

Kathy Trevelyan

Um, so I'd love to talk about Greenham, if I may. So first of all, er when did you first come to Greenham?

My first experience was the thirty thousand women encircling the base - the Embrace the Base protest - it was amazing. (Laughs).

Yeah, so I know that was first experience for a few women there. So how did you hear about Embrace the Base?

I used to work at a Women's Centre in North Paddington, basically when I was at uni. Back in 19...a bloody long time, when was it? 1978 - I was looking for a placement, and I got a placement at a women's centre - at a community centre in North Paddington, and then a group of women got together and decided to get a women's centre, and we managed to get funding and made a women's centre, um, so obviously people would find out bits of stuff on the airwaves and come back. So it was through contacts there. And a group of four of us got really involved from that.

So did you go altogether - the group of four?

Quite often. And quite often a bigger group as well. Sometimes someone would hire a van and we'd all go down for the weekend. There were four of us who were a bit of a group - Christine and Jeanie and Jill and I, and we would often go together when we could. And also Christine had kids, and I had kids, so we had to juggle stuff. And supportive partners, which was kind of helpful! (Laughs)

I feel that that's a prerequisite for anyone leaving the home for the weekend.

Yeah, if you've got children you need to have someone to take care of them. You know. So that was important. But I think it was also important for my kids that I was doing it too. They know now that I did that. It was a part of their background.

How old were they then?

Laura was 5 and Joe was 11, so Joe was very aware of it all which was nice, and Laura was like 5! (Laughs).

Did it help, so did you bring the children to Greenham?

They would go, sometimes we'd go down, like my husband would drive us, my ex, and we'd take a box of food for the women who lived there and stuff, so they'd visit, and then they'd leave me there for the weekend. That happened a few times. They got a taste of it, a flavour.

Yeah, because something that um, you know when I was looking into Greenham, something that struck me was the children being there at the base - so who, maybe it's a silly question, but how did you explain what was going on to a 5 year old? How do you explain that?

Yeah, I don't think she really understood it at all - Mummy's going down because there's some not very nice people have got some things we want to get rid of - it was much more on that level. Whereas Joe at 11, he understood about it a lot more. Obviously not totally at 11, but he understood it was to do with American missiles, it was to do with not wanting big weapons on our land, or anywhere, basically - anywhere in the whole world, so he kind of got it yeah. And it was lovely - when I had my 50th birthday - 60th birthday, my daughter got people to write stuff in a book, got a book printed, and what he wrote about was the fact that I had done things like Greenham and taken him on marches when he was little, was this massive inspiration for him, and he was really proud of that, which was just lovely - made me cry. (Laughs).

I bet it did.

Yeah. It was really nice. But I couldn't personally have my kids there, it was too, too kind of wild - you never knew when the police were going to arrive to remove the things you were sleeping in, so I wouldn't have felt that it was safe for them to be there.

So when you first arrived for Embrace the Base, was it you, your group of four?

Quite a few of us went, I can't exactly remember how - I was thinking about this earlier - 'Who went? Who went?' And I think that was one of the times when we had a minibus.

Oh, nice.

Quite a lot of us went, I think they had quite a few go down that day. I don't know how many, but lots.

What was your expectation, I suppose, driving this minibus - if you were in a minibus to Greenham. What did you think before you got there?

Massively excited that it was happening, and just really, really wanting to be part of it, and this huge anticipation that you can make a difference. But also, will we get enough women to hold hands around this massive thing, you know? Because I remember looking at a map and thinking 'Good god, that's huge', so would we get enough people? But mostly just excitement to be going there as a group of women to join all these women to do something really important. And it just felt hugely celebratory. A lot of singing, a lot of, well I don't know - just hugely celebratory, we can do this, we can make a difference. And the fact that it was women only was really important, because guns and stuff - they're all long and pointy like men! (Laughs). I know it sounds ridiculous, but war is a very masculine thing on the whole. I know we have women soldiers now, its different - but to me it's still got a very masculine energy, and the female energy of Greenham was so important that women - we're nurturing, all those kinds, and we're also bloody strong, and we can fight back in ways that are peaceful and different and innovative, and that was something I got - every time I went to Greenham. There were these amazing things that you could do that weren't stereotypical protest, you could be creative. And I don't know who had the idea for the Embrace the Base, but it was just - love that woman. Or those women, whoever they were.

Yeah, and you're right, it was creative, and I feel it was such a creative space at Greenham.

Oh it really was, it really was. Yeah.

So um, when you first got there, I mean how was it organised?

I have absolutely no idea! We just pitched up, and stood around a fence, and sang songs. (Laughs).

Yeah! Did you just, like did you have to kind of talk to people there who'd been there for a while?

No, just arrived, just pitched up and did it. And everyone was like 'Hi!' Just welcoming and lovely and inclusive.

How long were you around the base for?

I don't remember, I really don't remember. It feels like hours and hours because so much happened in my head, do you know what I mean? You're just really getting this whole kind of inclusive thing, and the joy of it, and the power of it, and just that we can make a difference - it was really...I think on that day I thought 'Yeah, we can get

rid of these bloody missiles here, we can do this', and that's not going to stop nuclear war, but it's going to stop something, you know. So yeah, I kind of had a real belief that day that we could do it.

Yeah. And had you been involved in er, protesting before? Had you been involved in peace activism before? Was this your first time?

Um, well I'd been going on marches, like big CND marches and stuff like that, yeah pitch up on anything (laughs), just like that's what I do! (Laughs). Yeah, but not particularly, because my focus, I mean I had children, and I was, you know I was working in the Women's Centre, so the Women's Centre was very much a focus for local women, we worked with the local women's refuge, we had a black women's group, you know there was, and I was an anti-natal teacher at that time, helping women with births, so I was very involved with the women's movement on a very personal, intimate level, I suppose, but also going on big things like the CND marches and stuff.

Yeah, so you were already kind of involved in that world.

Yeah. It wasn't the first time I'd done anything to do with protest, but it was certainly the first time I'd experienced such a powerful thing that was a women only protest. And when you got to the point later on when I was prepared to get arrested and stuff, that's definitely a first! (Laughs).

Yeah. So what do you think it was, maybe I should ask you this first - how long was the period you were at Greenham, I know that you were mainly there for weekends...

Yeah, I'd just got for weekends, and not very weekend obviously, but when I could. All of us that were happy to go would go when we could. And probably every other weekend we probably had some people going, but we couldn't all go at the same time, so there could have been a month when I didn't go, or six weeks even, but then I might go three weekends in a row. It all depended with what was happening with the family, when I could go, when there was transport down there, because I can't drive.

Oh okay, so you always had to rely on someone?

Yeah, always go with somebody else. And yeah, it was just nice having the group anyway. And also the wider Greenham women group in London would organise non-violent protest training, so you'd learn how to not resist arrest - how to lie floppy and be dragged around and stuff like that.

Yeah I've seen the footage of that.

So there was stuff like that going on too.

Let's go to that actually, let's go to that kind of action when people are being kind of dragged around, and you're prepared to be arrested and things like that. What was the kind of journey for you to get to that point when you're going 'Yeah I could be arrested, yeah that's fine'?

It took a while because it's really scary. I was so full of admiration for the women who lived there, and for the women who were just continually allowing themselves to be arrested, to go to prison, to come back. People would coat their fingertips with superglue so they couldn't get their fingerprints taken, and just incredibly brave. And some of them were quite scary also (laughs)! But just incredibly brave women who were prepared to do this, and I did - I mean it takes a while but there was so much - okay, like the night we did the witches, that was hilarious. I think it was Halloween, and we all took witches' hats and cloaks and stuff like that, and we all hid in the woods. And I think all around the base there were women hiding in the woods. and I can't remember what time it was, but there was some pre-arranged signal, and we all came out of the woods, and we were singing 'Who are the witches, where do they come from? Maybe your great-great-grandmother was one! Witches are wise, wise women they say. There's a lot of witch in every woman today', and then we got out the wire cutters! There's a picture from the Guardian of me standing on my friend Christine's shoulders cutting down the fence, and we basically cut it down, and we rolled it out, and sat on it and bounced on it, and there were all these poor little squaddies inside going 'What do we do?' We said 'Hi, we're the witches!' So we did stuff like that - you get a bit more used to doing something bold, if you see what I mean, because that was quite 'Are they going to shoot us? They're not going to shoot us', there's guys with guns there, and actually one of my son's friends was one of those soldiers at Greenham. I mean he had a great reawakening and left the army, and he's a green activist now and all sorts of stuff, but he was there and remembers some of this stuff, which is a really kind of interesting point of not knowing what the fuck all these women are doing 'Why are they all dressed as witches singing?!' So there was that, and there was another thing I did that I think gave me a lot of confidence, which was doing a die-in inside the base - that was really scary because some women had got tickets to go into an air show - there was an air show there. So I think about ten or twelve of us, I'm not sure how many, we went into the air show, and some of us laid down and got chalked around, and others were doing the chalking. And there were all these families coming to the air show, all these American women and their families looking at us, so you do a couple of things like that, and then you get to the point where you just think 'Fuck it, what, fuck it, all these women are getting arrested all the time and I'm totally prepared to do that.' It was the four of us actually, Jill, Jeanie, Christine and I decided that next time we're there

at a big action, that we will, we will just get arrested. And we were sitting outside, I think it's either Blue or Turquoise, I think it was Blue, because when we went back we were finding out where the gates were. I'm pretty sure we were at Blue Gate when we were arrested. And it was one of these really big ones - when you see the photos and just loads of women all sitting there blocking the way in, and there was a guy with lots of, it just looked like a General or some shit, in a car and we all just singing, and refusing to move. And then I can remember these policemen galloping towards us, this guy's tie flying, and then we all just went floppy and got arrested. And it felt good. Stuck in the back of a van with lots of other people, and one of them was the woman who'd put the superglue on her fingers and stuff, and ended up in the nick at Newbury or Reading, or wherever it was..

So, so were you arrested a few times or just the once?

Just that once. The one time.

So what happened...actually, I want to ask this, because you said something really interesting 'We decided to be arrested'.

Yeah.

And that just struck me as really, really funny! (Laughs)

(Laughs). We decided we'd get arrested next time because everyone does - our turn next.

It's going to happen, and it's, it's that decision that I think is funny. How were the police in handling you? Did you have to go limp?

Yeah, go limp, get dragged around. Some of the women used to get manhandled quite badly, but I mean we were lucky, it was a mass protest, all they wanted was to stick us in the van and get rid of us basically. And actually that's another interesting thing, because my, my day job when I'm not acting is tour guiding, and someone I know from tour guiding - she and her husband were police, and they were on duty at Greenham and I said 'God you must have hated us?' And she said 'No, we bloody loved you, the amount of overtime we got, we bought a house! (Laughs). And just really interesting to look at it from the other side. It was so bizarre.

So going back to being arrested, could you just talk a little bit about what that was like, your experience?

Yeah, it was really strange. Because there were so, so many of us getting dragged off it didn't feel as scary as if there had been one or two of us - it would have been 'Aaargh shit', but it was still quite alarming. I remember being sort of dragged off, put in the van, sitting in the van with a lot of people who had done it several times before, so I was with my friend Christine - and I think it was only me and Christine together and the other two were in a different van, and we got taken to the police station and processed. And then the thing is after that, you've got to decide what you're going to do, because you get a court date - now are you going to pay the fine, or are you going to go to prison? And Christine and I decided we were going to go to prison, and the other two decided to pay the fine. (Laughs). So going to court, it was like, I'd arranged everything with my ex, he was happy to look after the kids, we were pretty sure we'd get a week, because that was the standard amount, so it was all kind of - you have to plan for these things, so yeah we both wrote impassioned speeches about why nuclear weapons should not be on our soil, why we did what we did, and the magistrate, this woman, and she clearly had had to do this so many times, and she was 'I'm really sorry, you're going to have to go to prison for a week'. Whatever! And then suddenly it's like 'Oh shit, that's interesting'. And you spent the first 24 hours in a cell in the police station - I think it was Newbury, and I was in one - Christine was next door. And they take everything away from you, your shoes and your belts and whatever. But still Greenham women had managed to write on the walls, you know we could bang on the wall and hear each other just about, and then at the end of that day - I don't think we spent the night there - at the end of that day we were taken to Holloway. And that was 'Holy shit' that was just awful. I mean in some many ways we were both a bit worried that the other women in there would think we were idiots putting ourselves in there on purpose, even though it was only going to be for a few days - because they would have to let us out of the Friday because otherwise it would be over a weekend, and you know. So we knew that we weren't going to be in there for very long, but it's just, just dreadful what the women in there - they should never, ever, ever have been in prison, you know. I mean the first day we were in this holding cell - there were about six people altogether, and one of them was a woman called Christine, and I'll never forget that woman because she was in there for cheque card fraud - her husband's business had gone bankrupt and she'd done several thousand pounds of cheque card fraud because she was desperate, and fucked up, and depressed and she had kids. And she was just a really lovely person who should never, ever ever have been in that situation. I remember coming out and there was an article about her in The Sun calling her 'Evil', and you know there were scary people in there too - people that would normally be scary but they weren't, because they'd go 'Oh man, you're Greenham women, welcome - that's so cool'. Really nice.

Did they welcome you?

Really welcoming, totally getting it - totally, totally getting it you know. And there was one - I had a really strange time, because there was one woman there who was in for GBH, and half of her hair had been ripped out, and she was quite - sort of person that I would be really, genuinely scared of if I met them in the street - but she was bloody lovely! She said, she said to me 'Oh do you smoke dope?' I said I used to, and she went 'Here you are'. And I thought 'Oh my god, I've got drugs in a prison, I'm never going to get out of here!' And I put it under my pillow, 'Fuck, what did I do for that?' And then nothing happened for ages, so I ate it to get rid of it, so I was completely off my face! (Laughs). And then she said 'Have you still got it?' I said 'No, I ate it' and she rolled a joint, and I was kind of scare-der of her than I was of smoking a joint in prison! We were looking out the window smoking dope. And Greenham women would go outside the prison and do things like pop balloons, so all these helium balloons going off - very odd - stoned out of my head watching these helium balloons with this scary woman! (Laughs).

So wait, the Greenham Women were releasing balloons so you'd see them?

Yeah they were outside the prison - you could see them yeah, because they knew there were lots of us in there. It was lovely. But the whole process - when you get so dehumanising, obviously - just, so dehumanising. I mean I've heard it's a lot better in Holloway now - "better" - in inverted commas, but they would always take you for processing near C wing, I think - where the really scary people were kept. So you'd hear people banging on the doors and screaming, the doors are that thick and they're bulging - just the whole thing was just designed to intimidate you and really fuck you up before you got anywhere. So the first like, the first day in that cell was six, and then that evening we got our cell for the rest of the week. And I was with two other women, and I was on the top bunk, and there was one over there, and the woman on the bunk beneath me, she'd just had surgery for her kidneys, quite elderly - I thought at the time, black woman, and in the middle of the night she got really, really ill, and I was banging on the door trying to get someone - I thought she was going to die, and the other woman was saying 'Oh, they're not going to come, they're not going to come, you know there's not point - they don't give a shit', so I kept on banging on this bloody door, and eventually someone did come and she was taken away. Really ill. Just all these women - why's she in there? Nobody in there except for scary woman with half her hair missing had done anything violent, it's just desperation and yeah, just - I'm so glad I did it, because it gave me a real insight into what women go through in there. But I tell you what, getting out was amazing - I was high as a kite when we got out.

Not literally?

No, no, no, that was just on that one day! (Laughs).

(Laughs). So you went in on the Monday, got out of the Friday?

Yeah. Yeah. And I remember doing cartwheels down Holloway Road. They didn't let me and Christine out at the same time, which was a shame because I was standing outside the gates thinking 'I wonder if she's coming out today?' And I waited a little while, and literally did cartwheels down the road. It was so amazing to be out. And every time I go past that building it's just 'Oh god, there should never be anybody in there, it's just wrong - really wrong'.

So because you know, you said it was so amazing to get out - because I'm now thinking about the women who just kept going back, and in and out.

Oh god yeah, so brave.

Yeah.

(Checks a text message) Oh that's okay - some guy's looking for an older woman to be in his paid video, so I'll get back to him later. (Laughs).

Is it okay if you put it on silent?

Oh yeah, it's just a contact through Facebook.

I can't remember what I was going to say how - I was just thinking of the women who were going back and forth.

Yeah, and it makes me think of the Suffragettes who went through far worse than anyone from Greenham ever did - being force fed and you know, but it's part of that tradition. And just the courage of those women to keep going back and back and back. And just the pain, the commitment to doing it, to living there, to all the inconvenience, the cold and wet and damp, but the sisterhood - I know that sounds a bit happening - but the sisterhood and that thing of women doing something. And then amazing things would happen, like we were, I think we were at a different gate when this happened, but Peggy Seeger pitched up - you know the folk singer. And she went to every gate, and she'd written a song about Greenham called 'Carry Greenham Home', and she came and sang it to us and taught it to us.

I love that song.

Amazing.

I love Peggy Seeger.

And to be there when she came, and to meet her, to have her teach us her song, it was just amazing.

What gate were you at, then?

Blue, mostly.

Blue.

Yeah.

So that was. Your -

That was where we would go, because we knew some of the women there.

What was the feeling at Blue Gate? Did it have personality? What would that be?

It felt a lot more welcoming than some of the others. We tried different ones - we'd go to different ones sometimes. And Blue - it's just the one where we felt more at home, I think. It just felt welcoming. I think it was Yellow Gate we felt a bit - errr - we're just like day trippers. And there was a bit of that actually because the women who lived there were like 'What the fuck are you doing here?', you know, 'We live here'. And of-course if you went and stayed the night either you were in your sleeping bag or you were in one of their tents or benders or whatever, and they'd have to be wanting to welcome you in, and I think it was Yellow Gate where we felt a bit like we weren't proper Greenham women because we didn't live there. I mean that's fair enough, because there must be massive sacrifices and whatever, you know, but yeah we felt more at home at Blue. It was amazing, and that's the one where they've still got the gate there, when we went back.

Oh right, okay.

Yeah, I'll show you some pictures of it. So they've still got that - they've got the posts and the gate. And it's, there's people who have written on it in blue.

Oh wow.

That was really nice to see.

So when did you go back, sorry?

Last year.

It was last year.

Yeah. I think August / September time.

How does it compare to what it was like back then?

Oh my god, you would never recognise it, just to see - this land that was militarised that had guys in khaki with guns patrolling the fence, and we knew there were nuclear missiles in there. Now it's beautiful, common land, there were people walking the dogs, and just - just hummocks of heather or whatever just beautiful. And you could see the silos up on the right hand side, and whereas they would have had weapons, they - some of them are car storerooms currently for local car dealerships. It's like yeah, you know - it's amazing. It felt really really lovely, you know. 'Cause, it was like - yeah we did it, we did it. And I know people saying 'They were going to take them away anyway', well I don't think they were. I think if there hadn't been so much protest, and particularly the women who lived there all the time, you know, the determination - it was more hassle than it was worth. I don't think they would have got rid of them anyway - certainly not as soon. So I think the protests had a massive impact, I think it had a massive impact on our understanding that as women we can do stuff like that. (Someone enters room). Hi Mark - this is Alice!

Hi!

That's Mark. I think we all gained a real understanding that as women we had a strength and we can do stuff, and I've started to do stuff like I remember there was an arms dealer's conference. Oh god - how can anyone be an arms dealer? On Piccadilly, and loads of us went, and we stood on the other side of the road and there were these wealthy men, going in there and we were just standing there singing. I remember one time running like a banshee and just shrieking and oh, god, just feeling so angry. How dare you? How fucking dare you, you know? Our country is the second biggest arms dealer in the world now. It's - I just don't get it in any way shape or form. And there is an anger there too. At Greenham that anger was very much channelled into doing, and being creative - but I remember one day walking along by the fence in the woods, it was beautiful, a lovely woodland walk, and you could see the fence, and this war plane went overhead and I just fell on my knees, and I was just screaming, because why? (Laughs). You know. It's just a nonsense, the whole thing, really the whole thing, but there you go.

You said that that was channelled into creativity at Greenham as well, and I know a lot of the actions - as you said, the dressing up, and the kind of irony of the situation was definitely used as well.

Yeah.

Yeah. Um, being from like a theatre background, why do you think that something like Greenham encouraged so much creativity?

That's a really interesting question. I think it's partly the women who were there - some of them were from creative backgrounds. One of the women we used to travel down with quite often was a writer, and um, I assume there were probably women who were actors and artists and whatever there as well. Er, yeah. Er, that is actually a really good idea. I think there's something that happens when you get a group of women together for a physical end that's important to the, because if you look at the creativity in the placards for the anti-Trump protest, you know, 'Hear these Pussies Roar!' Like all that stuff comes out, and when one or two people start it, it encourages other people to do it, and it, and it spreads. And I just think creativity is a really powerful force - if you go and see an amazing play or an incredible film, it can change the way you think about the world. If you see a picture, if you read a book that moves you in some way - all that stuff can change the world. This is probably bollocks, but I kind of tend to think that women are more likely to be influenced like that, because we have a more - oh I don't know - that's not right - I was going to say open, but that's not right, because I know some women that are completely closed and channelled, but I just, I think we do tend to respond more on an emotional level that is not cut off from the intellectual understanding. I think sometimes, I really hate this generalisation - it isn't right to generalise, but I do think there's something in this that, that on the whole men have an intellectual level, and their emotion is not necessarily connected, whereas I think ours is more connected. And I have no idea if that's bollocks or not. I don't know, but it feels like that.

Yeah. It feels like that.

Yeah.

And it felt like that then?

Yeah, it really did. Because so much of what we did was creative. The witches was my biggest moment, I just thought that was fabulous. And, who has these ideas? We never knew who had the idea to do these things, like someone had the idea so we all did it. Um, you know, and the die-in - someone managed to get tickets and we went in and then did that, and again although that's been done before, it's still a creative

thing to do. The woman who went in and did teddy bear's picnic on top of the bunker, you know, that's fabulous! So it's like daring to do something a bit different, daring to use creativity to make a point, and also because it's nurturing for you, because if you're doing something that has an action inherently in it, you enjoy it as well, so you've got - you might have the fear of getting arrested or something, or whatever, but you have more courage because it's creative, it's fun. You know singing to the soldiers and being a witch and bouncing up and down on the fence was fun.

Yeah!

(Laughs). It was brilliant fun, it was wonderful.

And it just strikes me that the opposite of destroying is creativity. So it's that...

It's making.

Yeah, making from nothing - this horrible thing that has come and invaded that land of yours, and you're going...

So you're combatting something that, (bumps something) oh sorry darling, that's like that, you know - going round by creating something that combats in a non-confrontational way, if that makes sense.

No, absolutely. I was wondering what it feels like today to talk about your experiences at Greenham?

It's lovely actually, because you know a lot of people don't know about it, and I think people should know about it, because it's part of the women's movement, it's part of the peace movement and it's part of our history, actually. And it's not necessarily known. I'm always quite shocked when people have never heard of it at all, because I sort of assume that people do know about it, but feeling they don't. And it was something that I really learnt a lot about me, and what I'm prepared to do, you know - would I go to prison again for something I cared passionately about? Yeah, I probably would, I don't know what that would be quite - Brexit springs to mind! (Laughs).

Let's not go there...half the population.

Bastards! About how far you're prepared to go, and just about using creativity to make change in the world, I think that's important. Um, and it's just nice to talk to a young woman about it - you weren't around then, and it's passing on that heritage. I mean my daughter is a campaigner at Amnesty International.

Oh okay.

And I'm so round of the fact that she's gone down this route, and she cares passionately about all the things that I passionately care about, so it's also going down the generations. Yeah. And it's just nice to remember - they're really nice memories for me. Obviously being in prison wasn't the best memory in the world, but I mean I'm really pleased that I did it, and I kind of think when you're 14 you should get banged up in there for a day and the crime would drop! Because then you'd realise if you do that you're going to end up living like that - 'Oh my god, I'm not going to do that'. I don't know! (Laughs).

Oh well I was going to ask you a question, because we've got one question we're supposed to ask everyone just to get that nice uniformity. But you kind of answered it, because it's - could you explain why you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

Yeah, because it gives us the power to know we can change things, and you don't have to use - confront violence with violence, you can confront violence with creativity and passion and love, um, and you know I felt so much love for the other women I was doing these things with. And when Peggy Seeger came that was amazing - the love she was giving to us - love through music, love through dressing up as a bunch of witches and doing daft - things like bouncing on a fence, its like, and I think that's the legacy, that you can confront evil - because I do seriously believe that nuclear weapons are evil - with love? You know, that sounds a bit trite, but that's okay - it's kind of how it is. (Laughs).

(Laughs). It's good. And, I don't know - we've talked about so much, I feel like you could talk about Greenham, obviously, for days and days and years, but it's - is there a defining movement for you? Or best memory that you have of being there?

Best one was I think definitely the witches!

That's sticking in my mind as well.

That sticks in my mind because it was just hilarious, and seeing these poor little lads with their guns going 'What do we do?'

Was there a part of you though that goes 'Okay, I could maybe get shot', or was the whole thing...

No, I mean it is weird seeing people with guns, I mean when we see policemen with guns in central London and stuff, I find it really bloody weird. I mean they're supposed to make us feel safe, it doesn't make me feel safe. And certainly the sight of all these young guys with weapons who might just have thought that we were going to do what - run in and go 'Wooo' at them! (Laughs). Sing at them!

And you all just hiding in the woods - that would be scary enough for me!

(Laughs). And also I kind of think it was important that we did witches, because witches were women who were persecuted for being herbalists and midwives and whatever, so making it about witches was also 'Who are the witches, where do they come from? Maybe your great-great-grandmother was one! You know it's kind of important, also.

So because obviously - (a cat walks past) saying hello to your cats! When you would go back and forth, what were the conversations like with people who didn't, who hadn't seen Greenham for themselves, and they were just reading the news or seeing the news about Greenham. Were there any conversations you had with people that were of interest?

Um, I can't think of anything in particular, because everyone I knew was just incredibly supportive, and there always, nobody - because I was living in this little bubble of working in a Women's Centre, in a community centre, in an area where I mean, it would be like doing it in Walthamstow today - 97% of the population would be totally on your side. So I was living in my little activist bubble, I suppose.

So you were almost in a Greenham bubble even when you weren't at Greenham?

Yeah, because everyone was just behind it. And you know, some, I'm just trying to think - I can't think of any particular conversations.

Rather than conversations I just wondered if there was a feeling when you left, or you know - you've kind of answered it that you were almost living in Greenham still.

Yeah, that's true. Because even after I stopped going, you know, my marriage broke up, so I had to earn a living and look after the children, so couldn't really do it anymore, but it was still very much in my heart and in my mind, so that didn't stop, and I don't think it does. When you've been involved in something like that - like people who were at Woodstock or whatever, it's part of you. I was at the first ever Glastonbury as well, that's part of me.

Were you?

Nothing to do with protest, but I mean it was a big thing for me. I was 16. Helped build the first pyramid stage.

Wow!

So things that you do that are important - they just stay with you.

Did you, um, know when you first went that it would be such a big part of you?

No not a clue. I mean when we went down to Embrace the Base, we were going down for a day, that's what we were doing, but when you have that amazing experience it's like 'Oh my god'. You know, there's - we need to get back there. (Laughs).

Did you meet many people that you saw changes in, that were at Greenham, or was there anyone there that you remember meeting there?

I remember meeting a woman who was in her 70s, I mean I don't know how old she was, but really elderly, and chatting to her, and being so amazingly impressed that somebody who was clearly elderly had bothered to be there, and cared, and I don't remember what we talked about, but I really remember talking to her, and thinking that's brilliant, that's amazing, um, yeah. Nothing I can particularly think of.

It always strikes me as amazing, all these women who maybe would never have met, coming together for a common goal. I just think that's...

All sorts of women, all sorts of women. Gay, straight, you know old, young, with kids, without kids, you know - and not - I don't know, people involved in activism, people not normally involved in activism, just yeah it was a wonderful melting point of people. Of women. It was lovely.

Um, I wanted to ask you about revisiting Greenham, just a little bit more, because you mentioned that there was a peace garden that's there now.

Yeah, it's really lovely, I mean we knew there was one, but we had no clue where it was - it was kind of interesting trying to find it. It's really beautiful because they've got - it's just lovely because there's little groves of trees, and there's some information about the peace camp on the way in.

Oh, so there is...

Yeah, there's an information board on the way in, which is lovely and just talking about it a bit. But I think my favourite thing was the spiral with 'You can't kill the spirit' because that really was the Greenham song - 'You can't kill the spirit, she's like a mountain, old and strong, she goes on and on and on.' I don't know if you guys have got a copy of the Greenham song book, have you?

Yeah. Yeah, we've been researching, and we spent a day in the Women's Library, and there are a lot of great archives there like song books, photos, diaries, it's yeah it was really cool, and then we watched the film together - Carry Greenham Home, and there's a lot of songs. That song is in it as well.

Yeah it was just so nice to go back and see someone had valued what we'd done enough to build this beautiful garden, and it was right there - not far from the place where we were.

How does it compare now with er, with back then er, I guess how Greenham was seen - are we aware of that, or?

Well it's just a lovely place where people walk their dogs now, and it's just a lovely place where you can take your kids to play and you know, there's no weapons - it's just a beautiful area of common land. And there's a cafe I think in the - which we didn't actually get to. We wished we'd allow a bit more time.

You were with people you were in Greenham with?

Yeah, my friend Christine and Mary - when we were going to Greenham Mary was in her late 50s, which I thought was really old then (laughs)! Now its like hey, that's quite young. But now she is really getting on now, she doesn't walk far, so it's lovely that she came back. And other woman who I didn't know as well, but we used to travel with sometimes, and it was just so nice, so nice to be there, and to see the remains of Blue Gate, and I remember we were standing, and said 'So when we were arrested...oh that's where it was', and just going through it all in our heads, and had a picnic, it was lovely.

A picnic!

Yeah. (Laughs).

Not dressed up as...

Not dressed up as witches, no! (Laughs).

A normal picnic, a non-protest picnic. It's such, I mean it's nice to revisit things in your mind as well, but physically....

Yeah it was so nice, I mean we said we'd go again, we've got to go back again, because it was a really nice experience. So we might get back this year. (Laughs).

Um, oh I had something in my mind that I was going to ask you then, and I've completely forgotten what it was.

If you think of anything else, just phone me.

I will.

Or whatever.

Oh, I was going to ask you did you have any experiences with the media at the time when you were at Greenham?

Not directly, there was a picture in the Guardian of some of us cutting down the fence when we were cutting down the fence, but I don't think I even realised anyone was taking pictures. Um, no. Actually that's not quite true, because we did get in the local appear - the Paddington Times, there's a picture - the picture I've been searching for and can't find - of the four of us and a banner saying 'Paddington Greenham Women' that someone had made for us. And there's a little article about using the Paddington Times, which was nice.

So what was the Paddington Greenham Women?

It was just a group - well the areas we lived in was technically North Paddington, but you'd probably think it was Maida Vale, but not the posh end! (Laughs). The bit with the council estates, and we just all happened to come from there, and some of us worked at North Paddington Women's Centre, so that was the connection.

So it was you representing that area?

Yeah, and trying to encourage local women to come and be involved as well, because it was, I think doing things locally is really nice, because you can go and build a local base for something. That's one of the things that works well in Walthamstow - I'm thinking arts rather than politics now, but it's a very local place. I run a Facebook group called Walthamstow Photography, and I've got over three hundred members, and it's all people that live locally, so we do photos together and stuff. I think that works. Building a local base.

Yeah. How do you think - going back, that social media thing, because I'm thinking Greenham, I'm thinking women's marches and how they were organised - on Facebook and things like that, and I'm kind of imagining being at a time when there were no phones, or trying to!

(Laughs). There were no mobile phones, there was no social media, so how the hell did thirty thousand women end up going to Greenham that day? I have no idea.

That's what I was going to ask you!

I really don't know how that happened. Because it's amazing to think - for people who have grown up with mobile phones and social media, it must be such a weird idea that you can do anything in the world without it.

Yeah. Yeah.

Because now it's how you do stuff. I don't know how we did that.

It's just those large scale things that I find so deeply impressive.

Yeah, yeah.

To comprehend how that...

Networks of women's centres, you know rape crisis centres, and whatever, and everyone just phoning everyone else, but I don't know how that happened.

Yeah.

It was extraordinary. Actually Christine might know - she was the one who, I think I'm right, Christine was the one who got the North Paddington Women's Group together, I'm not sure - have to chat to her, she's in Norfolk at the moment, but I'll ask her. She might have some interesting stuff to say.

Just an amazing level of connection.

Yeah, totally. And it just took, didn't it - it was like one of those things, the moment is right for that thing. And it just took.

Yeah.