

Jane Griffiths

After university, you went back down there in...

I wasn't at university - after school. (Laughs).

No, after school - you decided not to go to university.

Yeah, so I went. And it was a sunny, I remember it being sunny, and there were all these, I was at Main Gate and there were all these rocks piled up either side of the road, um, to prevent vehicles going on and all that sort of thing. And I remember us making a big roundhouse out of the rocks - that was good fun. And I think it made me feel like we could achieve anything. I don't know why, it was just, it just felt great to be able to, you know, they were trying to stop us and we made something. And what's coming to mind is all the extraordinary women I met at that point, but I'll try not to too much detail (laughs). Um. I do remember finding one or two people a bit unnerving, and coming across, you know, some slightly difficult women and I was quite pleased to, to move around. I think that was the summer that Judy set up Orange Gate. I can't remember at what point I went round there. But I spent a bit of time in London, with the women, with my friend, and with women that I'd met there, and was quite an exciting summer. But I did go back to York and um, tried to do various bits of - delayed university, tried to do various bits of volunteer work and things like that. But I was not particularly happy, I think was probably looking for an opportunity to go back again. I went back in August. Oh, I had to have an operation. Anyways, long winded - I'm trying to remember, it's a long time ago. So the next time that I went to Greenham was um for the, for an action, um, Halloween action, so that was October '83. And we went - went, came down with a minibus of women from York, but had been in touch with what was going on - I know there'd been all sorts of things - people had been arrested for drain laying. I think that was the summer there was a dragon festival thing - I can't quite remember. I remember there being all sorts of, I can't quite, I don't have a very clear memory of that,

particularly that summer, but just about being intrigued, and excited about the very different women that I met. You know, people who were um, had quite a lot of personal power, I suppose. Bit witchy - which I'd never come across before. There were people who were obviously, you know, in quite a bad state on, you know, someone who was on a lot of glue, I remember, but was - there was sort of a place there, um. Lots of really - it opened my mind, I suppose just meeting a lot of different, a lot of different women from different, different ages, different political backgrounds, different kind of different countries. It was, it was exciting, really.

Was it mostly the different, like the different political directions that they're all coming from that fascinated you, or mostly just how different they were themselves?

Um, all of it. I was excited by the conversations that we had. I was excited by you know, one woman's just popped into my mind now and she had her face painted completely silver all the time. And she said that she was actually dead, um, because she'd um, she'd, she'd been having increasing amounts of Bella Donna and was now immune to it and didn't need to eat. And she could, she could whisper to the police horses. She was a horse whisperer basically and they would do what she wanted, and not what the police wanted. She was really, she was lovely person, but obviously quite odd as well, and had that extraordinary ability to talk to horses. She wasn't really interested in people. (Laughs). Only liked the horses! And there was someone else who we called Carol Safety Pins, because she had every bit of her that could have safety pins on had it - clothes, body. Do you remember her?

(Different woman's voice) I do remember her, yeah.

And she was, she was very interested in electrical stuff. So she had all these sort of broken radios that she felt like she could make work with a safety pin. I mean, that makes - there were lots of people who weren't that unusual, as unusual as that. I was, I was um, excited by meeting, I mean, not everyone at Greenham was a lesbian, but there were quite a

lot of lesbians there! (Laughs). And it was quite exciting to meet people, because I'd kind of come out, but didn't really know many. You know, I knew a few of the political people in York, but, so that was interesting.

Do you think it was probably the largest concentration of lesbians in the UK outside of London?

(Laughs). Probably outside of Todmorden. Yeah! Um (Laughs).

Hebdon?

(Laughs) Probably. And, you know, it probably encouraged a few to decide that was a good way to go temporarily or permanently, I don't know. So it was a mixture. I can't - it was just, it was just very exciting. I'd come out of school, I was really fed up with what had been presented as the direction in life. I was very political, very worried about nuclear, very worried about nuclear war. And, and here was - it was like, here was a possibility that actually fitted. I felt like I belonged there, whereas I didn't feel like I belonged where I was - nothing fitted for me where I was, but this made sense. Not that I was - I did feel a bit like when I grow up I might be like them but is this feel like you know, 'cause I was quite young and I don't know, waffling. (Laughs).

No, like I might grow up to be like them when I'm older. But here is where I can go and find out?

Yeah, yeah.

And was there something - what was it about the place that made it possible for those women who, who - I've heard a different name for the woman with all the pins, but who, who, who could make radios work or talk to horses - how, what was it about the place that made it possible for them to be part of it as well?

Because, well, there was - it was a fairly, I suppose it was fairly anarchist. It was a group of people - nobody owned the space, you went there because you thought there was something you could do there useful. And um, 99% because you're anti-nuclear, and we didn't want the weapons in the base. But apart from that you could be - we could all be who we wanted to be. There wasn't a leader saying 'You have to be like this, that, or the other', though some people tried. (Laughs).

So what, what's the other name for Yellow Gate?

Main Gate - but I don't know what - oh, have you heard other names?

No, just this thing about, you know, whether Main Gate was main gate, or whether it was Yellow Gate?

Oh, yeah, well, it was Main Gate at that point. And it became Yellow Gate as there were more camps, I think. So it was the main gate of the base, as opposed to the main camp. And it was the starting place for the camps, wasn't it? But then they increasingly spread when there were more women, women who didn't, you know - felt like they'd rather do something slightly different somewhere else, or be with some people who were slightly different. There was enough space to be who you wanted to be, and to find a place to be where you wanted to be. And to to, meet, meet the women that you got on with and felt that you were, could do actions with, or live reasonably amicably with (laughs). But without it being separate. You know, I must have gone around the base, maybe not every day, but very frequently - walked around, or went to other camps. So it wasn't about these little cliques of people who didn't get on with anyone else. Later on there was, there was a big split as you I'm sure you know. But um, I think at that time I was quite happy going down to the Yellow Gate or going to Green Gate or you know, somebody'd, we'd go and get water and chat to my friends at yellow Gate, you know so it was - I think there was a perception sometimes that, that they were more important than Main Gate, but I didn't - it didn't really bother me. I didn't really think that.

So when it was the Halloween action.

Oh, yeah. Going back to that.

And speaking about wicked women.

Yeah.

What happened that time?

Okay, so um, well signed up. I was very nervous because it had been going on for weeks, I think we'd, there must have been sort of people phoning. It was a fairly secretive. You reminded me it was black cardigans was - we were calling the bolt cutters. So I turned up erm, Charlie, Charlie got a pair for me and a pair for Charlie and we, but she thought that she would be arrested, because she was known and also she had very tight leather trousers on. So I had two pairs of bolt cutters on me, and it was totally freaking me out because there were low flying helicopters, police wandering around the bushes looking for, you know what was going on - trying to find out what was going on, and trying to arrest people that looked suspicious. (Laughs). So I was getting very panicked. Um, but there were some women who managed - who did some rituals, which we - you could join in if you wanted, which were really helpful, actually really helped me. I remember someone called Clace, and Iyo, Mariah - I can't remember, but there were some people who did, we did a big circle and we sang 'Building Bridges', and it calmed me right down. It really, really helped. I think I had Rescue Remedy - never had any of this before. All sort of new experiences for a 17 year old (laughs).

All the classics!

(Laughs). It helped though! I joke - it'd just make me laugh now but then it it was perfect. (Laughs). I was contemplating getting arrested, you know, so it was quite scary. And um, but it became fun after that. Once I'd calmed, got, calmed my nerves, and then I remember us going

off in little groups, and we were singing, you know Blue Danube, 'De de de dah dah, snip, snip, snip snip', you know, being on somebody else's shoulders and trying to get to the top. We had these sort of techniques for how you cut the fence quickly and um...

And where were your two sets of bolt cutters, secreted about your person?

I think I probably had either one down each leg, or up my sleeves - I can't remember. I couldn't walk very well, I don't think! (Laughs). So...

Do you think the police realised what was going on?

Well, they didn't come, they didn't stop and search loads and loads of people - so they, if they knew, they didn't know well enough to do anything. But I think they were probably a bit of - they must have known something was going to happen at Greenham, but they were probably surprised by the numbers. There was a couple of thousand women there, I think - that day, if my memory - around different bits of the base. I think we took down, was it five miles of fence? Two miles of fence? Anyway, a lot of fence came down. And I think they couldn't have expected that that would happen. It was a big surprise.

I think they thought it was going to be - they're going to do some dancing.

Yeah.

Weirdo rituals.

Maybe they'll break in and run on the, you know, run around in the base or something, I don't know.

I think they were surprised.

I think they were surprised that it was a very concrete thing, that so much fence came down. And they had a lot of police on the outside. So

people who were arrested on the outside of the fence for doing stuff, were held for a bit and released. So quite a, and it was very well organised. You know, we'd had all these workshops on non-violent direct action, and there were lots of people who were observers and legal observers and had people's names and contact numbers, and were not going to do anything to get arrested, and people who were going to assist but not cut, you know, it was all very clear. But it wasn't like somebody - I didn't feel like I was directed 'You must do this and that and the other', it felt like I was given the information and I could choose what to do what I wanted.

Did you do all those workshops back in York, then?

I can't remember. I think must have done some of them at Greenham.

Right.

But I had done stuff, I had done stuff before. I just, I can't remember. I can't remember. Maybe it was in part of the earlier stuff that this is what was gonna happen and that we needed to - I just can't. It's not clear to me at all.

Say how well organised...

Osmosis! (Laughs). I don't know

But we say things happened slower because we didn't have mobile phones, but maybe they didn't - maybe and we just factored the right amount of time into doing things, because it must all have been done with landlines, telephone trees, and I don't know....

Cryptic posters! (Laughs). Talked about coming and, you know, bringing your woolly jumper, knitted jumpers, and bringing your knitting needles or whatever. Doing a mass knit-in. I don't know what it was that was said on posters. Um, and I was - I went round to Orange Gate then, so I knew people there. I might even have visited in between - I can't, I

can't really remember. So yeah, I remember very exciting, very funny, um, we got, we managed to find a little dell near Orange Gate, where the police didn't find us for a while, so we cut down a lot of fence - went inside. I went in with maybe four others from where we were, and started chopping, managed to cut through the the barbed wire rolls on the inside, and then got arrested by the MOD on the inside of that. And they don't let people go, so there was about - I don't know how many were arrested then, maybe 40/30/40 arrested inside the base. And um, so they held us in the base, and they held us for a very long time. Without being - I think we probably got photographed, and measured, and fingerprinted, and all that sort of thing. And I gave a false name most of the time, and then somewhere about 4 o'clock in the morning, the solicitor that we had, um, advised me to give my real name, I have no idea why - I think it would have been fine to carry on with a false name. I think I was Mary Daley. (Laughs). I don't know how many other people were, but we were Theresa Green and you know, Frida People - quite a lot of... Anyway, so I did give my real name, which means that I have to declare it - this is a legacy of Greenham, I have to declare it. I don't have to actually, because it doesn't appear on record. I presume it's somewhere on record, but not in the normal police record. So I do declare it every time I get a job - I think it shows me up in quite a good light to be honest. (Laughs). I feel quite proud. (Laughs).

Yeah. If they ask, you go well to tell the truth you have to say have you ever been arrested? Yes I have been arrested. But, yes you'll struggle to find any record of it anywhere.

Yeah. Um. So I just remember that being a long night, and getting to know people, you know, making more friends and having that sort of connection with women - being, it being feeling a bit nervous about it all. Um.

Did you get coached on how to, whether to give your name, do you remember any of that going on?

No, I don't remember being coached about anything really. It was just what, what it - like osmosis again, we'd be chatting about what we were doing probably beforehand, thinking about what name to give, and what to do if we got arrested, and maybe - maybe there were people on the day, or leaflets on the day or something - people saying 'Well, you know, if you do this, you won't get arrested. If you do that, you will. And if you do,' - whatever, I can't really, I have no idea. (Laughs).

Picked it up from everybody else?

Yeah. So yeah, I know I gave a false name to start with, but eventually I gave a real name, and I think it would have made no difference whatsoever, apart from you know, it would have been fun to carry on being Mary Daley forever. But, um, and then I don't think I went home for a week. So they were very - my parents were very worried. They would have got a message from somebody, because I didn't turn up back on the minibus. Um, and then I can't remember - we would have had legal meets, probably went to London. And by then I was just totally, that was all I wanted to do. So although I did go back to York, and um, my mom screamed at me (laughs), my dad didn't speak to me for about 3 days. My sister took me out for a meal to get me out of the house. And er, (laughs), and then about 3 days later, my dad said 'I'm proud of you', (laughs) which was really nice. After him, like not knowing what to do, I think.

I suppose they were scared?

My mum was totally freaked out, because I'd got arrested and disappeared, and I'd gone for a demonstration and not come back for a week. And she'd been told I'd been arrested. Anyway. So, I immediately went back to Greenham, and I didn't, didn't return, you know, I think I went and visited at Christmas, and I'd have very painful conversations - I'd phone from the phone box. My mum would shout at me for not phoning sooner - I'd cry, put the phone down. Phone again a few months later. I do feel for them. It was difficult for me, but it must have been awful for them - they have no idea what was - they were

getting whatever they were getting on the news. Um. So I'd get, I'd get slightly - I'd get quite negative letters from my mum as well, in the end I started getting my friend to read them, tell me whether I could read them or not, but I do - I understand, I sort of have a bit of an understanding now, but it was really difficult then for me, and it must have been terrible for her. Oh god, where am I?

Have a break.

So, (laughs). So, Orange Gate, yeah we made a bender, we had a bender row down by the fence. Um. You know, learnt how to make them - that was very exciting to make your own place to live. Had one, I think that night after I'd been, been released from the base, I stayed at, at the camp that night - it was the only time I was ever cold at Greenham. We just, we were just all in a big bender with a plastic sheet on the floor, or a tent even. There was quite a lot of us there. And I was absolutely frozen. Ever - after that, I don't think I was ever cold at Greenham - learned to put loads and loads blankets on the floor. I had the blankets on the ceiling - we had a blanket stash, somebody - can't remember her name, but somebody in the local area had a farm and stored a load of blankets for us, whenever we needed more, or they needed drying out or something, she'd take them off. That was fantastic. Um, so it was nice to have that little bit of community, but it didn't last that long. You know, we all - there were a lot of - we'd, depending on which soldiers were inside the base at the time, you know like - we've talked a bit about it, but you know like the Irish, you know, the Irish Rangers were great. Um, befriended them. I mean, some, some women were particularly good at befriending, someone called Annie was very good at befriending them. Um, but we, you know, we'd pass them some whiskey, and they'd pass us over some, you know, coal for the fire and a shovel or whatever, you know. Have a sing along with them that sort of thing. It was quite nice. But the Paras were a different kettle of fish. And um, I remember them doing things like setting fire to the benders, and throwing throwing metal pole through when someone was in a bender. You know, so it got a bit - we started to move away from the fence when it got um, more difficult.

What was daily life like? How did a normal day...

A normal day...

An ordinary day, a non-action day start, or a non-eviction day?

Um, getting the fire going. Usually there was a few embers left. Either someone had been up late or there was just something - it was, it became such a deep pit of, you know, charcoal and stuff, there was usually something you could get a fire going with. And getting water, which um, meant getting somebody who could drive to go around to the Yellow Gate where there was a standpipe, filling up the water coming back. Um. It might be there - might have been there the night before, but there wasn't that sort of organisation which would make sure it was. I don't think being, you know, being 17/18, I don't think I was - I kind of did what needed to be done, and at the time in that moment we didn't stress too much about it, but it was - collecting wood, you know, spent a lot of time in the woods finding bits of dead twigs and branches and things. Wandering far and wide for wood was a big part of it um, for the fire. Putting up shelters over the fire, taking them down - depending on the weather. Um.

How did you make a shelter?

Loads, I mean loads of different - every way you can think of! (Laughs). So bits of tarpaulin, bits of plastic, bits of string, um, I mean if we weren't being evicted, if we had sort of the possibility for more stable structures, then benders were amazing. You've probably got loads of people talked about how a bender was built.

I haven't had one yet.

(Laughs). Well, you need quite a lot of bendy sticks. So you have some bendy sticks going vertically that combine at the top, and you tie them together. And then you have some bendy sticks going horizontally

which weave in and out, and you tie them together until it's fairly stable, and at whatever size or shape you wish. So like I say, I took my cello briefly and I had one that was tall enough for me to sit and play cello in at one point. (Laughs). Another point I had one that was hidden in the bushes, so my mum could come and visit when the bailiffs were evicting all the time, so that was a bit smaller. And then you covered it, because there's an issue of condensation and with the plastic, so covered it with several layers of blankets, lots of blankets on the floor. You could make your little modifications, if you wanted shelves, or cupholders, (laughs), or a special area for going to - you know peeing or something, not, not, I'm just saying people did different things. Not actually peeing, but peeing in a cup to chuck out, some people did that shocking though it is! (Laughs). Um, whatever - libraries, you know people did (laughs).

Where did all the blankets come from?

Plant pots, you know sometimes people had little windows with their plants. They were donated, so people donated hundreds and hundreds of blankets. I guess we asked for blankets, and then they came by the ton. We, it was fantastic. There was incredible support. But it did tend to be in gluts. So I remember like the first Christmas I was there. Bin liners full of sherry, whiskey, you know, drink - alcohol, Christmas puddings, Christmas cake, no vegetables - you'd be like searching to make something decent to eat, and it would just be Christmas cake, Christmas cake - shouldn't be ungrateful, but it was. That was - bin liners full of money. You know, I mean, people donated lots of money, which we could go and buy vegetables with. But um...

Did you get a sense of who they were - that it was coming from?

People came, like loads and loads of visitors - people came constantly, and maybe stayed for a night, or stayed for a day, talked about where they'd come from. I didn't really - I mean, I didn't know where all of it was coming from - it was, it was very interesting. I know probably after I'd been there about 10 months, I began to get bit fed up of talking to visitors. But it was interesting, and there were people who came

regularly as well. So for example, Toni, who made that pot, used to come, come for a week, every month or something. You know, there were people who came for a weekend pretty regularly. So there were, people were there all the time. But my community, or my sense of who was at Orange Gate included a lot of people who weren't there all the time, but came a lot. Um, and then there were people who came for night watch, which was because there were times when there weren't huge numbers of us there at each gate. Um, and we weren't getting any sleep, because we didn't know - either we were being attacked by vigilantes, or we, that we were looking for the convoy coming out. And that's the reason, part of the reason there were women every gate or every possible - you know, some of the gates were temporary places where they could remove fence quickly, that had a bit of road going into what looked like fence, but could come down - was to watch for, watch for the convoy bringing out the er, the missiles. So that was really helpful having people come who would sit up for the night, because we could go and get some sleep. Because otherwise, sometimes there wasn't enough of us to cover that everywhere. I mean, some gates there might have been but there wasn't always. So you'd get to know people who would do that. And that seemed, you know, so you get the sense that there were these support groups of, um, you know, women's groups or mixed groups who were, who were raising funds, and who were doing benefits and things like that, and who were coming down on a rotational basis to do night watch, or to visit, or to bring supplies. So there was a, there was a lot going on out in the community. And I don't think I was particularly, particularly thought about that, then. Um, but it was nice to be connected in that way. I'd meet a lot of, I met a lot of different people that way, from all over the country.

Did it get, did the atmosphere got a lot worse after the missiles came?

The atmosphere?

Or did it change a lot?

Um. I remember seeing missiles coming in. So that would have been

December, whenever it was '83 was it? Anyway, we were talking about dates, doesn't really matter because that's on historical record. I do remember them coming in, and being very upset. And, um, the, you know, the experience of being woken in the night - convoys and things, that, that there were different police who turned off in the middle of the night when a convoy was coming out, that's my memory. They might have been the same police but in different uniforms, I don't know - suddenly, sort of emotionless robot police would turn up, line, line the roads, be completely immune to any eye contact or conversation. It got a lot rougher in terms of the evictions, but I can't remember when the evictions started. Or, they came in waves, you know, to start with, I think they tended to go for right we'll do a big eviction and clear out the whole camp. And that happened a few times, but it didn't really make any difference. So at some point, in um, at some point they I started doing it, they had a period of doing it constantly. So like, five times a day or whatever, they were just driving around the base evicting people all day. And that was very difficult. And it was a bit of a, a battle of wills, I think, to appear to be not bothered by it, when it had a massive effect. (Laughs). So, to try and get the fire going before they came back, so it looked like they've done nothing, whereas actually, we'd had to work quite hard to do that. We got into putting in the fire in a pan, putting it in the van, driving the van off site, then driving back when they'd gone and getting the fire out of the pan. Um, but did lose everything you know loads of stuff just went in the back of the - you couldn't stay attached to property at all. All the sort of niceties of like benders and things all went. I remember spending, you know, sleeping in survival bags out in, in the gorse - being warm, but it's a different experience. I remember Gore-tex created Gore-tex, and they tried them out on us, which was fantastic. They donated a load for us to um, to test. I can't remember how many they sent - 30 or something, that was fantastic. (Laughs).

30?

Gore-tex bags.

Right.

So they were zip-up bags, you know, human shaped bag - you zip yourself in, breathe, you couldn't see anything, but you could breathe. That was great - to have a Gore-tex bag in a blanket, in a survival bag was great. Sometimes it was just the Gore-tex bag and sleeping bag, but I do remember, you know, when it was snowing and stuff, it was good to have a bit more on top. So, but in a way, that was quite good. So, you know, to let go of all that stuff. So long as we had - as long as we could keep the fire going, and keep the basic, you know, keep the money, so we could go and get more supplies. We got very good at managing, and I think in - but I think if they'd gone on - I shouldn't say this, because they'll learn for future, for research purposes - if they'd gone on a bit longer, they'd have probably succeeded. (Laughs). It's so much effort to just be - alongside of trying to collect wood and water, and dig the shit pits and all of that sort of thing, to be evicted five times a day was really difficult. Um, but, you know, and I remember, there was a fantastic witchy woman, at our gate called Iyo - Welsh woman. And er, I remember her doing this thing of sweeping around. She just made a brush out of you know, like a stick and some twigs, and sweeping and mumbling around one of the guys who um...(interjection from another woman) that will be him, just like cursing him - she wasn't probably saying anything, but he was convinced she'd cursed him, he was absolutely convinced she cursed him, and he never came back. He never came back. That was the end for him. He was convinced he'd been made ill by her. So some quite effective techniques that we worked out.

So they were trying to break your spirit.

Yeah.

And you we're hexing them?

(Laughs).

It was psychological warfare in both directions?

It was. It was. And I think we were just, we didn't have nowhere else to go, and we were so committed, and it was just a job to them. So that's why we won. But, effectively.

Which is asymmetric warfare, which is how Guerrillas win every time.

Yes. Yeah.

They're committed.

Yeah. But it was... Yeah. So it was a mixture, and we were all together. You know, we had it. I do remember driving the van when I shouldn't have been driving the van, because there was no one else to drive the van, and I did get off the site, that sort of thing. Um. I'm feeling a bit lost. So you were asking about daily life, weren't you?

I was.

(Laughs).

But you've told us about daily life, so that's okay. I'm just imagining this, er, you setting off, you know, having had three driving lessons in a... with the fire in a pan, modern day....

(Laughs, then sings) 'Little brown van, we love you. Little brown van'.

(Laughs). Yeah, I did get stopped by the police, but they just, they just told us that um, that the local supermarket had noticed that we'd removed one of their pallets. Would we return it? I said 'Oh yes, of course. We didn't realise, we thought it was being thrown away.' And they said 'That's fine.' It was one of the times they were really nice - the local police. Which is great, which is good, because I had no license. And um....

And your name was Mary Daily?

(Laughs). Yeah! Anyway.

I'll give you a breather in a minute.

Yeah.

So the, so the, how important was it that, that the camp was there all the time, as well as the big events, and the, and the actions - when I was asking about daily life, how important was that, that you were there?

It felt, I think it was essential, because we didn't know - it was part of showing them that, the strategy - the military strategy, the US military strategy was that they had highly movable nuclear missiles that could drive around British country lanes, so they couldn't be targeted - so they could send off missiles without being targeted, very easily. Made, you know, the whole of Britain a target. And um, if, because we, we were aiming to show - to make that ineffective essentially, so that if people knew as soon as the missiles came out of the base, people were on it. There was a telephone tree around the country - people, it wasn't effective anymore. They couldn't secretly do whatever they wanted to do whenever they wanted to do it wherever they wanted to do it, at least, they might still do it, but that everybody would know about it. So I think that was why it was important having us there all the time - it was observing them, watching them, I suppose, reflecting back to them and making it - and also making it a thing that stayed in the news, that stayed, made people conscious that this was happening - because we were a target. You know, obviously, having warheads made us much more likely to be targeted by anyone who didn't want us to - who wanted to get rid of those warheads in order to do whatever they wanted to do. So it felt like - I feel like I'm waffling.

But it also kind of made it a bit ludicrous, didn't it? Because...

Yeah.

You know, crazy ladies living in a bag can disrupt your whole strategy for a theatre in war in Europe.

Yeah. And also, um, it was supposed to be a very high security base where the weapons were completely safe. And we were also out to show them constantly, that it wasn't safe at all. And we had no weapons, and no training. And we just went into the base as and when we pleased, really, that was part of it, part of the strategy. And they did get into um, trying to not show that - by just throwing people out without arresting them. You know, that was part of their response to being, there being hundreds and hundreds of breaches of security, was to, to not make it show officially. So then we had an action where they couldn't throw us out, which was the no name one. That was a bit later on. Um. Yeah, I suppose I'm just talking about the day like without thinking about the nuclear bit, aren't I? It was, it was very I was very conscious of it. I was - at that time. It was, it felt like I had to do something. To me, the threat was so huge that I didn't feel like I would necessarily be successful, but I couldn't not do something about it. And I think that was something that, you know, there was that feeling, generally quite a lot amongst the women - but the women were there for other reasons. And I learned a lot about the, you know, the connections, the international connections around the whole nuclear industry and trade and, um, the, you know, the mining, and the oppression, and pollution, and the testing and all of that stuff. Indigenous land rights, all sorts of things that came, that raised my awareness around that issue.

(Edit in recording).

Um, you were talking about the everyday life of the base and what it was like, and how much it mattered that that was going on, as well as the bigger actions and events, that actually the presence...

Yeah, just the presence of us there was - that felt like that was, that was keeping, keeping the issue alive. And also messing up their plans, basically.

So, um, did you want to talk about some of the events, some of the actions, and the big, the big actions?

Yeah, I could do. I've written some down. Yeah.

Is that what you wanted to have a chat about?

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. (Laughs). It's hard to know, it's hard to know. So um, I was trying to remember - so when I did the Halloween action, I remember going up to London, I think for some legal stuff. And we also did, I think we all dressed in black and went keening over Westminster Bridge. And I remember that being very, highly draining emotional thing to be going very, very slowly wailing across the bridge, and I think I was, yeah, very emotionally drained by that. Um. So that was one.

We were just talking over lunch about how on one minute we were laughing about winding up the plod, and the next that real sense of danger that was around at the time.

Yeah. And I think, you know, it was ever present. Margaret Thatcher was was not, not a safe prime minister, in my view. It felt like any war to keep the Tories in would be, would be fine. I mean, there'd already been the Falklands. There was the whole Cold War rhetoric really ramped up, which presumably was keeping the whole arms trade going and everything else. Um. It did feel like at any time we could be the target. And it was sort of American planned to have the, have the war go on here rather than on American soil. So, yeah, it was frightening. And it was, and it felt like, I felt very powerless. And it felt like by doing, by going there, was that how I could do the most I could do was anything I could do. It felt like not very much. But it was all I could do. Um.

Was there a sense it was the right place to be?

Yeah. There wasn't anywhere, there wasn't, there wasn't anything else that I could do. So that was the right place to be. And it made me less frightened to be there because I was doing what I could do. There was no point in worrying, because that was all I could do. So it was, it helped me feel safe in a way, even though I was faced with it completely up front. It's a strange thing. You know, like other lot of other people were feeling safe by pretending it wasn't happening. And I felt safer because I was facing it, really. So.

Or maybe they weren't feeling safer?

Maybe they weren't. A lot of people weren't thinking about it - war. Very powerless, very like that they couldn't do anything, so they would just get on with their lives and not do anything. But there was also a bit like having the camp - so there was this sort of - women who could stay there all the time, or a lot of the time, in a way made it possible for other women who couldn't - who had families, or work, or, or couldn't beat the thought of camping or whatever. And to, there was a focus, there was a way that they could be involved, feel like something was happening. So I think it did also gave hope to people across Britain, really. And there were lots of other camps - although there weren't other women's camps, so many other women's camps. Greenham was quite a focus really, that I think helped that sense that we weren't all powerless in the face of the military, right wing thing that seemed to have taken over the world. We were being mown down by, well, and everyone else in the world being squished by other countries.

So when you went to keening on Westminster Bridge?

Yeah, well, that was, I suppose it was taking that emotion - it felt like it was taking that emotion and despair straight to the MPs. I mean, they probably didn't know anything, have anything to do with it, but that it was, we didn't have a lot apart from creative action. That was what we could do. We certainly were much more powerful by not being violent, I think because they had all the all the cards in the violence and

aggressions, you know, they had the hand there. So the only place we could be was being creative and peaceful, because they couldn't easily respond with violence. I mean, they did. But it was, it was not easy for them to respond there. So they were then off, off set, you know, they had they had to...

On the back foot?

On the back foot. Yeah. Because they couldn't just beat us up to shut us up sort of thing. They'd have to listen to us wailing. (Laughs). Or sitting down singing, or doing other things that weren't actually against the law. You know, but were bringing to attention what was going on, and bringing to the attention of lots of people what was going on. It was in the media a lot, media wasn't particularly, you know, some media was positive, but I'd say quite a lot of it wasn't.

Do you think it's probably the women were seen as a bit of a joke, generally? Through the media?

Um...

Or dangerous?

A mixture. So it was you know, so particularly the right wing, probably in The Sun there was quite a lot of jokey stuff, they I think they had an undercover report at one point - The Sun. Anyway. Um. So it was, it I think that was a bit of seen as a bit of a joke. Some of the other like The Mail saw as a big saw as a big, big threat, or idiots for, for doing what, you know, the Russians wanted us to do. And um, some people you know, some bits of the media seemed to think that we were trained up as guerrilla fighters and that's the only way we could possibly have got the fence down and got into the base when, when it was a super secure thing that kept, kept having more and more and more security added to it - extra layers of barbed wire, and extra fences and all the rest of it, and we still got in. So some people were convinced. And I'd hear people,

you know, people would tell me that I'd been - 'Where's the training camp?' You know?

Here!

Yeah.

This is it.

But we don't even do any training. We just go and do it.

So you got a list or something, of some of the things?

Yeah, so, um, so I think there was, there was that sort of Embrace the Base, there was a Reflect the Base where we sent, you know, there were these kind of concepts - I quite like them. It gives you a sense that you're doing something, doesn't it? And it confuses the people inside, who are just looking at mirrors seeing themselves. Um...

So - I have to say Em-brace rather than Embrace, because of the song which went 'We're gonna em-brace that Greenham base'. (Laughs).
Down by the riverside!

(Laughs). I don't know that one!

So that was everybody held hands?

Yeah, everybody held hands.

And then Reflect the Base?

Reflect the Base was same thing the next year, but it was with mirrors. I think - I was trying to remember that. And it was, I'd been there quite a long time by then. It's great that there's those thousands and thousands of women interested, um and to do it. There was the, so the, um, the Halloween thing I suppose what the result of that was, was I went to

prison for that. So um, I don't know whether to talk about prison separately, or go there, just go there?

Go there then, yeah. It was one of the things I really felt I learned was - what's all the stuff about prison? And it didn't feel it was just about Greenham. It was about prison itself. And that was something that I had not come across as a young woman before. Was just why - it slowly, it was slow. I felt my brain creaking to understand why women were in prison.

Yeah. Yeah. It was a real eye opener for me. So the first time I went to prison, it wasn't easy, but it felt like I learned a lot from it. I wasn't damaged by it. Um. You know, I met, I'd got tips. You know, take cigarettes in whatever. (Laughs). And I had, you know, in a, in the insides of Biro's and needles and all sorts of things secreted around my clothing. Um. I was kind of prepared. And it was really interesting. I met all these women in Holloway who I couldn't see why they were in there at all - completely ridiculous. Not that - I didn't think prison's great before that, and everybody in there is bad, but I hadn't - it didn't properly click until I met them. Met the women there, you know, women who'd stolen stuff because they didn't have enough money, you know, food. Women who had been used as mules for drugs, prostitutes, you know, like, why are they - why are they in prison? They're not a danger to society. They're just unfortunate. You know, they need some help - they don't need locking up. And then, so that was very, I kind of knew that, but I hadn't met it. You know, I hadn't met that - I hadn't fully realised it until I was in the middle of it - how ridiculous it was all these women were being locked up. And maybe some of them didn't tell me exactly what had happened, and maybe some of them were very dangerous. I don't know. But you know it, on the whole my feeling was that it just really showed up that you know, the benefits system everything - power relationships between men and women, and how badly women are treated and that's where they end up.

And class?

Class. Yeah, definitely. Um. And race. You know, I think that's the first time - I was in a, I was in a sort of dormitory for a night or 2 with about five - not a dormitory, like a big cell about five women first night or 2, and then I got moved into one with two women, and one of them had just drunk - tried to kill herself with battery acid because she was being sent back to um, I can't remember which country - Uganda or somewhere like that. And she couldn't bear the thought of going back she, you know, she'd put everything into getting to Britain to - I think it was economic, to get money to send back to her kids, so that they could get an education and all the rest of it. And she was being sent back with nothing, but for her it was it was absolutely devastating. And it just what that - maybe it was more than that. I can't even remember now, but I just remember her absolute despair, and then you know. Um, and then I got sent - because I was underage, I got sent to Bullwood Hall, which was a Borstal, you know that it was - I don't know what they call it - young offenders' place. Um, which was a bit more militaristic than Holloway. Um. We had to stand up for the, when the person, you know the person in charge came on - I want to say ward, but you know, on the wing - when the screws turned up and talked to us, we had to stand up and be polite. And of course, that didn't last very long with me. And the other young woman, we were in the same wing. Sasha, I think she's become an academic - Sasha (last name inaudible). Anyway, we were in together. And um...

I think she did some research on Greenham.

She did. She's done, she's done a thesis. I think she's a professor now. Professor of Greenham! Anyway.

Were you ever put anywhere on your own in a prison?

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I was, I was, we were on in rooms on our own there. And it was - like in Holloway, you've got a toilet in your room. But in in Bullwood Hall, it was slops. So it was like buckets. And they kept - I think it was sort of torture, really, you know, they kept the light on all night, and that drove me mad. And it's, you know, it's always a bit scary

being locked in and knowing that the key is quite a long way away, particularly at Holloway, you know, the key is a long way away, and if something was going wrong, you couldn't be let out, whoever was on the wing didn't have a key to get in your room in emergency. So it wasn't very nice. You know, there were lots of things that weren't very nice. We got sent to do prison work. And um...

What was the work?

Making cardboard boxes for drinks. So I used my secreted Biro and wrote 'Greenham women are everywhere' on every box. It was horrible working conditions. I think we got, I think we got 2p an hour or some ridiculous - I think I got, I think I left with 30p or something wages - I can't remember what it was, something, or 7p an hour - I can't remember what it was - some ridiculous wage I was given as I left, like pennies. (Laughs). And that's, you know, so women are there long term, you know, earning - they're working, learning about it, it's ridiculous, enough to maybe after a while buy some cigarettes. And it was clouds, clouds of dust. You know, the cardboard dust. It was choking in that place because it's just cutting boxes and putting them together and it was just swirling. Anyway didn't last very long, that. Um. I did that, Sasha refused to do it and she got locked in her room, and then we got - then I got locked in because I didn't stand up for the person who entered. And a probation office came to see me (laughs) - I don't think I took them very seriously. And we, um, but it was just, it was an interesting experience. Again, lots of young women, some of them were in for GBH, and stuff like that. But again, in just young women in a fix, doing stupid things, being locked up, and being given a criminal record. And they didn't like it, that we, we sort of did seem to set things off. So when we didn't stand up, the others didn't stand up - when we said (inaudible), the others didn't (inaudible), that sort of thing. I can't remember. I mean, I don't we were rowdy, it's just that, it's just that thing of non-violent direct action that we'd got into doing. Like I'm going to do what I'm going to do, and I'm not going to be rude about it. But I'm not going to accept your way of doing things.

Do you think that had a longer term impact at all?

On me?

On either you or other women in prison?

I don't know. I don't know. I think it was unusual. You know, they were interested. Women did talk to us. I mean, I would be trying to find out about why they were there and what was going on, and they'd be trying to find out what we were doing, and being really curious about it and, you know, not having that, and not having that necessarily the same political um, understanding or information that I had. Um.

When you started telling them...

It felt very positive, mostly they were really positive. I didn't get, I don't remember getting anybody thinking it was stupid or whatever. I think I remember what positive reaction really. And it was a camaraderie thing, you know. And I think that's why they increasingly they tried to split Greenham women up from people, other inmates. I remember it being quite shocking coming out of prison. My dad came to visit me. First time. Poor guy.

Was he still proud?

I think he was. Yeah, but he was ashen. (Laughs). I don't know, he'd had a long journey, and then he'd had to go through security or I don't know, but he was, he kind of looked very drawn and worried. He was very worried. And I spent quite a lot of time trying to reassure him, I think. And I think lots of things that weren't nice. I mean, I remember being, you know, strip searched, and you know, there's a lot of dehumanising stuff - I remember them going through our pubes checking for nits at Bullwood Hall. (Laughs). It's like...god! You can't have any sort of - they, it's a real thing of eroding your dignity, and personal space and freedom. And I do remember coming out, and if - being quite overwhelmed, I'd only been you know, it would have been 10

days or something I probably got 14 days, and then it would have - I would have had that point had a third off. (Laughs). Because they could get rid of us after that time probably. It was probably 10 days, but it felt overwhelming being out in the world outside. Being able to open a door myself, going to a shop. It was - even after a very short period of time, I remember feeling very overwhelmed, and thinking, imagine, imagine being in here a year, 10 years, how eroding that is of your sense of autonomy. And so it was very clear that it's not really about the, you know, whether it's a toilet or a bucket or all the rest of it, is not the issue or, you know, we didn't have TVs - people talk about TVs in prison, that's not really the issue. It's about having no...

Liberty?

No liberty, not being able to open your door, not being able to - yeah, pick up a book or do whatever you want, so, but that was mainly an educational experience. I didn't - I don't feel that that damaged me particularly. Um, certainly didn't put me off getting arrested.

Was there any of the things that happened that were traumatic that you've...?

Well, I think the next time that I went to prison was traumatic, and it did make me think I'm not going to do this again unless I have to. (Laughs). And thinking, you know, there were women who went like, Anne Francis was in for 6 months or something and you know, god, because they decided to make an example of her. But um, I yeah - so that was the action where we didn't give our names because they, because otherwise they were chucking us out, and there was no record of the base being insecure and the police - we just wanted to mess up the system really, I suppose. And get um, it be visible again. And well, that's what I wrote here. I don't know whether to - I mean, I could read something I suppose. Um.

Was this something that you did as a way of processing it?

Yes. I don't think there's a lot though. I don't know. Basically, so we got arrested, we got taken to - so the idea was that the police had the usual tactic of arresting people and throwing them out, there was no record. So we wanted to, and dropping the charges, so they'd sort of arrest, charge, and then throw them out, drop the charges. So there was no record and no court, court wasn't involved. And we wanted them to know that the base was still insecure, that the protest was still huge. And um, so we went in without giving our names - some women went in gave their names, you know, lots of women came - not everybody did this. Not everyone wanted to be arrested, but they just took part in it anyway. Some women were so well known that they just, they knew their names and chucked them out. Sort of a handful. And then er, there was - I don't know how many maybe 100 or 200, 100 or so, somewhere in that region, who they kept, they had to keep, because we refused to give any information at all. And um, we got taken first to Reading and it was that one of these big Thatcherite red brick fortress police stations. Not legit, not Reading jail, as of Oscar Wilde, but Reading police station. (Laughs).

The Ballad of Reading police station.

(Laughs). Yeah! Could write that one, but it would come out all wrong for me - crude. Um, I remember being driven underground. So it was all underground, all the cells were underground. And we were in pairs in cells, and I was with somebody I got on with - we had a hoot. You know, I think I'd smuggled in a Biro, we made a pack of cards with toilet paper. And we were doing a lot of somehow smuggling stuff between different cells. I don't - you sort of think how on earth did that happen? You know, but we did manage somehow. Um, not everyone was in with someone they got on, but I was alright with Annie. We did a lot of um, er, sort of games and exercise and things - run around in exercise yard, had fun. Um. But they woke us up something like 5 o'clock in the morning and wanted the mattress out of the room. And I don't think I was particularly - I wouldn't think I was normally somebody who's really a troublemaker. Maybe that's - (laughs), oh, yeah, maybe I've got a strange concept thing, self concept, seeings as I was there, but I just

didn't want to get out of bed at 5 o'clock in the morning. So I held on to my mattress when they tried to take it. So then I had five policemen come basically land on me, rip me off the mattress, and there was something about brushing my teeth, I can't remember - just somehow out of nothing I became a troublemaker. I was marked out as a troublemaker. And um, so then we got - the prison visitors came round, chatted to us all, because the police had applied for the police station to become a temporary prison, so they didn't have to send us anywhere else. Um. And the prison visitor said no, they couldn't do that - it wasn't, didn't have adequate facilities for us to be there for 2 weeks or whatever. So they had to send us around the country, and I know you've talked with Judy about all of this - the same thing. It's just like they had nowhere to put people, basically - they had to send us everywhere. And they called us out one at a time over quite a long period of time over a day, you know, a whole day, morning till night. Eventually I was called, all these underground tunnels, come out into an underground carpark. And there's a meat wagon. You know, one of these - we called them meat wagons, but like vans with little slits down the side. And I'm scared. I really didn't - I was scared of going in one. And I'd heard about them, not been in one before. I'm trying to think how we were transported to - I think it was like a mini bus we all went in actually, I think it was a - it wasn't like it, so when you get into one of these meat wagons, it's split into cells inside the van. And that, there's a, it's a wire cage at the top. So you can't stand upright. It's not high enough to stand upright. The cube size, you've got tiny little bench on a bit of it, it's not big enough to get your knees out. So you kind of, you can't sit with your knees out because it's too small. And there's like a letterbox window. Anyway, I saw this thing - door opened. And I wasn't intentionally being a troublemaker, but I just said 'I'm not going in there.' And they said 'Oh, ignore her. She's a troublemaker.' Dragged me in. I got hysterical. I mean, I'd never been - I'd always managed to stay quite sure of myself. And, you know, I knew what I was getting myself into, and I accepted it, and was quite reasonable. But I wasn't then - I just really felt like I was losing it. And so I started shouting in the van. I was bleeding, because they'd dug their fingers into me. And luckily, because I couldn't see anything - it's metal, it's steel sides of the cell, but I could

talk because of the wire and stuff. And a woman that I know next - Mari, lovely Irish woman, who'd always been kind to me anyway, but she just said 'Jane, you need to calm down. It's upsetting. Not just you, but everybody - we all need to keep calm.' - but not in a way that made me feel bad. She was just lovely. So I did calm down.

It's sometimes the best way isn't it?

Yeah. Yeah.

To help you think about somebody else as well?

Yeah. Yeah. Um. Anyway, we had like a 6 hour drive or something - comes to mind. I don't even know if it was that - a really long drive, we stopped at Milton Keynes. We got out in the exercise yard. They were nasty, nasty police officers in that van - or they were behaving in a nasty way. They were talking about, laughing - talking about 'Let's switch the gas on.' That's what, that's the sort of - and they were driving really fast. It was terrifying. The whole thing - I'd got myself, maybe in another time I wouldn't have been so scared, but I was really scared. And I felt like if there was a crash we're totally stuck - you know? We're with these psychopaths who treat us like dirt - don't care that they've hurt us, and threatening us, and they're being really obscene in the things that they were saying. Anyway Milton Keynes exercise yard um, (laughs), had a - was fenced in at the top, but I do remember chatting - we couldn't see each other - but to the prisoners around us, so that was quite nice. And again um, Iyo, Welsh witchy person got us all chanting - I can't even remember, something witchy (half sings/speaks 'witchy' chant about Hecate!) something like that. Oh, you know (sings) 'The earth is our mother', you know, that sort of thing. One of those sorts of things, but it was really helpful, very calming. We were all together as a group, and I remember after that, when they stopped for petrol, we all kind of shook the van and shouted, and it took a little bit of control back. We got to Styal, which is up in Cheshire - long, it was a long drive. And um, I remember, you know, and I remember that sort of looking out of this little glimpse of this, the world passing through, and um, desperately

trying to connect with the world out there. Part of keeping me calm, going into Styal, and it was - I think it's, on the whole, it's an open prison - it had these big sort of long buildings in lawns. But we didn't stop there. So we went to the punishment block, which was um, this kind of isolation. So it was one person to a cell, very thick walls. You could just about shout and hear the person next to you, but not - you'd have to pass messages along. And we all have nicknames, because we weren't using our names. I think I was called cello woman, for obvious reasons. Another friend was called Badger because she was wearing white dungarees and had black hair. That sort of thing, you know whatever, you're just different.

So that was one time when like you say, you knew what you're getting into, and then you turned around and saw that meat wagon and it's like, oh, okay....

Yeah, I wasn't really prepared for what they, what it was like, and I became I, they were - it was passed on that I was a troublemaker, I kept hearing it. So it was like, I ended up - I think they made an effort to humiliate me. So I do remember, you know, them sticking their fingers in my mouth, sticking their finger up my bum, you know, nasty. It was sort of just a sort of exercise in humiliation. And I became, I think the thing that broke - it didn't break me, but I felt like very close to be honest, um, I became very good. I became quite - because I got very scared. I just felt off partly because um, nobody knew where I was. I didn't have a name. So nobody knew who I was. It wasn't like there was legal observers sending information anywhere, nobody knew who I was, where I was. It was a very sort of, because we were on, in single cells on with just a mattress. This little, little window with about five layers of security - bars and wire, and then beyond that a 20 foot welded mesh fence and more barbed wire. Um, I just had to keep working on quelling the thought that I could disappear, that something horrible could happen. And nobody would know. Um. You know, about Amnesty International, it just sort of all grows. It's all just there as a sort of, it's hard to get rid of all that when you're on your own, and you've set off on a line like that. I remember I told them I was a vegetarian, and I'm sure

they gave me meat, but I just said thank you (laughs). I remember looking, they brought round books at one point. Um, and I don't know if I took them. I had, had embroidery thread through my clothes. So I did embroider the blanket. And I did exercises to the point where I found it hard to walk. Actually, I overdid it. The er, I was gonna say the screws - okay, so the screws did laugh at me. We had exercise on our own. It was one at a time so we wouldn't meet each other. And they laughed at me because I ran around. Nobody else actually runs, nobody does exercise on exercise, they have a fag or they sit down (laughs). But I got became obsessed with trying to find a way to escape. I didn't do it, and it would have been stupid - I was only in there in another week or something. But I became completely focused on how to escape.

Did you have like I don't know, Robben Island and...

All of that. Yeah.

All those thoughts in your head?

Yeah.

How to survive prison, because this is how it's done?

Yeah, I don't know about how to survive prison. But I had got, I did, I think - like my mum used to write letters from Amnesty International. I used to read the magazines. (Laughs). Nice horror for me, scary reading. But I think all of that just came to mind, and then, and then you're thinking about it start, that's where, thinking about the witches who were burned, and it all becomes how society treats women, um, and how easy it is to - for power to just take over when they can. And I don't know, it just, it was a very - I don't think everybody, even who were there with me in Styal punishment block, I don't think everybody got woken in the same way. But because I remember coming out and talking to people, and didn't really read a sense that they'd also felt quite the same. I mean, it was it was hard for everybody, but I don't - if something in me couldn't quite handle it, I think.

You had all the stories already.

Yeah.

And I would have been exactly the same, because I'd got them as well. So, it's like, it's understandable. Did you feel you know, like you say you weren't broken, but did you feel like when you started being good did that feel bad about that?

Yeah, they'd got to me, I felt terrible about it. And I felt like if they keep me here much longer I'm going to start thinking of ways to kill myself. It just you know, I don't know how women last for months in isolation or years - I don't know how they do it. I wouldn't you know.

Or you'd have got your second wind?

Maybe, maybe I would have found a way through - I might have. (Laughs). Yeah, for anybody who is doing research on this - on how to break women, I've got...

But also that thing about being identified as a troublemaker and then targeted.

Yeah.

Is a) how to radicalise somebody.

Yeah.

Further.

Yeah.

And b) it's what happens to kids in school, isn't it?

Yeah. And I must have, you know, I was probably one of the youngest, and vulnerable in that way. Maybe. I don't know. So it did feel a bit like - afterwards when I reflected I thought I probably went into that without thinking too closely about what I was getting myself in for. And I might think, a bit harder next time. (Laughs).

And was that, was that, was this part of your decision of not to keep going was it sort of said that, like it was almost a sense of it's escalating and, and it sounds almost as if the like, if I keep on like this, this will happen. And I don't want that to happen. So I'm going to stop before - almost like that it had a life of its own?

Yeah. I mean, I didn't stop then - I did stop, I did move away from Greenham a few months later, but I did keep going back and I kept doing actions so, but I did, I think I was more cautious about deliberately getting myself arrested. I did do a bit of stuff where we went and investigated some of the, the other warfare stuff that was going on in south, sort of Herefordshire, South Wales, Malvern sort of area. And we did get picked up you know, we did do things that got us picked up. Um. So I think I carried on being, doing quite a lot. It didn't stop me, but it didn't - it made me think I'm not, I'm not going to deliberately get arrested again. (Laughs). I'm not going to go to prison, just for the sake of it again. It is quite a tough thing to put myself through that I didn't quite manage. Well, I did, I managed it, but it was hard. And you know, I didn't really, I thought about it at the time, and then I think it - years later I thought, I realised it had affected me a bit, so.

Do you do you find that you look back with - I mean when you were talking about being locked up when you're older, and you maybe have a house of our own, you think about things like fire exits, which you don't tend to think about that much when you're younger.

Yeah, that's definitely - that's what I mean. When we were in Holloway, the first time around, I was in Holloway and realised that there's nobody - that the key goes to the gate house. And people you know, there have been fires where women have died in cells in Holloway, because it takes

that long for them to get there and unlock it. So if you set fire to yourself, you might well be successful somewhere like that.

And when you look back, hindsight of age and all the rest of it. Do you - are you 'what was I thinking?' sometimes about the risks?

Well, I think I did, maybe. I kind of know that I just felt very strongly and I needed to do what I needed to do. And I hadn't, I did feel more invincible then, I imagined. I think I felt I thought I was a bit more invincible then than I think I am now. So I'm not surprised I did it then. But I feel, and I might do it again for the right reason. But I would be wary. I would definitely be concerned about what it might be like.

You're more informed.

Bit more informed now. Having been through it. Um, it did make me you know, I, I suppose it was partly the it's partly shame of feeling like I was started being very good. You know, 'Thank you.' 'Yes, please.' I don't know.

Like a bit of Stockholm Syndrome kicking in?

Or just survival, just survival.

Yeah. Yeah, that's what it is.

Just do what you have to do. Um.

Is that still there then? I think you might need to do a ritual with some witches to get rid of that shame?

Yeah, maybe.

That just feels like it's just a little bit of wafting needed.

I just feel... Yeah. Maybe. I think it's sort of definitely, you know, it's an experience that made me think about other people in that situation as well. You know, when you think about prisoners in the states, and private prisons who might be years in isolation or - you know what that does to somebody. Anyway, um, definitely got a big education - didn't go to university but again, big education, learnt so much about the world and people and yeah.

You have mentioned witches and rituals a couple of times.

Oh, have I! (Laughs).

What do you think is the role of that?

Well, for me, it was very often it was a sort of unifying thing. It was something that was reassuring and drew on an inner power and a connection to other women. So it felt like it was about using, you know, at times where we were frightened, it was doing something together, that brought us all together and um, proclaimed, in a way, that we were we were strong, we are connected to the earth, and we might feel piddly and puny, but we were part of part of nature, and what was going on was wrong. And we were connected to something that could support us, even if we were very weak, on our own. And I think another aspect to it is um, living outdoors. For, you know, I lived outdoors for a year, went through all the seasons, outdoors. And it was fantastic, you know, that was lovely. It was fantastic. I didn't get ill. Actually, I didn't get very ill with hepatitis, but that was another another story. I didn't get cold or anything like that, because I was always you know, it was a gradual change of the seasons. I adapted to cold and rain, and sun and wind, and all the rest of it, and I just, I loved it. I remember you know, at night, I loved going out and seeing the reflections in the puddles, and looking at the clouds, and it sounds a bit corny, but it was fantastic, that was a lovely experience, and I think that lends itself also to that women's traditional - you can say witchcraft, but you know it's just that thing of being connected to the seasons, to the earth, um, and getting some sense of power from that - of being a part of it. And quite a lot of the

things that we did were, were about that - I mean, I remember, um, I don't know somebody - I think it was somebody's 60th birthday and we made a big papermache dove and climbed up a tree, and put it in the tree, hanging over the base. I just sort of thing it was just nice to be - everything that we were doing was in trees, in the bushes, and then there was this very alien construction next to us, which was not part of, not part of the natural world at all, you know, concrete and wire and...

Straight lines?

Straight lines. Yeah. Um. I took a couple of my granddaughters down, maybe 10 years ago, well, passing, we were going somewhere else. And I realised we were going to go past Greenham, and I hadn't been for years. I took them - there was no fence. And we went and it was all sort of gravel pits, you know, where there used to be a run way. It was quite nice. Oh, um...(becomes emotional).

You alright?

What?

Our interviewee is snuffling slightly at this point.

(Laughs).

Yeah, what did they make of it then, your grandchildren?

Well I think they - because I'd not talked about it. They were quite excited that their grandma had been involved in something like that. And we play acted, you know, making a little shelter in the woods. I didn't - you know, I just told them what I'd done, and then they wanted to make one. So it was quite strange for me, because it didn't - almost didn't look recognisable. It was er, it was quite nice to share that with them, because you don't really have a reason to talk to people, mostly. Most people, it's only people my age or older have ever heard of Greenham - anyone younger, you know, very, very occasionally mention

it and they don't know what I'm talking about, so that was quite nice to share that.

Do you think there's a legacy that Greenham has? Saying people don't know about it. Do you think it's anything's...

Well, cruise missile went, so that's a sort of basic legacy. I mean obviously - I couldn't say that what we did was solely responsible for that, I think it became inconvenient for them to have it. Um, ut I think it helped made, it is easy for the it to work. I think um, we - I think I very strongly felt the thing of the taken you know, that personal is political thing - which was part of the women's movement anyway, but of, you don't, you know, politics isn't in the House of Commons. Politics is what you do in your everyday life. And that you live what you, you know, I tried, sounds corny, I try to live what I believe in, you know, do the things that feel right to me. And, and believe, and I do believe that I can make some change, or that individuals or groups of people working together can make change, which most, I think, mostly we're brought up to believe isn't possible. That, that the state, and military, and business and everything else is so big that none of us can do anything about it, so we might as well get on with our little lives. Whereas I think, I do believe that we can make a change. So I've not - that's not gone. I don't do very much, well, I do things, I do remind myself that I'm bringing up my granddaughter on my own, because, and that's a very kind of political thing, I suppose. Um. I don't know - is it? Just, you know it's not that I'm doing nothing in my life. And I work with people in health service in extreme situations. And I draw connections, I don't take for granted what I read, or what people tell me. Or, I think about a wider picture - what else might be going on as well? I'm not saying I'm not these - I'm probably hoodwinked by all sorts of things, you know that I'm told, but I think I've got that, you know, I remember what was written about us as smelly dirty, Greenham women. Um, which was true (laughs), but you know, but um, so I don't, I don't assume that was written about, that what I'm reading, or what I'm seeing on the news is all true. But I don't get into lots of conspiracy stuff either, particularly. What else? I think I you know, I - without - not as a big political thing, but I don't feel like

there's great limitations on me as a woman, because I had a period of time just living with women. I trained as a joiner when I left. You know...

Do you think that was important that whatever was happening - we were talking about a character earlier who was not necessarily the nicest of characters. But, whatever was happening, whether it was building something, being a pain in the arse, being lovely, making, cooking standing up for whatever - it was all being done by women.

Yeah. So there wasn't anybody - and I am much more aware now than I would have been, I think, of men taking over. You know, I might not always do something about it, but I do notice how much they talk in meetings. I do notice that they are at the top of every bloody management tree. You know, it's not - I get on with lots of men, lots of them are very skilled and talented, and I feel great working with them. But I do notice the air time, because I've been in a situation where that wasn't happening, where we worked in a very - not always easy, but cooperative - sort of cooperative way, where we let us - let each other do what we wanted to do. And people weren't feeling the need to take over. And if they did, nobody put up with it, you know! (Laughs).

And it settled back down.

It settled back down, or you move to another gate - I can't be bothered with that, I'll set up another gate.

Do you think that that er, work - women working together in that way, do you think that's happening much nowadays?

I don't think it is happening very much, but there does seem to be a new wind in feminism. You know, I'm quite excited. It feels like I'm hearing it at a distance rather than very involved with it, but you know, there are young women now. You know, there's all sorts of stuff around feminism now. The word is not a dirty word anymore. You know, for a while feminism was something that was quite hard to say. 'Are you a feminist?' Yeah. (Laughs). You'd get a negative reaction - it was like,

whereas now it doesn't feel like it is, feels like there's a whole new generation of women who feel very strongly about the way they've been treated. And that it's not okay to be abused, and shouted down, and, and treated badly just for being a woman. So that's quite exciting to know that's going on. Um. But I don't, I don't feel like I've linked into it hugely. And when I, when I'm sort of, so when my granddaughter talks to me about school, it doesn't feel like it's filtered to that level at that - it feels like quite an oppressive place still, really. You know, the sort of stuff that gets sent on social media, and whatever just feels very unliberated.

When we were those 18/19/20, whatever 21/22 year old, young women, and there were older women that we were learning from

Yeah.

So we're there - we're those women.

I know. Maybe, but I'm not out there at the camp, or doing those things, particularly now. I think because, because I'm a single parent worker, you know, I've got, I've got caught up in it all.

Yeah, it's not - I'm not asking you to go and set up a camp somewhere.

No, but I guess she does, you know. So people, people are just by being me, then, you know, to - one of my granddaughters is an engineer and another wants to be. They're not thinking they can't do it because they're girls. One of them wants to be an air hostess, you know? Fine.

That's the whole point.

Yeah. Do what you like. So, um...

But I was thinking - I was just, I didn't mean it like that. I meant it more like, so, er, is there a - you're hearing it at a distance, it's coming from

over there, but there might be a point at which some of the old ladies were round the fire....

Yeah. I might be one of them!

Come into the mix.

Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I think there'll be a time.

Do you feel like an old lady, though?

I do, sometimes feel like an old lady. But I think that's to do with being tired and busy. It is very, you know, as ever, it is very draining being a single parent. And um, worrying (laughs), and working. Trying to keep everything together. Takes a lot of time now. And I guess a lot of the women who didn't come to Greenham were in that position then - I could so I did. Um. Oh, the legacy. I mean, I've still got those friendships. So I mean, I suppose maybe it's a bit like people going to university and keeping friendly, but I've got a vast number of people that I know - I don't see them all the time, but I feel very connected to people all around the country who went to Greenham. Who, that it's a relief to be with - you know they're people who might be very different, might have different ideas and whatever, but we all went through the same thing. And they've got the same basic sort of humanity and politics and - on some level, you know. So that's, I suppose that's a legacy, and I don't - I don't feel isolated in that way. I mean, I can be very isolated in my daily life, but I know that - this, I've got this big network of people as well. I have a sense of that. Um. And there's been all sorts of campaigns and things since you know, now I'm not doing very much, but I've done all sorts of other things since - there's, you know, apartheid stuff, and war stuff, and miners' strike and loads of different - you know, lots and lots of political campaigning. I worked, I carried on doing women only work for a bit. So I trained as a joiner. And then, and then I worked as a joiner for a bit but that was, and that was in a mixed - it was to build a women's center. I came up to, went up to Nottingham, from London with other women builders, and then I joined a women's band

(laughs) and then, so I became very much in that sort of world I suppose. Not one single world, but um, and then I worked at a women's training scheme teaching women joinery. (Laughs). And then I worked at a women's centre, (laughs), and then I trained as an occupational therapist and my god, normal life hit me.

Ah ha, finally got to university?

(Laughs). Finally got to university. So yeah, so I got a degree at 40, and, um, yeah worked in the health service, and it's, it's just such a, such a different world I suppose, that very straight world. But, you know, finding my place in it where I can, I can be the weirdo woman in the office, but there's still, you know, we get on alright. Um. I don't, I probably make a lot more concessions now than I used to, I think, you know, in terms of my hair and shaving and all those sorts of things. I wouldn't have dreamt of doing in the past, but just to try and look vaguely (laughs) acceptable in the normal world. Um. That's quite, so that's quite, that's quite hard in a way, but it's also I've got a lot of experience I can share there, you know, it's, it's been a use, you know, I feel like my life experience I may always - I don't tell people very often I've been in prison very, very rare to be honest. Or that I've done political stuff, but I'm not coming from a place of surprise when people have been in prison, or people have had, you know, you know that lots of life experience. You know, which I - you know, I lived in squats in London, I've done all sorts of things that are not the norm, that those people haven't lived through. I've been through bins looking for food, you know. (Laughs). I've slept outdoors, you know, when I've had nowhere to live, you know, there's all sorts of things that I think I bring to looking like a normal, vaguely normal professional, you know? Um.

So nobody's going 'This one's the troublemaker' yet then?

Sorry?

Is anybody going 'This one's a troublemaker'?

No, not on the whole. Although sometimes I'm surprised. I think I'm being really low key. And people are like (breathes out heavily, laughs). You know, when I'm saying 'No, this is not okay. You can't tell us to do this without some warning. You know, we need this, this and the other.' And I think that's perfectly normal. And other people are thinking, whoa! We don't - we don't, we don't go to authority in that way, not here. But to me, it's just like, well, they're just other people. They've got that role. But, you know, I've actually got a responsibility to the people I'm working for, that they don't get sent to an old people's home when they don't need to go there, or whatever, you know, whatever it is that I'm saying 'No that's not okay.'

You're not saying it to be awkward. You're saying to do the right thing. So...

Yeah.