham, any prejudice against me because of my outness. Um, I, I can't say whether that's true for everyone else, but I never received any negativity from other women there. Alright, I don't know whether - clothing styles change....

Okay.

I had a patch on one of my pairs of trousers that was two women's symbols linked together.

Right.

And um that happened to be the set of clothes I had with me when I was admitted into Holloway, and one of the guards was rather concerned about this obvious display of being a lesbian, because she didn't know how other inmates at Holloway might react to it, and did offer me alternative clothing, which I declined. But I don't know, I didn't get the impression that they were actively against what I was expressing - they just thought it might cause problems. It didn't (laughs). It didn't. But I think that's the only comment I can make about my sexuality having been raised.

It's fine, it's fine. I think people were just interested in what, how accepting people were - back then in general.

I know there was um, probably earlier than that there was some conflict within the women's movement, of lesbians giving the, um, lesbians giving feminism a bad name, but that was back in the late '70s, or early to mid '70s really. I grew up in Oxford, so I was part of a very active women's movement in Oxford from quite an early age, and I know that viewpoint was around at that time, and I think perhaps people involved in Greenham saw potentially the press being lurid about lesbianism could bring Greenham common into disrepute.

I've read some stuff about that.

Yeah, but personally I was never objected to or verbally abused or physically abused. I have an awareness that it is a tool that can be used against women only protests, so yeah I'm aware of that, but personally I never experienced anything. (Laughs).

Good. Yeah sort of felt a bit yeah.

I think it's one of those tools that mainstream press used against...

Used against, because they just - this is sort of flitting through things, but they used the word 'lesbianism' as like a - 'Oh these women are lesbians because they're all together in this space'.

I think the term 'lesbianism' was seen as a more derogatory phrase then than it is now.

Do you?

(Laughs). And I think that the um, it's not called the Lesbian and Gay Movement anymore, its LGBTQIA inclusiveness, that wonderful warm inclusiveness that exists nowadays has done a lot towards that, and it's a lot more acceptable to be openly lesbian, or gay, or trans nowadays than it was back then. Not that it wasn't acceptable back then, but you were more likely to get verbally abused back then than you are now. So I think it's less of a strong tool against people now. And I think also then using it as a derogatory term in mainstream press was more acceptable. I think if you tried to do that nowadays, there'd be a lot more come back for it. So these things have changed.

Especially since social media people are quick to - yeah, defend themselves and other people. And I guess there's more sort of, they have to be more, what's the word? Inclusive now, and I can't think what I'm saying. A lot more careful now, the media...

Aware.

Yes. About what they say, because people, and the media being a big platform for other things..

And also people will, are more likely to enact legislation.

Yes, right.

Whereas you could get away with that then, you can't get away with that now.

It's interesting - around then - wasn't sure what it was like back then, but I can only imagine that's it.

Well it's the same period as Section 28 and not being allowed to promote homosexuality in schools, so that's the context you have to put it in. (Laughs).

Yeah, people having to live in other, yeah. People having to live like, er, I think I read about gay people having to live like in secret - like in the '80s....

Yeah, basically being in the closet, because sometimes coming out could threaten your job and livelihood and relationships with everybody. So...

Awful. Okay.

Difficult.

Definitely. Okay um, what, if there is one, detail or moment would sum up Greenham for you? Was there a specific...

Hhm, what moment sums it up?

Just one, or...

I have so many memories, I have so many memories.

Yeah.

Um, things from sneaking down a wooded part of the fence, because we discovered that you could open some of the bolts with a tuppenny bit and unscrew them, um, these were long sheets of fence, so it wan't like every 2 feet you could do that, but every... we undid a whole line of the bolts and peeled back the fence, and went for a walk one evening. And doing that - the mischievousness of a small group of women together - going onto foreign territory and just going for a walk in the moonlight, it was beautiful, it was absolutely beautiful and we just did it. And we were just laughing and not being, not creeping about in the bushes, we were walking openly across the airbase for about - I don't know how long - and that counter-balanced with being surrounded by hundreds of women for a mass invasion of the base with um, wire clippers in your pocket, and just going through, and then the sense of community when you're just there, and everybody's just singing. Just singing - that sense of togetherness, of strength, of unity, and you can even hear the song echoing back at you. Women tying pictures of their family with ribbons onto the fence. Yeah. Times like that. I want to forget the painful times. They're still there, they're still formative, but that's not what I want to remember.

No. Definitely not. How does it, er, something I wanted to ask - make you feel to be part of Greenham?

Proud.

Yeah.

Very, very proud. I have no regrets, there's nothing that happened there I need to be ashamed of. Um, yeah.

Yeah. Good.

And that's why I've never denied my criminal record. (Laughs). Which is all down to non-payment of fines. That's the thing about it - they would fine you, and you had the option to pay the fine. And because it was like 'No, I'm not going to pay the government for my right to protest', and that's what the statement was being made. That's why women were not paying their fines. It was like I am not paying - have a right to protest, and I'm not paying a fine for protesting, everyone should have the right to protest - that's something I still feel incredibly strongly about, and that's why we went to prison, because we would not pay the fine, and I would not work in prison, because if I worked in prison, the payment for my wages went towards the payment of my fine. Um. And also, oh, yeah, it has echoes all the way down - I ended up working for a group called Women in Prison, which um was promoting rights of women, and trying to support life for women, when they were in prison. Things like suicide watch, things like even getting decent hair products in for women of colour, um everything. And I became part of that because of my experiences in Holloway, because of Greenham. So it just bing-bing-bing-bing-bing. It has repercussions all the way down the line. (Laughs). Sorry, that was just a 'beeeeuuww'.

No it's good.

You see it's all part of a greater thing. It's not something that occurred in isolation.

No, that's why when we had the meeting and I learnt about it, I just thought of all these women that were ...and things, and just learnt about what they did. I felt proud because they were doing it for me, but also because that was my country that they were doing it and, yeah it was two hours from where I lived, and even though I wasn't there, I could actually imagine what it was like to be there. And it took me a while to sort of...

Sometimes very wet and sometimes very cold, but always, always positive.

Right. Good. Just a couple more on here that I wanted to ask about, if that's okay?

Yeah.

I think we've done a lot of them already.

(Laughs).

I don't always like to Q&A, Q&A, it easier to do it sometimes in conversation. Um, where were they to? Okay, um, what did you think of the decision to make it a women only camp or a women only place...to be?

I think that was a really good idea. I think my awareness of that decision, and this is only my awareness, is that it came out of the really strong desire for a peaceful protest. The awareness that other protests that had been mixed had become violent, and that as it was a peace protest, they wanted it to be a peaceful protest. And it was seen as a protest. And I think that is one of the main reasons why it stood out. Think it was one of the main reasons it received so much coverage, because it was so radically different. And I think it was a really, really strong positive enabling decision for a lot of women. Um, empowering. Positive. It was a wise decision. And I have a great deal of respect for those that made it.

Same.

Does that help?

Yes, a lot.

Have I answered that?

Yes.

(Laughs). I tend to ramble off, my thoughts take me in various directions.

So do I, so do I. It would have gone, from my point of view it would have gone in a different direction if it hadn't been such a female orientated, it would have gone in a different place.

Yeah, I think it was one of the main reasons for its success, and I do count it as successful. Um I know some feminists, some women have said it was just something that detracted from the main points of feminism, for women's rights, but I think what it did was allow women to see that we can make a difference, allow women to see that the personal is the political, that the decisions one person makes is important, and that can have an effect when a lot of individuals make the same decision. It reaches a cascade effect, and I think that happened, I think it reached that cascade of awareness that this is something women are doing together. And groups of women - from the W.I. even, were talking and friends talked, and people came round in a car share because they'd talked to their friends about it, and one of them knew about it, and then it just spread, and I think that's - it wouldn't have happened if it hadn't of been a women only group.

Definitely. Even if it wasn't um, even if it hadn't have been successful, it still would have given you all those things, it still would have allowed those things to happen. So

I suppose you can say, you could never really say it was unsuccessful, because it provided all those platforms for...

Yeah.

Okay. I think I've asked them all.

(Laughs).

Er, oh there's one more actually, about have you been happy about the representation of Greenham in popular culture - films, books plays, if you've seen any?

Salt Lane by William Shaw!

Oh yeah.

It always surprises me when they turn up - it always surprises me when they turn up.
I think it's because I just expect it not to be there. As I said there was a big debate within the feminist movement as to whether it was a good thing, or wasn't a good thing. For Greenham common, or against Greenham common. But I think that debate is healthy. Um, I think most of the representation I've seen - maybe has been positive. Apart from back during the time what we were talking about - trying to slander the, sorry I'm using hand movements as punctuation, which doesn't come across on tapes. Nowadays there's not that much. Back then there was a fair bit - mainstream press was, on some occasion was very slanderous. On other occasions surprisingly positive. But nowadays there isn't a great deal of representation. It gets mentioned in background for characters occasionally, but I'm not actually that aware of it being brought up. Has there been a lot?

I know that there's a film that's out at the minute, not at the moment - it's online somewhere. The lady I was talking to last week asked me to watch it, but I haven't had time to do that yet. I think it's on Youtube - she said there's a lot of stuff on Youtube - videos and things.

It's not something I've gone searching for. It's not something I've gone searching for.
I think because I haven't had that need.

That's what I was just about to say.

I haven't felt that need. Um. Yeah.

Were you surprised when you got approached for this project?

Yeah I was actually, I was quite interested. A friend of mine who knows that I was at Greenham, although they weren't, um said 'Have you seen this?' And um, it was like 'Oh!' So it was on Facebook.

Oh was it, I don't even know what platforms they used.

And it was just like 'Oh, that's interesting'. Yeah, I was there - it's like 'I was there!' I wouldn't have come across it but a friend of mine who's more on social media than I am, um just said 'Ere, have you looked at this? That's what you were involved with'. That's Tracy - that's what I was involved with, thanks for that!

I'm not sure how they went about doing everything.

I don't know, I just - it came up - while you're here, would you be interested, and I thought 'Yeah, I would be interested, I would be interested', and yeah I've got time I can give to something like that. I think because my important thing is, it shouldn't be forgotten.

No.

And that's the same with how I view gay history, it shouldn't be forgotten. And I'm using 'gay' as the all encompassing phrase that it was back then.

Yeah, it's good because even though you've had quite negative experiences, you're still happy to talk about it.

I have had negative experiences, but I think the positive experiences of it outweigh those. And I think we can all learn from these experiences. And yeah, they were very emotional, and yes, they can be seen as traumatic, but I'd never give up my right to protest. (Laughs). And I think, I think trying to take that away from anybody is one of the worst things that can happen. Because you have to be held, you have to be able to hold people accountable - especially the government, you need to have the power to hold the government accountable outside of the ballot box. It's got to be in addition to that, because then they break their own rules they break their own rules. (Laughs).

Yeah, you see documentaries on TV about countries that um, well they're just completely corrupt and people can't have a say in anything, and it's just really, really sad that they live in such a dictatorship way. I've never been to anywhere that's like that, but...

We should never forget our privilege, we should never forget our privilege. And if you don't stand up for the right to protest against things, then I think you are taking advantage of your privilege.

Yep. Okay. I think that's it.

(Laughs). Sorry, that went rather heavy towards the end.