

Sue Say

So, um, can you tell me a little bit about how you first went to Greenham? How old you were, how you came to hear about it?

Okay, well, it's quite interesting - I was, I was brought up - I was adopted by people who brought me up in a little village in Surrey. And my father was a conscientious objector during the war, and my mum was a wren during the war. And so I was brought up with both the ethos of my mum thinking war is a necessary evil. And if it's done, it should be done by soldiers, sailors, army, not by nuclear weapons, and my dad being an absolute staunch pacifist who believed no war was ever justifiable. And so for him, it was no war - you don't pick up arms against another human being - he was very definitely a Christian, as was my mum. And that was sort of the ethos that I was brought up in which was that talking - you had to talk in the end of the day, so why not do that first instead of doing all this sort of killing? Um, so that's where I came from. I was, I was working in, in business - that's what I went into after after home. And I went into business and business studies. And I was working for a company, who were a brilliantly very good Swedish, politically, very good company, very positive about women's roles. And I got the job by being purely cheeky - waltzed in at 16, for a job that was for an 18 year old and said 'I can do this'. And they went 'Actually, you might be able to - we're going to send you to college first.' So they sort of sponsored me going to college, and I worked - training people, that's what I was doing. And we were going into businesses and telling them how to work better to achieve more profit. And we worked for Halfords. And during the process of working for Halfords, I looked at it and I could see very clearly what the problem was - men did not trust what women said. And so our advice to that company had to be take the women off the counters, and shove them into the back rooms in the offices, and I think it broke me. I think, that just made me feel so sick inside. Business wise, it was the most practical, logical, sensible - but in my head, I thought I can't do this. And I think that was the point at which I left that job. And I thought I can't do this - I can't keep sort of being part of the position of oppressing

women. I couldn't be involved in that. And I think that's what made me go, do you know, I just need a weekend - let me go and do something that's 'rooty'. And I went to Greenham for the weekend. (Laughs). That is what I did. And I went in the November when I was 18.

Okay, so I need to not be part of this business that's pressing women and I think I'll go to Greenham for the weekend. You know, that's that's still quite a big - how did you know about it?

How did I know about it? Well, obviously you know, being brought up in a family that believed that nuclear weapons were abhorrent, I'd already heard of Greenham and I'd already been part of the local CND group - I'd been part of doing things, writing letters, and it wasn't really me. I was an open your mouth and do something sort of girl, and I'd got sick of writing letters and having very sympathetic understanding letters coming back saying 'Yes, this might be the case but...' and I it just wasn't me, and I wanted to do something - I wanted to feel like I, I was actually connecting, and I thought, have a look at some of the things that were going on at that time. And Greenham was relatively close to my home. And I thought, just go and have a see what the women are doing there, just see, because it'd be something positive about women after being in such a negative environment, and I got there for the weekend, and I didn't leave.

Was it an organised trip was a...?

It was not! I got on a train, I bought a ticket, got on a train and hoped for the best.

Wow!

You know, that is what I did. And then I sort of tried to hitch from the station, which, you know, I learned very quickly doesn't happen. There wasn't - at that time, you know, I think I was there for about an hour and 40 minutes at the side of the road before I thought no, just just walk.

You've sort of got an idea of where you're going - follow the woods. And that's pretty much what I did.

One of the things I've talked about with my sister is the fact that all this went on before wickable fabrics. Like so you're headed off wearing whatever clothes you were wearing, and you didn't know you were staying the night?

No, no, I didn't take anything with me. I didn't take a sleeping bag. I didn't - because I really thought I was going for the day, you know, or just for the weekend, and I did sort of add a pair, had a spare pair of knickers but I didn't really care for much else. I had a little rucksack with a - you know, a pencil and a pen, and a couple of drinks and some food. And that was it.

And did you - what did you do - what happened that evening then? Did somebody find you - make your bender?

Well actually, there was already a bender there that belonged to a couple of German women who had gone away for the weekend. So I was invited to stay there. And that's what I did for the first two nights. And then after that, actually, funnily enough, there was an ambulance there that nobody was in, so I've moved into the ambulance. So that was quite good.

So was your address 'the ambulance'?

(Laughs). Yeah, in the clearing, in the clearing, Yellow Gate, as we called it - Main Gate, there's another political argument for you.

We'll come to that one. So when you - from your village, and then even from your circles and CND circles, was this still quite a extraordinary thing to do?

Um, well, let's put it this way, the CND group went up once a month with, with biscuits and cakes and jumpers and, you know, they they, they

took it very seriously - supporting the women that were there. And so most of the people that I knew weren't - they were a bit surprised that maybe I went for it. But they weren't surprised at you know - this was something that we had supported. So nobody was shocked. Nobody was thinking it was a bad thing to do. Because most people had actually been at one point or another - they did a sort of rota. And everybody went you know, once or once a month, somebody went taking anything, and taking requests, and then bringing them back the following month. So it wasn't something that was completely alien to anybody really.

And in all the time you knew of Greenham, did you only know it as a women only?

Um, no, I'd heard the history of how it started and I thought I can see why it was necessary for it to become women. And actually, if it hadn't of been all women, I don't think I would have gone. I think what I was looking for was to root myself back into the woman that I was - if that makes sense. And I was very young, very immature. I thought I knew the way the world worked. Er, no! (Laughs). So it was a bit of a shock, really - village life, village life, and very much so the Christian lifestyle back then. Everybody went to church. Everybody was involved in the Brownies. I was Brownies, Guides, Queen's Guides. That was, that was what everybody did. I played hockey, you know, we were part of the community, we worked very hard to sort of ensure that the older members of the community had their needs met, you know, you went to the shop, you just automatically asked them if they needed anything when you were going down the street, you just sort of asked, you know, and you sort of had your own little set of old ladies and old men that you'd just sort of supported, just naturally and that was the lifestyle. And I thought everywhere was like that, which was a bit of a shock. When I went to London, that was a hell of a shock. So you know, there was there was a sort of big gap between what I was used to, and then getting to Greenham was something else altogether.

But it was from village to Greenham, or village to London?

Village, to London, to Greenham. When I moved to work for the Swedish company, I was living in London at the time, and that was that was a big shock. A big, big shock. Policemen tell the truth you see in little villages, you know policemen don't just come out of nowhere and push you on the ground, or kick you, or hurt you. That's not what policemen did - policemen were there to make sure that you were okay. You know to deal with broken down cars, and one bike going missing when I was just a kid - just one - front page at the Woking Times! It was just right there Woking News and Mail - right there on the front cover. You know, a stolen bike! That was the kind of place I was brought up, and going to London was a shock, it was a shock - but it was good as well. There was a lot more of a mix of people, and it was - I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the sort of eye opening experience, but it was quick and hard and fast. I learnt quite quickly, police tell lies, police hurt people, you know, and I hadn't perceived that at all because our our local bobby used to come to our CND meetings (laughs) - he wasn't that kind of person at all. He was lovely. And I grew up thinking they were supposed to help you, you know, like...

So what was that first evening at Greenham like, then?

Um, a mixture of - well if I, if I explain when I arrived at Greenham, I arrived at what I thought was Main Gate. And that's where most women, I think, started off - because that's the sort of the the main entrance of the base. And I was quite determined when I got there, that one of the things I wanted to do was walk around the fence. So when I arrived, my first thing was to go to the fire wherever it was, and there were women around, and a few women spoke and said, 'Yeah, you know, you can stay there, if you want to stay overnight. That's not a problem', so I thought that's good. So I sort of put my bag in there. And then I decided I'm going to walk around this 9 mile fence. That's, that's that was my first job. And I literally set off from Main Gate - Yellow Gate, heading towards Green. And as you get to the corner, there's a big piece of concrete. And there was a woman sat on this piece of concrete talking to a soldier. And as I approached, I was just a bit - I wonder what she's saying. And I just stood there listening to her, and

this woman was telling this soldier, 'It's never too late. You have to recognise the abuse that you do. When I abused my children. I did this, this, this' and proceeded to talk about something incredibly personal, incredibly - made her very vulnerable, and she was trying to say to this guy 'It's not too late, you can change this, I've changed me, you need to change you.' And I just thought she was so brave, so brave to recognise her own failings, and to use them to try and help someone else to recognise theirs. And I think that that was the single most powerful moment for me when I got to Greenham, was thinking, what is she doing? She's insane. Why would you tell some, some, you know, complete stranger who's not on your side in any way, shape or form - why would you open your emotions like that? Why would you open your vulnerabilities like that? And he massively stood there and abused her. And she sat there so calmly and said, 'That's what I've just been telling you about.' I just thought, yeah, you have - that's a good point. And it I think it had so much more of an effect on me than it did him, because it made me see that there was another side to things really, it's always so easy to see when someone's doing something wrong, but to acknowledge yourself and what you are doing wrong, and to try and change it, no matter how bad it is - that this woman was saying, to me, doesn't matter how bad you've been, you can always change your life, you can always be different. You can always see what you're doing and stop it. And I found that quite powerful.

It's like a little snapshot of the whole Greenham thing, isn't it?

Yes.

This woman trying to persuade this part of this big machine to be different. And yeah, that vulnerability as well.

And I was I was quite, I was quite overwhelmed.

I am now.

And quite emotionally moved by this, because this woman I would class as one of my friends, and if somebody's said, you know, somebody who had been part of a - abusing someone would have been my friend, most people would have said 'No'. But it it was an eye opener that we do things in our life that we're not very proud of. And what we have to do is acknowledge that, and change it, and that anyone can do that. And I was, I was quite overwhelmed by that. And I think that, that was probably the catalyst for me staying, actually.

Did you make a it round the fence?

I did not. I did not. I met this woman. I talked with this woman, and we walked around to Green Gate, and it was way too cosmic for me! (Laughs). I found my way to Blue Gate, however, and that's as far as I got that day because of course, the pub was just down there. So off I went to the Rockabee, first day. I was invited by a woman that I met - Lesley, and she just said, 'Oh, I'm going to the Rockabee, come with me.' So I ended up going, because she played pool. We both loved hockey and so that was, that was, that was my first day at Greenham, was to, to walk as far as Blue Gate - so I got two whole gates (laughs)! To the pub, which was just perfect. So I spent a bit of time at Blue Gate - I'll be honest.

And for all the time that you stayed there, was that more or less your patch?

I would say Yellow Gate was my patch, or Main Gate as we used to call it. Main Gate. I loved the clearing, I loved being - the atmosphere I think, I think it's very difficult - for me I would look back, and I would say, each gate and area in a gate had a kind of feel to it. It had the kind of people - most people would start off at Yellow Gate - Main Gate, and they would disseminate to the gate that was more appropriate. I would say I spent very little time at any other gate other than Yellow Gate, however Orange and Blue. Yes, Orange because that was where there were children. And Blue because that was closest to the pub, is the truth.

So, so the, the both the things of the nuclear disarmament and the, and the being - the organising with women, would you say there were equal importance to you at the time?

I think when I went, when I went, it was more about the anti nuclear. But when I got there, I realised that this was going to be a bit of a journey for me, and exploring the idea of woman-ness, if that makes sense. I don't think that I went with that agenda. I went with the agenda of what the hell am I doing? I have just caused at least 3 / 4 women in one particular Halfords to lose their jobs, and several others at several other places to be shoved back into office like positions, and I couldn't kind of, kind of come to terms with that. So I'd gone with that in mind. I needed to be with women. And so it was perfect for me, and antinuclear - that was with women. However, when I got there, I suddenly realised that there were many shades of woman, which I hadn't really realised either. Coming from a very sort of Christian background, all the women were fantastic, and open, and warm, and loving, and caring - and they weren't angry, and opinionated, and independent, and strong and wilful (always). So that was a, that was a fantastic sort of explanation, because I was thought I was a bit out of place. Because whilst I was brought up in this very quiet, and gentle, and loving and supportive - my mouth would often not be quiet like that! My mouth was a little bit more loud, and clear and 'Hold on a minute.' You know, I asked the question - if I felt it, I asked it, whether it was appropriate or not. And down south I think definitely the desire to not ask the question is very much there . You're supposed to work things out by what's not said, and I wasn't very good at that. Because I'd see something I'd go 'Hold on a minute, you said it's really cruel or mean to do this, this..' and I would sort of vocalise that. And I was often in trouble as a youth for that one. And then suddenly, I was with a whole bunch of women who did exactly the same. And I felt sort of empowered really, because before I'd felt there was something wrong with that. Now some of the opinions and views I held and other women held were appalling. But the reality was, these were our opinions and views. They were being vocalised. They were being challenged, and they were being discussed. And I think that was what it

gave me an opportunity to do. It gave me a chance, an opportunity to vocalise and hear what other women, other ages, other experiences, other cultures, other races, other religions, all of that. And it gave you an opportunity to hear the world from their point of view. And that was very, very, very useful - as a young woman that gave me the opportunity. Ahh! That's why people there do.. Ahh! Okay, and that's fine. You know it, it was very, very helpful to understand that women were very, very different than just the group that I'd grown up with.

Looking back from now, when you think about that, just the fact that you could see and hear women doing all of the things. So holding all of the different views, and doing all of the physical work, you know, so that like, rather than this is what women do, and the fact that...

Mmm , from my childhood, and this is where it becomes a bit of a clash. You know, my mum was the wren, and my dad was the conscientious objector. My mum was gown up - my grandfather was in the First World War and he was hit with shrapnel, and he had epilepsy. And the shrapnel would move a little bit, and they were expecting him to die any minute, but he married me grandma. They were told he'd probably only live a matter of days or weeks. And he outlived her, and had 13 children. But he had to have a sort of, he was retired on to a sort of tenement farm - can't even say it now. So it was like he had a piece of land that he was given with a massive house on it. And he was told 'Just do some gardening'. Now he ran a dairy business. He sort of maintained some of the grass areas, and had tennis courts for the rich. But the majority of it was his milk round, and he made cheese and you know, sort of that was the sort of life they had. And me grandma, my mum did that, but they grew everything. They ate what they grew. So of course, my mum, she she plants in this village and so goes 'That's what you do'. And so the life that I lived was about animals, it was about growing our own food. It was about basically, if you didn't look after the plants, you didn't eat. And so it was - there was a lot of focus on working on the land. My father had a job, so he went and did the job. So of course, we were the ones who worked the land. So we were the farmers rather than the other way around. So I didn't really have that kind of stereotyped, if that

makes sense. I did in the sense of my father was very conventional, he was the one that made the rules. And did you know, and my mum was this sort of - managed him. (Laughs). She managed him. She showed me how you make a man think it's his idea. And that was just splendid to grow up watching that. My mum definitely was the one who - she'd go, you know, she'd plant the seed, let it go for a little bit. And then she'd point out that he had said, which he hadn't, you know, and it didn't take me very long as a child to work that out. I'd just go to my mum and say, 'I want this' and she would instil that idea, and my dad would come up with this fabulous idea that we were going to go swimming that day or, and it was, it was quite, it was quite funny to watch - because I always used to think well why can't she just say 'This is what we want to do', but that wasn't how their relationship was. And I found that quite interesting because there were - my other friends had very different setups, you know? So that was quite a useful thing to see. So when I went to Greenham, that wasn't - the doing thing really wasn't the problem for me.

But the, the different positions, the different political positions, so like, the, and the, and the having, having something to say and saying it - was that, was that, did that just feel like well, this is what it's meant to be?

For me, yes, for me, I thought that's who I was supposed to be. But I spent a lot of time being told to stop it. You know, as a child my mum used to say 'Can't you just!' (Laughs). That was the phrase 'Can't you just?', and I felt no, no I can't. That's how I feel - I need to say that. And I found it very difficult to hold that back. And I think that was a little unwieldy at times, and a little bit abrupt at times, and a little bit inappropriate at times. But that was pretty much who I was, I suppose. That was something I was. And then I went to Greenham and everyone was like that! That was great. That was like, oh, fabulous, because then I had somebody to expand. If you have an idea and a view, it's formed from your prejudices, your experiences, your history, and then to come and see somebody else's perspective and have someone go 'Oh no, because my dad did this to my mum, he hit my mum' - I was mortified, because the way I've been brought up that just you know, I think the

only incident when I was a kid, I can remember at 11 my mum and I squashing our faces up to the front window, watching the woman down the street launch her husband's clothing out of the window. It was just like (gasps), this is the most horrifying thing I'd ever seen. She was swearing, and telling him to leave. And it was just, oh, my goodness. And he was running around the front lawn picking up his shirts, and his shoes, and his you know. And that, to me was just like, oh, my goodness, you know, I'd never seen - it was all done behind closed doors, and it wasn't, it was right out in the open there. And I'd never seen that. So for me seeing that, and then hearing someone talking about her husband beating her, and her having to climb out the window to get away. You know, that was just like, you know, do people actually do that? I couldn't imagine. You know, because I'd never seen.

I met a lot of women at Greenham, who had a far more internationalist perspective on everything than I had yet come across. That I mean there was a Linton Kwesi Johnson song out at the time, about the imminent nuclear war, and believe it or not, a lot of people aren't bothered if it's imminent or not, because, you know - it was kind of expanding that view from the little old England being air strip one kind of a thing.

Yeah, yeah.

You know that was, that was, and the other thing was meeting loads of women who'd all been in prison, that was two of the things that I didn't expect. And that, but that I had no idea how to expect those things, but they really expanded my understanding of what women were doing.

Well, for me, for me, it was obvious I was never going to go to jail. I was only going - I was never going to jail, because criminals are there. You know, that was one of the things that I was very clear on. If I get fine for something, I'm going to pay it because I'm not... And there was a big debate about that. And it was very interesting for me to hear other women's perspectives - it was like 'But you're just playing into the system. If you pay it, you're kind of almost encouraging them to just

continue because they're getting money from you. So there's no, there's no harm to them that way.' And I was thinking, I'm not going to jail with all those complete, freaky people who kill people and murder people, because that's what people in jail do. Because from my perspective, living in this little village, that's what people were. And actually, the way I ended up going to prison was, was on remand for something that I didn't do. (Laughs). And so it was, and the very afternoon that I'd said in the morning, 'I'm not going to jail'. So it was quite funny when we were on our way to jail. I was going, I said, 'I'm telling you, I'm not going to jail'. And I absolutely had no choice, you know, which was just, you know, but I'll tell you about that. Do you want me to tell you?

Yeah. May as well.

They did a hideous thing. And they were making us very, very cold by coming and putting out fires with fire extinguishers, and they passed a bylaw, that you couldn't have any fires there. And we were cold, that's the truth of it, we were cold. And this particular day, they'd come along, they'd squirt it - but they didn't just put the fire out, they used to squirt the mud. It would, you'd be soaking - you'd be covered in mud, and of course, you've got no fire then to dry. It was a, an attempt from them to to undermine us to such an extent that we would go away. That was what it was for. We weren't going to go away. It was just going to be really unpleasant for us. And that was going to be the end conclusion. But what actually happened this day, was I had an outstanding charge, and I was going to go to jail anyway, I just decided, okay, I'll go tomorrow - because this is what we used to do - go and hand yourself in. Now, on this particular occasion, they'd soaked us, and there was a big debate going on, and this was the debate - somebody thrown some water at one of the police, and the argument around Main Gate that day was is this violence? We were going 'No, it's not'. And they're going 'Yes, it is. It's violence.' So that was the debate that was going on. But you know, me, I don't think so. I don't think so. So, this is, with that in mind, this is what happened. My friend, friend Lesley, and I decided, no, we're fed up with being wet, why shouldn't they be wet? So we got a washing up bowl. Now, lots of people didn't understand. It's vegetarian. We're not

having meat here. But people used to send tins of meat stew, and oxtail soup and you know, all that sort of stuff, you know, it's sitting there rotting in a can, we might just as well empty into a washing up bowl mightn't we. So we emptied all that, and there was some half tins of beans that nobody was going to eat because got mud in them. So we put that in the washing up water and everything else. And then Lesley then I built the biggest fire you've ever seen in the clearing. And so there's this big fire, and me and Lesley each end of the washing up bowl going 'Yeah, we'll have them off this time'. So other women were going 'Yeah! We got a fire.' So there they came down from Main Gate with their fire extinguishers, with this woman taking the lead, and they squirted all the fire, and they tried to squirt women. And as soon as that fire went out, Lesley and I stepped out - woop! The whole lot.

Spaghetti in there and everything there was. Now, I've seen it once, there is a shot of a policewoman with one of those flat hats, with a piece of spaghetti going you know, with a mouth wide open - with this piece of spaghetti hanging down like that. Now for me, I would say to this day, hand on heart that was one of the best actions I've ever done. It made me feel so much better. But anyway, she was soaking, Lesley and I crying laughing everybody, else crying laughing. These police 'Ooh, you bitches.' Off they came with the extinguishers, chasing us through the through - there was one woman, what was she called? Arleen from America - ah, she was fabulous, Arleen, and she was there absolutely like this while they were squirting - with her hands up going 'Under here, don't forget under here!' She was hilarious, she got the soap out and everything. She's like this - 'Come on!' The police are trying to squirt us down to really miff us off. But we're following them then, we're going 'Oh, look at all that beef stew, officer', and they're getting really fuming. So they go up to the gate, and they're due to be taken off shift in 5 minutes. And then the other ones are there, and they're like, no lads, it's still the 5 minutes - they left them. They sat there fuming, these police. So they moved just to the right of Main Gate, where there was another piece of concrete, they're standing there. And everyone said 'Look, all the fire extinguishers are just inside the gate, and they've left the gate open'. So I said 'Okay, I will go into the middle of this group. I'll be the sort of distraction. And you lot can go and get the fire extinguishers'.

And so I went into the middle of these, these sort of four or five police officers and they're all standing facing each other. And I went into the middle and I'm like, 'Ooh, that smells a bit like beef stew'. And he's just sort of staring at me, because their fire extinguishers are empty now. So they can't do anything. So this was a sort of thing. So I'm going into the middle of them going 'Oh dear, you're going to get in trouble for that uniform, aren't you?' And I'm doing all of that. They're all focusing on me, and you can feel the fury from them. Girls grab the fire extinguishers. And the police ran like a pack of girls. They did, it was brilliant. You know, that kind of thing that they always accuse us of - they were like that (adopts high pitched voice) 'Oh, no!', and they're running, they're hiding behind the police vans. Well, everybody's got a fire extinguisher now, so we are squirting those police down. Because they've done it to us so often. We've got the fire extinguishers, now. It was all out war with these things, it was. And it was a release of tension. It had been so tense and stressed, and everyone was getting angry, and we were bickering as a group. And that was actually the bit of relief that we needed. And so everybody's chasing around with these fire extinguishers, and we were, we were laughing. The police were hysterical behind the gate - the ones that was supposed to be taking over. These police are now soaking, so we're delighted - they're soaking with beef stew, and we've soaked them down with the water. And then out of nowhere, came officer 1087, and he just - to say he full on rugby tackled one of these women with a fire extinguisher, he took her off her feet, smashed her into the gate about four foot up on the gate. She slid down, completely unconscious - another woman went to kind of get round - Lesley, in-fact - went to get round to protect her. And as this policeman came in with his boot, I'm going 'Officer 1087, don't you think you've overreacted?' He turned round and goes 'You're fucking nicked.' So that was me done. But he didn't then attack her, but as he went towards her, Lesley sort of put her foot out to protect, so she got arrested for assault. And we all got thrown in the back of the van. There were about five of us, I think, that got arrested that night. We were taken to, to the police cells. The police in the police station were fantastic. They left us cells spoken - we were walking backwards and forwards, but we hadn't seen Stella. Now we're going 'Stella, where are

you? Stella, where are you?' She was unconscious. And they'd left her unconscious in the van. Now if it hadn't been for the grooves down the back of the van - she'd thrown up and everything -she'd have been dead. So we were quite lucky in that way. Well, anyway, they carried her in, she was semi conscious. So they put her down as refusing to give her name. So they arrested her for that. So, anyway, the end conclusion was we all had a really good night in the police cells, laughing - they let us out. They said, 'Look, if you let us take your photos, we'll give you some fresh air', and we said 'You let us have the fresh air first, and then you can take our photos', 'Okay'. So they let us have our fresh air, so we let them take the photos. We thought, okay, no problem. So we go up in court, the next morning, I walk up to the, into the dock and they go, you know, I can't even remember what name I was using at the time. But you know, it was - 'She's accused of throwing excreta and urine at the police.' And I'm like, 'What? What?', and the judge said 'Take her down.' And they remanded me for 7 days. And I'm going 'It was beef stew!' And he's going 'Contempt.' So I got done for contempt for saying 'It's beef stew. (Laughs). It was beef stew'. But so yes, I was remanded for 7 days for that. And then, and then charged for the damage to the, the police uniforms, which actually when it came to court, I did not get done for any - they tried to go for compensation to replace their uniforms. And the judge awarded them £37 for cleaning of five uniforms, which I refused to pay. So I went back to jail. (Laughs).

So that's, that worked well - deciding that you weren't going to jail, then?

Not! Really not! But I mean, I was terrified. I was terrified. I thought jail was for real criminals. And you know, the first time - there's another story for that one, when I first went to prison. When I first got there, went into a dorm, the night before a pair of scissors had gone missing. And there was this woman in the cell with really long arms, and all the other Greenham women shot over to the other side, because she was saying 'Oh, I hate Scousers, you know me boyfriend was a Scouser, so I stabbed him to death.' So Lesley, who is pure Scouser went over to that side of the room . Stella went over to that side of the room, and muggins gets the bed underneath hers. And I spent all night with my back

against the wall, watching - forcing my eyes to stay open, watching for this crazed lunatic woman whose arm was going to come round and slice me with this pair of scissors. Right? In the morning. She was like, 'Oh, I'm hungry.' 'Here, have my breakfast!' You know, it was it was it was everything. It really was. As it happened, as it happened. She was having a laugh at our expense. Actually, what she'd done is she'd walked down the street, seen one of those rails of leather jackets and thought, oh, it's not pegged down to the ground and wheeled it around the corner, and there was a policeman there and she got caught. So no, she hadn't murdered her Scouse boyfriend at all. But it woke me up. She was - she'd stolen denim clothes. The woman opposite me had stolen a pint of flaming milk off somebody's doorstep. She was hungry. She had no, nothing and she nicked a pint of milk. She'd been there 8 months on remand, and it was such an - and the woman over this side was an addict. And it was just like, what in the hell? I expected these to be crazed lunatic women. And I'd gone in with that in mind and realised there were women just like me, they were women just like the women at Greenham. And they were just women. And they had had a lot of unfortunate things happen around them. And one of them was in because the police were shaking her down to try and get her boyfriend to admit to a crime that he'd committed. And it, it didn't take me very long to realise that I'd had this illusion that these crazed women who killed people would be the ones in jail. There wasn't - I think there was only one person I met in jail who I thought belonged there, you know, maybe two.

And it was almost all about poverty?

Yeah.

And they almost all have...

Poverty or addiction.

Yeah. And abusive relationships.

Yeah. Yeah. And the things that they'd done to get away from them, or to get out of them. And I think that that was an eye opener as well, because I really thought jail was for bad folks, and it so wasn't. And actually the bad people in there were mostly the screws. And I watched the way that they treated women, the way that they would use, you know, 24 hour lockup we were on when we were first there, and I'd you know, and they were taking us from one area in the prison to another, to another, to another, and it was just hideous. They were just being awful. And we just set about causing as much trouble in there as possible. We, we stopped the searches from happening. But that was more because we were all in a line and the screw was sort of doing the thing, and you have to put your hands up and all this, they were doing that. And one of our crew basically put her hands right over her head - didn't touch her, and you know, this screw freaked out completely and thought, oh my goodness. So she carries on and does the next person, but this particular woman went down the line and went to the end again - went 'Me, me me me!' That was the last time they did searches when we went round through the prison. But there was a lot of stuff that we did, like they, they the way that they would oppress women was just horrible. They would put them on the ward with all those with the mental health problems, and frighten people. They put me on a deportation wing - I woke up with a whole load of women around my bed shaking it, you know, and this was because we weren't doing what what the authorities were telling us, so they were putting us in dangerous situations - they were prepared to do that. But actually, you know, it was a lot less dangerous, you know, for us because we would - people would tell us about things that were happening and we'd take it on as an issue. You know, it's like we organised a hunger strike, a rooftop protest. There's so many things that we did. We had a singing protest, where I was told 'Stop singing, stop singing.' So we started singing 'You can forbid nearly anything, but you can't forgive me to sing.' It just sort of - for them that was a bit of a shocker, I think. Having to manage women who didn't care about their authority. 'Going to work? No, I don't think so. I'm not working, why would I work for you?' You know, we were awkward. We were difficult. We made it hard for them. But that in turn made it easier for the other prisoners, because they were focusing on us instead of

them. And I think that we did quite a bit of good in there some times with that, because we didn't care.

But there's a lot of radical potential to laughing at things together, and being able, like you said, to say 'We're going to treat this as what it is, which is a political issue and not victimisation of this woman, this woman, this woman.

Yes. I think we used our humour, and we used our creativity to draw attention to issues in a slightly non conventional way. (Laughs). I think that's probably the fairest way of putting it. Like I said, you know, hunger strike, rooftop protests, singing - continuously singing really takes it out on you, but it really irritated them, which was good for me.

Which prison was it?

Holloway. (Laughs). Holloway. I spent a lot of time in Holloway.

How many times did you end up going because of Greenham?

Six or seven. Six or seven. Probably eight or nine. I'm not entirely sure. I'd have to, I'd have to stop and think about which ones. The, the, there were so many. There were so many. Because once you do the first one, I wasn't frightened anymore. I wasn't frightened of what I'd find there anymore. I was more concerned about the way that people were being treated than I was about being there. If that makes sense. So if it didn't stop me doing actions, it didn't stop me doing things. I would just do something else.

Did they ever split the women up so that you couldn't get up to these shenanigans?

Oh, yeah, but I mean, you can split up - they'd obviously split lots of women up, a lot of the time. But that didn't matter, because they split you up - you're not supposed to shout or anything else, but we'd be like, 'Oooooohhhh' out the windows, and sort of shouting people across

corridors, and we broke all the rules like that - none of us particularly cared. We would ask people 'Is somebody okay?' And women were pretty good in prison, they would pass messages round to check where people were. So there was a hell of a network there that we walked into, really. So we used to use their network to make sure that women were okay. Particularly if somebody had been hurt when we'd been arrested and nobody'd seen them. Then we'd ask around, and people used their network to find out who was who was okay. And they would pass it around and make sure you knew. So that was a good thing.

How were your mum the wren, and your dad the consc-y coping with all this?

Well, they came to visit me, and that's how they found out I was in prison. They actually - which was quite funny, because I didn't have any warning. I wasn't intending to go to prison. They were just going to come and visit me - make sure I'd got you know sort of towels and you know, my mum used to be one for towels. 'Bring a towel - a towel is always useful', you know, and they were, they were really useful, you know, as well as sanitary towels, and as well as sort of, you know, drinks and my mum would always bring me those sorts of things as well as the stuff that she'd bring - jumpers, you know, that sort of stuff. Well they'd rocked up for their their usual visit. And somebody - my mum had sort of said, 'Oh, where's Sue?' And somebody said 'Oh, they're in prison.' (Laughs). And mum was a bit like, what the hell? Because that's not something that she'd really thought about. And she rocked up to Holloway, and that's how I found out she'd known - I thought oh perhaps I'll be out by the time she comes to visit. But actually, she'd no - I didn't get away with it. But she, she came to visit which was a bit unusual as well. She'd never been to prison to visit anyone in her life. My dad had, because he used to be, he used to work a lot in different charities, and one of the charities was people - political prisoners. And so for my dad he was, was, was very proud actually, very proud that I was doing what I felt was right no matter where that led me, so there was never an issue - they ere just a bit shocked that I hadn't let them

know. But you know, as they found out I didn't really get a chance to let them know.

It wasn't on the time table?

No. So no, but that was that was how they found out that I was in prison - was that they rocked up at the gate, and someone said 'Oh, they're in prison.' Just very casually, (laughs) which was quite entertaining in itself.

Did you find the - like you were saying the police in the police station in Newbury were, were alright - did you find...

Hit and miss...

Contradictory relationships?

Hit and miss. Sometimes you would get there, and there'd be - if you were doing a sort of group action, or there were several of you - for them it's easier if they can leave the gates open, and the toilets - they don't have to serve you then, they can just sort of leave it open and you can mix quite freely. And lots of them at the police station were really good. They would just leave you to it, but you get the occasional one. I mean, there was one who we drove absolutely mental - she just flipped. This was - this woman who just kept trying to take our photograph. There was an eviction, there was a main eviction. And we were all taken to the racecourse to be held, because there were too many of us to be held at the police station. And they put us where there was a bar, what did they expect? There was no alcohol there, but it was a bar. It was set up as a bar, so of-course somebody flipped over and started trying to serve water to all the women. The police really cross about that. And then, you know, we were saying how stuffy it was. So they opened the windows, what were you playing at? What did they expect women to do? Now, of course, straightaway, we can see a window open, and we're thinking do you know, this has got to be an escape, hasn't it? It's got to be. So you can imagine, here we are at Newbury racecourse, within 15

minutes they put 25 of us in a room, what do you think's going to happen? So within you know, literally off went people out through the windows - we were running around, the police following and casing us round - we're going up and down the humps, round past the rails where they they do the racing, we were running up and down. We had these police absolutely going mental. But it was it was one of the funniest - I couldn't run for laughing. It was just so funny, because they were getting so uptight and so cross. In the end, I ran back and climbed back through the window (laughs). It was just so funny the way that they'd done it, because they were so slow and so stupid, really. And you can see we were messing about, no one was making a real escape. They could have just stood there and say 'Look, stop it women', and probably we would have stopped, but because they chased us in the way that they chased us - because one or two of them were furious. Well furious policemen is just lovely for a Greenham woman, isn't it? Because you just...

It's like have they never been around toddlers? Just..

Like we were, yes, that's what we were doing. We were winding up the parents and we did beautifully that day. They were just so, so cross.

And so wind-able!

Yeah, well, this one particular police woman was was chasing me for quite a while. And she was fast, but I was a hockey player, and I was quite fast. And so I would run, and she would chase me and then she would slow down. So I would stop, and I'd let her catch up a bit, and then I would run off again, and that really annoyed her for some reason. You know, and of course, she showed it me. Well, the more annoyed, of course, I'm going to keep doing it. And so I'd say 'Okay, I'm waiting.' And she'd get you know, sort of 10 feet off, and off I'd go again. She just - up, up she went again. It was very, very funny for me. For me, it was very entertaining to watch the colour she went alone. But anyway, that was that was that. So she, she was, she was very, very irritated. So by the time we actually got to Newbury to the police station, she was

blazing. And, you know, one thing led to another, and we ended up getting released. We got released on our own reconnaissance, but they took a photograph of us as we were leaving. And so the woman that I was with - Stella, when we did this action - we went up to the counter, and we went 'No, we want our photographs back, you have no right to take our photograph, we want our photographs back'. And so we're standing there arguing for the photographs, and then they shut the shutter down. So Stella, put a finger on the bell. Oh, and I'm flipping the light switch on and off and on and off, so these police they pull the shutter back up, and he gets a ruler, and it's one of those old school bells, ding, ding, ding ding, and it's on the far wall opposite, and Stella's like this. They had the little counters with the sort of, sort of four inch gap, you know, like they have to keep you from attacking them. They had that. So he got a ruler, this this policeman, he got a ruler and he's swinging it past. And just as he swings it past, she picks her finger up, and puts it straight back on the bell. Yeah. And it was like this. (Laughs). With this ruler sliding, her finger going up and down, I'm flipping the lights on and off. You've got a policeman stood on a filing cabinet reaching up, and all you can hear is 'Ow, ow, ow', as he's trying to disconnect this bell! (Laughs). So it wasn't working very well for them. It was great for us, and all we kept going is 'We want our photographs back' and he's going like this, and this, this going on 'Ow, ow'. And then suddenly the door opens at the side of me - I'm grabbed and we were yanked back in, so we got arrested again. But we got arrested for violence in a police station because that was the charge that they did - I'm flipping lights on and off and she's doing this. Well we'd already been released. So we already had our charge papers on. And so, we go into this room and they, they start and they sit there and they say 'Right empty your pockets', so you have to empty all your pockets. So we emptied our pockets, and this policewoman, we're thinking oh, you sucker. She's standing there, and she's stuffing everything in the bag. Yeah, and she's stuffing everything in the bag and she puts the seal on, she puts the seal on. And then she comes over and she notices that we'd both got things around our necks. She takes this one off Stella and she just gets this key and she threads it down and sticks the cord that was on right in the bag, and she goes

'Come and sign', 'Haven't checked that, we're not signing that'. So she had to rip - she's going 'Get them to the cells'. And we're going to the sergeant, 'Excuse me, Sergeant. She hasn't let me check my property. You know, so I don't have to sign anything, do I?' So he's like 'No, let her check her property', so this woman rips this bag open, and she goes through all of the stuff. So she's gone through all of mine and she's written everything down and I'm going 'Oh, you've forgotten this', and she's put that on the list. And then she's going through Stella's, and she's going through the list. And she goes, 'Right come and sign', 'I'm not signing. I want my bloody photograph back.' (Laughs). This is like - she's got to write down. 'Little bit of tissue'. 'You've forgotten the bit of thread there. You have marked down this,' you know, making her add...

Pocket fluff!

Yeah. Pocket fluff. She's making her add it all, and then as soon as she got to the end of it, she put the seal on, she went 'Right, sign for your property'. 'No, I want my photograph', that was it! These huge policemen come in, grabs hold of Stella, drags her in, and she was like, 'Are you going to sign yours?' and I'm going 'I want my photograph'. So often we - you know, the pair of us thrown in the cell. Well, just as we'd left, we've been going 'We want to go the toilet', but I swear to god, she would not let us go to the toilet. We were ringing on the bell all night. They turned the bell off and everything. In the morning, somebody else obviously hadn't been told don't let them out to go to the toilet, so she - they opened the door and let us go to the toilet, and we were locked back in. And then this police woman comes down, and she, she - you hear her putting the breakfast down - you hear it. And then she walked off. Maybe about 40 minutes, 50 minutes later she comes back down, opens the thing. 'Here's your breakfast'. Dead smiley. 'There's your tea'. Well I drank my tea and as I got to the end something went against my lip. I turn it and it was all her nail clippings. She put her nail clippings in it. But she'd left the breakfast - I didn't touch mine. But Stella forced hers in - you could pick up the paper plate and turn it over and nothing moved. It was that kind, it had been left there that long, congealed to the plate. But Stella forced in every single bit. This

woman comes down to the door and she opens the thing and she goes 'Did you eat breakfast?' and Stella goes (gasps) 'Cold egg and bacon, my favourite!' And this woman went 'Aaaaarrrrggh', she actually screamed and shot off. You know that point at which you just think that is the moment - and that for me was the moment, was driving her to that point of actually screaming. I didn't know we could do that to another human being - it was quite bad. But it was, she was trying her hardest to get us. And I think Stella forcing that cold breakfast in was the final straw for her, because she'd wanted to get us well and truly. And of course it wasn't very effective.

And she didn't know you'd had a wee?

No. No, she was, she was absolutely determined to make it hell. But it was only a few that made it hell. There were a few really, and when they used to have big actions they used to bring in police from all over the place, and some of them were good and some of them were bad. I would say most of them were bad. You know, most of them were bad. Lots of them had worked on the picket lines and were ready for that kind of aggro, and they went in with that in mind. You know some of them would sort of pick you up when you were in your Gore-tex sleeping bags and throw you, kick you, punch you, you know there were a lot of quite nasty stuff that went on with the police there.

Do you remember mostly like we've had a good laugh about do you? Do you mostly, is that what stays is the good stuff?

The thing, you see, the thing is the bad stuff was often the good stuff in a lot of ways - I know that probably sounds a bit bizarre. But I think I learned so much from the negative things, I learnt to look at things slightly differently. I learned that the challenge is keeping control. And I think for every time we, we made the police lose control, we took a little bit more of our own power back. Um, we would always be making a point with it, we would always be pursuing the goal - which was to, to make an much of a nuisance of ourselves as possible, cost them as much money as possible. I mean, like for one, for example, one, one

particular incident - there were a fair few women that were inside the base. They'd gone in, um , everybody had got in however they got in. And, but that particular night, the convoy had gone out. And it was just all I can say to you, is it was just luck. But we were asked how we got in. And the story was, 'Well, we were on the, A, whatever it was, and we saw this big truck and we put our hands out and, you know, it stopped and we got on it, and we said, oh, we're going to Greenham, and he went, I'm going there - hop in. So we hopped onto this, this truck, and they brought us into the base.' Now it was the - just a story. But it just so happened that the convoy had gone out that night while we've snuck into the base. So we didn't know. And it had gone along that road coming back in. Now, Stella was the Piccadilly Radio correspondent. And she phoned them up and she said, 'Do me a favour. I was arrested last night in the base, asked me what I told the police.' And so on Radio - live, they asked her how she got in the base, and she said, 'I was on the A...And this is what happened. And that's what I told the police.' Well, well, that started something else there. They had to send someone over from America to investigate it. It cost them millions, because they had to investigate it. They dragged women over the base and said 'No, take it back. Take it back. You didn't, did you?' 'Oh yeah, we did!' I mean, they tried everything to persuade women to make a statement that said 'We snuck into the base, we cut into the base', and nobody would. Everybody stuck to the same story - it cost them millions, because they had to have the Americans come over, because it's American personnel that were involved in the moving of cruise missiles that night, you know, the practice run. And so they had to come over and investigate whether, in-fact, their soldiers had stopped and picked up hitchhikers. You know, so that's one of the sort of things that, that went really well for us because it caused as much chaos. That's what we were there for.

It also gets to the point about what's really going on as well. Like, you know, Russian trained specialist women. Yeah, obviously. We'd all done the Russian training.

Well, yeah, obviously. Otherwise, how would we get in on top of the silos?

It wasn't just hockey that made you such a good runner?

Yeah. Yeah. But what gets to me is the fact that they weren't even aware. You're telling us that you've got nuclear weapons here, and we - a load of amateur women are strolling all over your base. We had a woman camping there for about 7 days. What the hell? If this was really, you know, if this is the level of security that they have these nuclear weapons under, frankly I don't want them in our country for that, never mind for anything else. You know, we were not - we learned quite quickly from other women - I'd never, I'd had a fair amount of actual training because I used to play hockey at Aldershot. And so we used the army, army base there, and we were, you know, training for hockey. So I'd had a lot of good training prior to it, but I had never - I'd never, you know, we had to work out that if the soldiers go that way, and then it takes them another 3 minutes to get back, we've got 3 minutes to get across there. Not that difficult, not that difficult. And we were in and out of the base at such a regular, regular thing. There was so many different types of actions that were taken. There were actions where we went in to cause chaos, there were actions where we climbed up things, changed flags on flag poles, we did so many different types of things to make a nuisance of ourselves. I mean, I had a one particularly nasty experience with an American military man who handcuffed my wrists the wrong way round, who was trying to drag me all over the place and, and he pointed a gun to the back of my head when I was on the ground, and 'I'm going to shoot you'. And this was just after we'd been told we'd be shot and I thought, well, if I'm the first, I'm the first. But as it happened, we ended up with a British military of defence police coming over and saying 'You know, that's one of my citizens - unhand her.' Which was brilliant - I thought oh good. I shall use this prejudice that they have between each other, because you've got to remember back then, British soldiers were in tents and in the mud, and American servicemen were in houses that had been built for them. And so it was kind of like, you know, your visitors in your own country really was causing tension between the two of them. And we definitely used that. We were like, 'Oh, you know, these, these - who do they think they are?'

You come and arrest me'. 'So take those handcuffs off her', you know, it was this sort of thing. And then they didn't have enough, um, they didn't have enough transportation. So they took their transportation as well, which was quite good. So there's lots and lots of sort of things that happened, where we would use the, in, in a sort of politics of the Americans were treated better than the British on a British base. That is always going to be somewhere where you can use, use your, your power, and we used to use that - we used to say, 'Oh, you know, we want the British. No, we don't want you, you don't have any authority over us. They do.' I mean, as if they had, but it was it was, it was something that we used to cause that division, and it used, they used to love it. The British police used to absolutely - the base police used to love getting one over on the Americans, especially when they could take their vehicles from them or something like that, which they did often. That's good.

So there was, I mean, things like learning the procedures of being - when you were arrested, and itemising your belongings, and all those kinds of things, those things you learned?

I learned those - the very first time, I said quite clearly round the - we were actually having some breakfast, and I said 'Oh, no, I'm not going to prison. I'm not going to get arrested, I'm going to do - you know, I'll get arrested, but I'm not going to go to prison'. And, you know, the discussion occurred amongst different women saying 'You know that that isn't. That isn't right, because you're just paying them. That's why you're here, then if you're just going to conform.' I hadn't really thought about that. I just thought, I'm not going to jail with all those crazy lunatics who kill people. So I hadn't really thought through the politics of that. And then before I had any chance to do any kind of actual, sort of action that I was in control of, a situation presented itself - which was we were fed up being wet. And we thought it'd be nice if they were wet for a change, and that's what we did, and then 'boomf', I'm in jail the next day. So I learned about being taken into custody, and going through the you know, the, the prison humiliation of being, you know, putting your arms up, being stripped off with people sitting typing in an office right

next to you, and all you've got is one little curtain that they pull across, and they made you do star jumps and all sorts of things, and then bend over and look up your bum. It was the most horrendous thing I'd ever been through. I just didn't realise that's what they did, and as for what they made you wear, that was just criminal - criminal. These nighties with little, tiny little flowers on them, and pink knickers, and oh please, it was awful. It was just abusive. (Laughs).

But the the, the kind of strategy of like, you know, like using, using the rivalry between the British military police and the, and the Americans, where did that arise from? Did that just kind of...

I think what I learned...

It feels like it all happened kind of organically?

I think it did. I think what women realised when they were there, or certainly I realised when I was there, was the potential of protest. There are hundreds of different ways of doing it. And I learned very quickly from listening to other women, some women lived at Greenham - that was their protest. They never broke into the base. They never did this, they never did that, because this was their protest. Other women wanted to be more active. Other women wanted to be like camp voice, you know, they were good with, with the politics. They were good with the news reporters, they were good with - you know, that element, whereas other ones of us just wanted to make a flaming nuisance of ourselves. And that's what I wanted, I wanted to make a nuisance of myself, but I wanted to be creative about it. I didn't want to do the same old thing. I wanted to find something a little bit more annoying. I think.

It was very creative, wasn't it?

Yes.

Yes! And I think that's what I learned, was that you could use your imagination. And you could use it by sparking off - you'd start talking to

women say 'Oh, it'd be great if we could do this'. And then somebody would go 'Oh, but if we did that, we should do this with it'. And before you knew it, you were off doing it. Because that's what happened. You didn't have these, these sorts of discussions and let's do that action 4 years time. No, it's like, 'Come on, let's go!' You know, the times that I crawled through the woods, and crawled right round, and sort of heading towards Yellow Gate, literally big, big sort of through the woods, things so they would not see us approaching the fence. And then we'd have - there were certain characters. (Laughs). There was, there was a certain 'character', shall we say, and I absolutely love her to pieces. But she was not the person who took on an action with you. Just because she'd miss it. She wouldn't really realise what was going on. She'd go 'Oooohhhheeruugh', and you'd crawl for hours quietly. And she'd go, (loudly) 'Where are you women?' (Laughs), you're like 'Aaaarrgh!' I've just spent two hours crawling through the mud for nothing now. So there was, there was sort of some real characters at camp. There were some people who were very vulnerable at camp. And there were some issues that came up, that were interesting to explore. And we had a woman called Metal Carol, who - every part of her body had bits of metal stuck through it. She had an affinity with metal. She just had an affinity with metal. It was a bizarre one. But if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it. She had no infections from any of the holes in her face. She had none. You know, how the hell does anybody do that? But she had a thing about metal. She really did. Yes, she had mental health problems also. Yes, she did. But there was a big debate at one point about her legitimacy for being there. Mostly because she went naked to Newbury train station and tried to get on a train. I think the problem was that she didn't have a fare, rather than the fact that she had no clothes on. But the point is that, then that became a 'Well, we've got to', you know, and women were very uncomfortable about looking at the idea of 'Hold on a minute, who do you think you are to decide who can be at camp and who can't?' And there was a, then there, there became meetings and discussions about things that actually were nobody's god damn business, there was public meetings about people's relationships, there were, and it was, it was good in the sense of it was good to see where people thought the lines were, you know, where

people thought the line of what was a camp. You know, it was agreed that it was vegetarian. So therefore there was no meat eating. Okay, that's fine. But then, what other rules are there? There weren't. You were women. That was the other rule. You were women. And we were here to fight against nuclear weapons. And so that was the rules. It didn't mean you had to, you know, and non violently. Those were the rules. And then suddenly, it was like, 'Well, you know, that person's got mental health.' 'Well, haven't we all? Haven't we all got stresses, haven't we all got strains, and we all got our own things going on? At what point do you think that you as a woman have a right to throw that woman off because she has problems?' And I think that that was an eye opener for me as well. It was like exploring the fact that actually you don't, you don't.

Do you think that with those small number of rules, that all of that negotiation, and you know, that we don't - there isn't a leader, there isn't a boss here - do you think it mostly worked or didn't work?

I think, hhhmmm. I think - looking back at it, I think there were some people who believed that they were leaders. And that was okay. Because the rest of us thought you - you enjoy that. You enjoy that, if that's if that's what you want, you enjoy that. But I think that they were good spokeswomen. And I think that that was more, you know what it was about, rather than being leaders. I think they were leaders in their own right - as women, but that didn't mean that we were followers, if that makes sense? I think they were good at being the spokeswomen. They were good at being the person who was out there. And often, often being the straight, and straight Christian, white, and politically capable of speaking, made it easier for the world to hear the cause. Rather than hear some of the women at camp - I think possibly wouldn't have made as good as speakers, in that way. I think they would have often given the viewpoint of the majority of us, but I don't think they'd have done it in a way that other people were prepared to listen to at that time. So I was really good for the leaders, because I was happy about having the leaders, because they were the ones that dealt with the boring press and dealt with the boring, you know, sort of reports, and we

could get on with the business of developing ourselves as women, and being as awkward as we could in our in our demonstrations.

So as long as they expressed what was happening well enough to the press, then you let them get on with it?

I think there was a need for that, there was a need for the story to be told. I wasn't ready to tell it. I didn't want to tell it, and I don't think most most women did. But the women that did tell that story, told it on behalf of everyone else, and sometimes there was - there were clashes with that sometimes.

And then back in the camp, like you say, what, what's the line between...?

I think we explored the line, we explored the line to the fullest. I think that I was most mortified at a meeting that I went to at Yellow Gate, where they were discussing a woman's relationship. Because she had entered into a non-monogamous relationship. And it was upsetting one of the people involved. And so they decided to, to bring this up as a you know, not the women involved - other women, and I found that absolutely fascinating. I think I just thought, what the heck? That's none of your business, or mine. And I, you know, my view at that time was 'Uh-uh-uh', that's not my business. That's about three women entering into a relationship that is their business, and I was very clear on that for me. But there were meetings about people who shouldn't be at camp, there were meetings about a lot of things that perhaps I looked at, and I thought, no, I don't think so. I think the only meeting that had any validity was money meetings, and the money meetings went depending on who, who was, who was running them, they went well or badly. (Laughs). I would say that I loved certain people being at the money meetings, because they would stretch out the hand of love and recognise that some women needed different things, other than boots to make them happy. And I think that, that, that was helpful. If you'd like me to be more specific than that, I would probably say, at the money meeting that I enjoyed the most, was when I actually got a pair of boots

that I desperately needed. I also got two bars of chocolate that I really wanted. Um, other women pooled together and went and got a weed, and that was really appreciated because we'd had a really hard time, and it was cold, and it was wet, and we were all depressed, and other women were really quite happy to go and get a bottle of booze, or go to the pub, and some of us wanted a weed. That's the truth of it. And that's what - we did a run. And there was awful trouble the next day about that money meeting. (Laughs). Because all these things were spent, and you know, when we say there wasn't a hierarchy, there were a lot of people who believed that they were part of that hierarchy. And they would come and tell us 'That's not a valid thing', but we'd already got our weed. We'd got our chocolate, I'd got my boots. We didn't care.

So was there an idea that this might bring the whole thing into disrepute?

I think that was the whole idea, that we should be, you know, we should be worrying about how people would expect us to spend the money that they're giving. Well, for us, we thought - you know, we're the ones living in the dirt here. We're the ones living in the cold here. And if we don't want a bottle of beer, and we want something else instead - like a bar of chocolate, then so be it, you know, it was it was lovely. It was like Linda McCartney came, right? And she came with chocolates, and wine, and sweets - and she brought all the lovely things, the things that people didn't - people were really practical, and that was lovely. It was lovely to see those tins of beans rolling in month after month. It was lovely. But really frankly, I wanted a bar a chocolate! I did - you're sitting in the dirt, you're cold, you're wet. You know, this is not a lifestyle that you'd go 'Yeah, this is great'. So a bar of chocolate was so appreciated. And I'm not saying that the beans, and the bread, and the you know, and I mean goodness sake we had, we had miners bringing us coal, which was just fantastic. You know, something as practical as coal was so needed. But Linda McCartney with her booze, and her chocolates, and her guitar was much better for me. But for other women, maybe something different and I think that's the point. Every woman there was different, their needs were different. The way that they managed being in

Greenham was different. Some people would manage it by staying for 2 weeks, going away for a couple of days, and coming back. Some people would manage it by staying for months on it, some people would manage it by doing a demo every day, and going backwards and forwards to jail and to prison. And, you know, everybody dealt with things in a different way. I had phases of when I seemed to be living in the police station, and phases when I wasn't, you know, you, you, you sometimes need a bit of a break, a bit of a step back. But that didn't mean you wanted to leave Greenham, it just meant, actually, I'd like to leave my clothes on one more day. You know, it's like I was part of the prosecution, which Stella took against the Ministry of Defence police, where we got it through court. They tried to offer us money. They tried to offer us bribes to walk away from that case. But we evidenced that they had done strip searching on a regular basis. They were prosecuted, they were found guilty of it, and forced to pay compensation. And as a result, it opened up the Ministry of Defence - it's the police for immigration, deportation, it's all of those prison service - searching people going in, it all became illegal, they couldn't do it anymore. And that was, I think, was one of the most, the biggest things that came out after Greenham. After the days when we were actually living there, was that case - that stopped them from being able to do that. They were strip searching us for, come on, who's gonna stick a spray can up there, it's not going to happen, but they were doing it to humiliate us. And we, as a result took a case against them which, you know, we won, and so that that precedent was set. And so strip searching is not allowed to be done in the way it was. Now fortunately for us, one of the police officers who we worked very well with, and had a good relationship with - Ministry of Defence police, moved her job. And she made a statement for us before she went, she went to America. And she wrote a statement, signed statement for the solicitor before she went, evidencing, and she was prepared to come to court. And so therefore, they had to cave - they, the the judge advised them twice, 'Settle this, settle this, because I'm not gonna be able to find in your favour.' They were trying to say a personal search wasn't a strip search. Because a personal search, they just took all your clothes off. You know, whereas a strip search, you just take all your clothes off, but

there are two different things - apparently. (Laughs) Well they're not anymore - under the law they're the same thing now. And that's, that was quite significant.

So in terms of legacy, that is a really practical thing...

Yeah. In terms of, in terms of what came out of Greenham that will be there forever more changed, is the way that the Ministry of Defence, and immigration, and police officers treat, and sorry - prison officers treat human beings when entering and leaving their facilities. They now have to be a damn sight more careful than they ever used to have to be. They used to search quite regularly. There's been loads of cases that have spun off from that - once we won ours, then a whole load of cases - particularly prisons, there's, there's a few prisons that had a bit of a wake up call as a result of that, that precedent being set.

And some solidarity from the woman police officer.

Oh, yeah, that was just fantastic. But she was brilliant. She'd always have a laugh, she'd go 'Have you done it?' We'd go 'Yeah', or she'd say to 'Did you do this?' and we'd go 'No', and she'd say 'Let them go'. Because she knew we'd never deny what we'd actually done. But we used to get in, and so many people got in and they'd say 'Oh, we found spray cans' and all this, and we haven't gone into do any damage - we'd gone in without causing damage. And we were doing things to be a nuisance. Like going on the runway, or you know, when the planes would do it, we do all sorts of nuisance things, but not actually commit any damage, because it's very hard for them to get you for trespass. And that's what we used to do. And in this particular case, we'd get arrested, and they'd go around, find something and say 'Oh, they've done this.' And this particular MOD plod she was, because she was the boss, she used to come and say 'Have you done it?' We'd go 'No', and she'd go 'Let them go.' And you know, because she knew - we'd go 'Oh yeah, well, actually. Yeah, we did'. Or 'No, we didn't', and she'd say 'Right okay, you're not being prosecuted, off you go', and she used to release us an awful lot of times because we'd get collared for stuff that

we didn't do a lot of the time. And the onus is on them to catch you. But once they've caught you, at least charge you for the right crime and, and that they just palm you off with any anything and everything, which was quite, you know, I had a, I had a couple of absolutely spectacular cases. One of them was - I was trying again to get arrested, that was my goal. And I'd gone - I'm trying to think - Red Gate, Red Gate, I don't know why I went to Red Gate, but went to Red Gate because there was no way for them to get out. And so I was going to commit criminal damage, and they'd have to drive around to get me, so I'd get a lot done. And what happened was we just started snipping away the fence, and spray paint spraying anything. And they were sort of - you've got to imagine, and it was, it was about 8 foot by 15 foot concrete block. Then there were rolls of razor wire, and then barbed wire at the front, then the fence and then another fence, and we're this side - and they're on this block. Okay, that's what you've got to remember. They're on this block with a great big - one of those big search lights. And they went 'Identify them!', because we're cutting away this fence. And this woman goes 'It's the big fat nigger from Main Gate', right and everything went silent. Now the women who'd been at Red Gate, who up until that point, were thinking why have you come to our gate - why are you disturbing us? As soon as they heard that every woman there came over, and everybody was just stood there, and she's going she's shining this light, and I'm just gonna snip, snip, and all you can hear - there was not a word, all you could hear was 'Ssssssss' from this spray can, as we were doing this. And these - this, this man's going 'Get them, get them', and she's going 'Yeah, go on. We know who it is, it's that nigger', you know, this was her. They then proceeded to drive round and swoop us off, which was quite funny, because they put me in the car next to the driver, and then he went to go and get Stella, and I'm looking at this seat and I'm thinking (laughs) that seems a bit stupid - you've left that running! (Laughs). I wonder if I can learn to drive? So I sort of knew how to drive, but I hadn't got a driving, I hadn't passed a driving test. So I slid into this, of-course you do, don't you - so I've got the policeman running after me down the street, and I'm driving around in a big tight circle, because I don't know what I'm doing. (Laughs). So eventually, he sort of dived into the car and sort of, and I just let go of everything, because he's

going 'Stop!' So I put my foot on the brake. And he's sort of you know, so that went down quite badly. But anyway, when the case came to court, we decided to defend ourselves - now that particular day Stella was, was somewhere, and she said 'I'll meet you somewhere. Do us a favour, bring me a weed.' 'Why yeah, no problem.' So we get this weed. It was some rocky - I got some rocky, and it's in my pocket. And we're in the court and she said - we'd gone to somebody's house, but they'd had a big row, so we had to leave there. So we just wandered around the streets - now didn't think about it. So we're in the dock, and she said 'You didn't bring that stuff, did you?' 'Oh, crap, yeah, I did! Yeah I did!' She's like 'Ah, shit now what we're going to do? and I'm like 'Well I can't eat it, there's no way', she went 'I'll eat an Opal Fruit, I'll like eat an Opal Fruit, and you pass me it in the wrapper'. So she went like this with an Opal Fruit, and the court usher came over, and the policeman, and she went 'Oh, I've got ever such a sore throat, I've got some Opal Fruits. Is that alright?' And the magistrate went 'Yes, that's fine'. (Laughs). So she, she passes me this thing, and so the case starts we're defending ourselves. And the first, the first guy gets up on, and he says 'Oh, there was a box there, it was about two foot by five foot and I was stood on it.' And we thought this was a bit weird. And then the next policeman comes up and he goes, 'Oh, it was about 15 foot by three foot.' So we're thinking, oh, yeah, we're going to have fun here, the idiots. So we're asking questions we're going 'And exactly what size was the box that you were stood on?' 'Oh, it was this size now'. 'Oh, this magical, mysterious box seems to be changing size', you know. So anyway, the policewoman comes up, and she's there and it's like, 'Oh, did you while you were there, here, you know, on this magical box that keeps changing size, did you hear the words big fat nigger from Main Gate?', and all you heard in the court was (gasps) because you can say it blatantly like that. So, so and she went 'No', and this police woman went scarlet. You know that you know when you see the red rising? We're going 'Are you sure you didn't hear the words big fat nigger from Main Gate?' She was going (breathes heavily) 'No, no, no', and she's going absolutely red, and whole courts going on (gasps). So anyway it was then 'Are you sure, as it was approximately 3 inches from your very own ear?' And she was like, 'No, no no'. So she was absolutely denying

wholeheartedly that she'd said it, but everybody in the court knew she had because she was absolutely scarlet. And so anyway, the magistrate pauses and he says 'I'm going to pause this case in a minute' you know, we were chatting away - sorry, just as we were sort of saying to her But the mouth that said, you know, big fat nigger from Main Gate was approximately 4 inches from your very own ear.' I passed Stella the Opal Fruit. She doesn't think about it, opens it puts it straight in. I'm laughing me, because I bought a flaming teenth. So she's put a whole teenth in her mouth now. No it was an eighth. So she's put an eighth in her mouth. She's like (through gritted teeth) 'The size of this!' I'm like 'It was you or me, you asked for it.' So she's chomping away. So you've got to bear this in mind. So this, this magistrate then says, 'Right, I'm going to adjourn for 15 minutes', you know, and we thought there's a good chance now because of this magical mysterious box, we've got them looking like liars - it's going to be quite difficult. And then we realised, we don't want to get out anyway, the whole idea was to get arrested for something else in order to do our previous one. But anyway, regardless of that, we come back in after the adjournment. Well, she's smashed off her head now, absolutely stoned off her head. So I'm carrying on asking the rest of the questions - we've done really quite well. And the judge turns around and he says 'I'm awarding you, you know,', he says to Stella 'Oh, you don't look very well. You know, perhaps you'd better - I will adjourn your case for another day.' And she's like 'No, no, no, I'm her witness. She's mine. So no, we will do it now.' So it comes to sentencing and you will have 28 days, and you will have 14 days. So she's only getting 14 and I'm getting 28 for the same thing. So I'm like what, Stella? 'Course she's in control now. She does the speech of a lifetime, you know that - rights, human rights equality and all of that. And 'I demand' she says, 'To have 28 days like her' and I'm like 'No! You're supposed to argue for me to have 14 days', but no, she got 14 and I got 28 that was what happened in the end. Yeah, but that was that was yeah our own fault really.

So when the - that was a great story! (Laughs).

(Laughs). It was, it was a magnificent speech. I'm telling you. You know one of them when I thought - if she'd have come out with the 14, I reckon I'd have got it. If she had swapped it around.

So it did actually come out magnificently?

Oh, no, it was truly magnificent up to that last line. 'I demand to have 28 days as well'. No! You're supposed to demand for me to have the 14 - and we'd have been laughing, I reckon we'd have got it. But no, no, she got that one wrong right at the end. But the rest of the speech was brilliant.

So in terms of the, that, that example of racism was that - was the like, was it, was in the camp as well? Was there a lot of...

I would say that there were incidents of people being very unaware. I'd had quite a big lesson in how it works, because I was the only black person for a very, very long time in, in Halsall. But then it changed, and it got very multicultural. And I saw when more people came, then I saw the racism. I didn't see it before then - you don't see it when you're the only one, but when there's a sudden influx, which is what there was, as people saw it - what it was was a deal with the local council next door. You've got a whole load of houses, you put all these Asian people in those houses, and we'll get them out of the place where we want to build our, our sort of industrial centre. And that's what they did - and they had the jobs, and we had the Asian people, and Woking took off because that, they were hoping for this sort of centre to be built in Woking. It was impractical for it to be built in in Woking anyway, and where it was built was the perfect place. But people don't see that, they just saw back then the unemployment was so bad, it was what was needed. And so an influx of Asian people for everybody else was a bit of a horror - for me it was fantastic. It was this. this opening up of a new culture. And it was right on my doorstep. And people weren't looking at me as if I was some, you know, alien from Mars. So for me, it was a, it was brilliant. It was brilliant, it, it brought to me the different smells and sensations, the foods, that tastes, the clothes, it was a sudden sort of

revolutionary sort of example of culture for me. And I really enjoyed that, because I'd just been around white people entirely, you know, I was adopted by white people. And so that was, that was my life I was just around white people - so to suddenly not be was quite good for me. So going to Greenham, I wasn't really expecting to ever see it at all, but I did see it a lot from the police. Less so from women, less so - but it was there. There were a few incidents that I think I couldn't put down to anything else. Which is sad because it's the last thing that I think of, I think that people are usually put off by my gob, never mind anything else. (Laughs). So, you know, and that's fine. I'll take responsibility for that. I'm not really used to people looking at me from a distance and judging me - no, just wait til I come speak to you - you'll have plenty of opportunity for that! (Laughs).

When the - I don't know what, so it seems to me that there was - a moment where women doing things together became um, not exactly normal, but, but women acting, organising collectively was much more common.

Yes, yes.

And then, and then it stopped or it dwindled away. I don't know if that's your experience?

What Greenham?

Well, Greenham and, and the wider ramifications.

Okay, well, I'd definitely say that's true. Yeah, definitely. That's true in both in both senses. For me, for me, and I think everybody has their own Greenham story. For me the end of Greenham, for me, was I'd been on, I've been on quite a lot of restrictions from camp. Because I'd been in one action after another after another, and it was getting to the point where I was going to end up with quite a long sentence. Because they, they only take you for so long before you get really annoying. So, I was wanting to have a little bit of a calm down time before I got me

whacking sentence. And I got excluded from Greenham for a while - I got exclusion. And during that we were doing the case of trying to take the case against the police. And we went to Greenham to do some filming with a film crew that had been supporting us through through some of this, who basically wanted to be there when the Ministry of Defence got their comeuppance for what they've been doing. And we went to Greenham that day. Now this was when the Wages for Housework campaign, as far as I'm concerned, took over Greenham, and started to try and make rules that were never in a place, and tried to undervalue and undermine everything - as far as I'm concerned, that was woman. And they did so very effectively. They went around telling women what they were and what, how they weren't good enough. And they'd done, they did exactly what men were doing in society to women, and I was quite revolted by the whole organisation. I loved the idea of what they were doing. Um, but there was a woman who was wandering around who basically came up to me and said, 'Wilmet Brown tells me that you're basically you're not black enough to make comments on things', and it was just like - having a white woman come up to me and tell me I'm not black enough entertained me no end. I found that very amusing, because I thought, one, you know, by definition, this is none of your business, and what are you doing being told by some woman to go and tell other people - what the hell kind of setup is this? Greenham was about women exploring, and expressing, and being themselves, and coming together to unite under one banner. We're all very different women doing it a different way. What the banner was about honesty, the banner was about truthfulness, the banner was about openness. It was about warmth and caring, and working together and solidarity - not about what that, that campaign brought, which was segregation, and a deep sense of superiority that was so not deserved. And I looked at it and I was quite mortified. And I think the changing moment for me was a woman who was opposed to something that they were doing was actually refused the right to have a standpipe to get her water, and that was the point that Greenham had died for me - that a woman stood there right in front of me and said 'Oh, we don't give them the standpipe. They're not entitled to the water.' I reached my hand out for the standpipe, she gave it to me and I walked and gave it to that woman,

and she kicked off me for giving that woman the water. And I just thought Greenham is dead. Greenham is dead if you are refusing a woman water - what is wrong with you? Wages for Housework, people who are oppressed, people who are - who are working for nothing 24/7, are actually standing there refusing another woman water. What the hell? That was Greenham dead for me. That was not, not what Greenham was while I was there. That was not what Greenham was when I was living there. Greenham was about women supporting, and loving, and caring, and sharing and being awful about things - sharing things they shouldn't, commenting on things that they shouldn't. And learning, learning those lines - learning those, those, the way to do things - learning about from other women, what you say means to them. You know, seeing it from somebody else's perspective. And suddenly, the times I went in going 'No, 'cause this' and I'd come away going 'Actually, she's right'. It was, it was a learning curve for women. But these women were telling and controlling other women, and I just thought, how can you be allowed? And then I thought, of course you can, because people have given up on Greenham - because they must have done for you to be here. You know, that's, that was the end of Greenham.

Were there rules about who was not allowed anymore? Or was it...

As far as I was concerned, there was never any rules about who was not allowed. The only people that were not allowed were men.

But had they - did they kind of make it up on the hoof?

I don't know. I think they just were a group of controlling women, who got onto a political kick, and decided to wave their little flag. I think they had no validity at all at Greenham, they had no right to be there when they were depriving other women of the basic need of water - that was just - there was standpipes everywhere. Everybody had a standpipe, if you didn't have it, you'd go 'Where's the standpipe?' 'Oh, it's over there'. Somebody's get it for you. You'd go and help women with their water. They'd load it up - some people had cars to take them it around to you

know, sort of the gates the other side, but, you know, lots of people came to Yellow Gate for water for their gates - they would bring tubs and containers. It isn't anybody right to say 'No', we, we sorted it so we could have the standpipe to get the water in the first place. Who are you telling women you can't have that? That's a basic human right. What are you going to do - tell them they can't poo in the trees as well? It's like what the hell? That just was, was the death of Greenham for me was allowing Wages for Housework to go anywhere near. I don't know why women didn't kick off when they first arrived - I don't understand. I was on exclusions at the time when that happened, because I would have been going 'Who the hell do you think you are, depriving a woman of water? That's a basic need.' I had loads of arguments with people, people would disagree with me, we would have quite heated debates about things. And then we'd go 'Oh, someone needs water. Okay.', and everybody started - off you go together to provide those women with water and you just, you know, you'd be opposed to everything they stand for - doesn't matter. You don't deprive a woman of water, food or Tampax or anything. And that was, yeah, that killed it for me.

I mean, when I was asking earlier about seeing women doing all the things, I wasn't meaning exactly in terms of like, what amount of a masculine role and a feminine role, I was meaning more, because whatever there was to be done, including being an absolute horror.

Yeah.

All the roles.

Yes.

So, you know, so everything you know there being absolute pain in the arse, being magnificent.

Yes.

All, all everything was women.

Yes, yes, it was.

And so, you know it kind of it just made it - you went whoah! All of these things are possible then.

Yes.

Which I suppose includes coming along and doing what they did?

Yeah, yeah. And I think that - I'd never seen it before, because there were lots of women with different issues, as well as the nuclear. Lots of women came with knowledge that perhaps I didn't have, or understandings that I didn't have. And I learned a lot from sharing experiences. I learned a lot from listening to women's songs. I found that you know, there was a lot of creativity there. There were a lot of - there was a lot of poetry, there was a lot of songs being written. There was a lot of participation with women. Women were encouraged to explore their own identities. They were encouraged to explore their sexuality. They were encouraged to explore their, their political identity. And their, (sighs) their understanding of what being woman was. Because for me, I would not - I would, I was fighting for the right for women to be whatever they wanted to be. But if that's what a woman wanted to sit at home and be with her husband producing babies and not - then that's fine, as long as women who don't want to do that don't have to. And that was for me, the biggest issue was about women being able to be themselves, and be true to themselves. And for me, the fundamentals are that care and understanding between women that there always is, when you're walking along the street at night and you see a woman you hurry, she slows and you end up walking together. That is natural. That is something that you will not know that woman she will not know you, but you're walking at night and that's safer. And women automatically have those things, and I think Greenham showed me the extent to which that would go. Women would lay their life down for you. And you realise that that's what it was about. This was about

making a difference. And if you're going to make a difference, you're all in. You can't be partway in. And I think that that ,when I went with my, 'I'm not going to prison' thing, I think I went a little bit half hearted. And I think it took me very little time to find that that's not how it works, and that you have to put your whole heart and soul into it. And I loved it. I loved it. I loved the excitement of sneaking around in the bushes. I loved the stimulation of sitting there around the campfire, listening to women talk about their experiences, which was so far different from mine. You know, there were women from very, very poor backgrounds who had had horrendous situations while growing up. There were children who'd been beaten by their fathers, or their husbands or there were people who had beaten their children, or they were - you know, there were women of such a variety there, women with emotional damage, women with suffering women, you know, and women who were on fire, who were there in the centre of their woman-ness, and ready to share it, and ready to show you that there was another way - even if it wasn't for you, showing you another way kind of opens up that narrow perspective that we have. That is our own life. (Laughs).

What do you think happened to all that, then?

I, I'd like to think that like myself, I took it away and aimed it somewhere else. I think that I don't, I don't feel like, I don't feel that I left Greenham at the wrong time. I feel that I left when women were loving each other, and caring for each other, and being furious with each other, and being angry with each other, and being positively awkward at sometimes, because that's what women are. But I, I left at a time when that was still in existence. It was that coming back after those exclusion, those months of exclusion to see how far away my home had become - that it wasn't anymore. And I think maybe that that's what I needed because they closed the door on Greenham for me - Wages for Housework, killed it, killed it, it wasn't like that - it was full of love and care, and sharing and giving and compassion and passion. And they turned it into some political tool. And they were using it to put other women down, but that wasn't what Greenham was about - Greenham was about supporting other women to be themselves, and helping them to achieve that inner

them. And that was what it was about, and they turned it into a political tool. I don't think I can say any...

Some of that went out, that good stuff went out, you think, from everyone who had experienced it?

I think some people got quite beaten by that. But lots of people walked away, because they couldn't tolerate that ruining of something so important, that smashing of that beautiful picture that we all painted. And I think that that was, was very sad. And when I walked away from that, I walked into other campaigns, but I walked into the anti strip searching, and I walked into things that were slightly related - in South Africa house, and, you know, and then the (inaudible) Monday's campaign, and then Faslane, and then Burton Wood, and then, and then and then - I was a political creature. And I think Greenham gave me the confidence to, to be woman - to be who I was, and recognise that that's not always going to be the same as someone else. And actually, I might have to slow it on down and have a look at the women around me, and try and support them in who they are. And I think that it taught me some really good fundamental skills that I then went and applied in other areas of my life.

Do you think that Greenham women are misrepresented?

Now, that's always a difficult question to answer. I was going to say no. And yes! Because that is the answer. Some women were the 'dirty, scruffy lesbian pot smoking hippie junkies', you know? No, they weren't. But this was the image that was portrayed. Were they pot smoking? Yes. Were they lesbian? Yes.

Wooly hats!

Say again.

Wooly hatted lesbians.

Yes. And there were lots of, of straight women and lots of you know, there were lots of different women, but people went to type - so they were all women, therefore they've all got to be lesbians. Was that true? No, it wasn't. I would say, I would say probably half to three quarters were lesbian. But I wouldn't say more than that. I really wouldn't. You know, I was thinking back to some of the some of the friends that I had there, you know, at Yellow Gate - about 11 or 12 straight women I can think of straightaway. You know, the lesbians - probably 20 of them, that I can think of straight away - so not, do you see what I mean, not this massive sort of, you know, they're all lesbians was a bit over the top. Were we all woolly hatted? I tend not to wear a wooly hat, I had lots of hair so I didn't bother with the hat. Did people wear hats? Do you know, hardly anyone did! (Laughs). So maybe misrepresented with the woody bobble hat thing. I think that was more visitors than that was women that lived there. I think most women that lived there had their own styles, their own images their own anything's. And...

Is it your experience, do you think that straight women and lesbian women used to do things more together?

God yeah.

And now they don't?

Yes, I think that's definitely true. I do think that's true. I think that, I think that when you have a political issue, women tend not to worry too much about the sexuality of those around them. Whereas I think now, it's far more prevalent - people do and, and I've seen a division with people. I find that quite frightening because I have, I have more straight friends than I have gay friends. That's because of the life that I live. I tend to be around a lot of women with children because I've run play schemes. I've run, and I work with children, and most of the sort of political action that I've done over the years has been because I have my own children. I started a self insemination group in Manchester - called Ness Work, which was also referred to by Olga Maitland in Parliament, she waved my leaflet around going 'Sodomy, sodomy this

is', because the Ness Work group were calling for people who wanted to have babies but she's going 'Sodomy!' - it's all quoted in the book, it's quite funny.

I've never forgotten the name Olga Maitland for quite a long time.

Yeah, I love her. She's just fabulous. You know, objecting to my self insemination group. And it was a group for women, it wasn't a group that, and she was going 'It's for lesbian women, and they're all going to be committing sodomy, sodomy!', a sort of a like little technical hitch there but you know, leave her to it. But that - the bluster that there became over that, and it got us the best advertising ever. We had more women hear about that group because of Olga Maitland actually standing up parliament and having a big tizzy about it. If she hadn't done that, we wouldn't have had the sort of, well, we wouldn't have had as many people at the first meeting. And it was very, very successful. And I went on to have a few children, as did a number of others - as a result of that.

So do you think that that that shift in, in politics, and a lot of the identity politics, do you see it as - do you think it was, do you think there was something behind it? Do you, do go with a kind of conspiracy theory about, like, with the Wages for Housework and everything? Do you think it was deliberate?

Oh I think at the time, at the time, I just think they were a pack of incredibly selfish people who couldn't see beyond their own bigotry, and they really needed to sort of sit down, chill out, listen to what other women said. They thought they were the world's authority on everything. They were hilarious. We used to sit back and laugh at them really, but then that was before they did the damage. When they started going in to very vulnerable women at camp and telling them that they weren't good enough, that was just, that was just so horrible. That was something we'd expect from men - you wouldn't expect that from women. And that really hurt me, because they used their power, their experience, their eloquence, to stamp on the - on vulnerable women.

And that's just, that was so far away from my politics, because my politics was about we're women - we're women first. And as women, we're very powerful, if we work together on a cause, and we might disagree on 1000 different things, but right now, we're here to change this. We can do this as a group of women, we can change this working together. And I think that what they did is come in and say 'Well, you're not good enough, and you need to be doing what we're doing before you're good enough to challenge' - that is not the way that I think that any human being should be. That's like society that was like what men would be doing to women for years. It was horrible.

Some people think that that was, that was some home office or some you know that....

No, I just think there were a pack of really ignorant women. I do not think for one second I think Wilmet Brown was the most despicable human being back then. I can't, I obviously I don't know what she's like now. But what a foul woman to go in deliberately to put women down - to tell other women to go and put women down. What the hell are you on? What the hell was going on in your head? Yes, I'd heard the conspiracy theories, and we used to laugh at it. People say, you know, she's being paid by the state to behave like this - to sort of ruin the identity of Greenham. No, I don't believe that. I just think she was a very stupid woman. A very nasty spiteful woman, who wanted to put other women down. Why would you want to do that? Why not come and join and, and give an add to. She was a destroyer, and that was horrible. She destroyed a number of different campaigns - from I can hear. Back then - that was what they did. They just went in, took over, took the power from a situation, got loads of press...

I feel it goes to the point about saying women and can take all of the roles, including the one of...

Oppressor. There it was. There it was. That was a lesson to me in itself. Because I've been there in it, feeling this lull, and I went away. And 3 months later, this is only 3 months - a passage of 3 months passed. And

they had devastated the whole campaign, they'd devastated the whole idea of being being there. That was just heartbreaking, heartbreaking, and very deliberate because they've gone and instigated themselves at every gate - so that they could, you know, they'd spread out, divide and conquer. It was awful. It was awful. You know, and that's, that's hard when people are telling you that you're crap, because the one thing about Greenham is that people were going 'No, come on, we're okay. We're good.' And when people were struggling, the idea was to kind of get to the root of it and help them. You know, lift them up, not point out those those weaknesses, but point out the strengths, say 'Ah, listen, we're not all good at everything. But look at this, we're doing this and this is great.' That was the idea to build, to build, not to destroy. I feel quite passionate about that, don't I? I've just realised - I do, I feel very passionate about that - Greenham was about building, it was about making a difference and working together, and changing the world at the same time as looking at yourself and changing you.

And back to that question about legacy then, what do you think in the end - that that's part of the legacy for you, is to carry on believing that and living that?

I think thing for me is there's that phrase 'Greenham women are everywhere.' And any woman who can say Greenham women are everywhere understands the concept that you take from Greenham. Because it wasn't about you being in the dirt in that moment, it was about the women who went and did speeches and oh, oh, there we go. I can't believe I didn't tell you about that. I was standing around at the camp one day and somebody said 'Oh, you know, you haven't been on a talk have you? And I went 'What do you mean a talk?' 'Oh, it's like there's a women's group in Italy, and they want somebody to go and have a little chat', and I thought oh okay, I don't mind that - I've never been abroad. 'Have you got a passport?' 'Yes, I have', you know, no problem. So obviously, there's another woman was there - she was a separatist. This is significant. So I go with this separatist woman. We - I've never been on a plane. So I arrived, what 15 minutes before the flight was due. (Laughs). Yeah, I took this big bag of sweets because

somebody said you've got to have sweets for an airplane, and I thought okay. So I rock up, I run through, they let me go, and you know the point at which they stop you just as you're going to go down to the plane, and this, this policewoman or whatever she was started taking out my sweets, and she's opening them, and I'm going 'They're just boiled sweets. I've got to go', and she's going 'Well I have to check them'. So I left the sweets ran down, got on the plane. Get there. Well, we're met by a man, which went down very badly with this separatist woman, she did not want to get in this car. But I was like, I don't speak Italian. We need to get into this thing. So just just suck it up for a minute, will you, I'm going to this woman. So we get out of the taxi. This man's been really nice. He's just chatting away, and he said 'Oh, just just hold on'. And these two women came over and said 'Oh, you know, come with us'. And I'm looking, and there are hundreds of people in suits and evening dresses and all this, and I'm thinking what the hell's this? We're going along this corridor, and he's going 'No we're coming in this way.' They're all going that way, okay, we're coming in here. So we come into this room that was probably about 20 feet across. And it had, it had rows of seating, and I'd say there were about five, six rows of seating backwards there - it was a bit awkward. I'm thinking this bit of an odd place to have a women's meeting. Anyway, we come in and this woman goes 'Oh, no, there's men here, I'm not doing this.' Buggers off and leaves me in this thing, and I'm thinking, what the hell is this? Anyway, I'm looking at this guy. And I'm thinking, there's like two or three people here. I thinking that looks like Kofi Annan. That's really weird, that man looks just like Kofi Annan. Anyway, it's very lit up. And this person comes over and goes 'You're the second speaker, you'll just be introduced.' I'm like 'What, sorry?' 'You're the second speaker.' I was like oh, okay 'So where's the women's group?' And she says 'Ha', and walks off. Lights, drop, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping all these lights lighting up - rows and rows and rows. It was only the European Peace Conference, and nobody had bothered to tell me that. They told me I was going speaking to a women's group. And here I am now having to stand up in front of 270,000 people. Now, actually, I'm a good public speaker. But nobody told me - nobody gave me a heads up. They said it's a women's group. No wonder nobody wanted to do it.

They also - the other little point they hadn't mentioned was it was a 7 day ticket. I'd only taken stuff for overnight. It was 7 days. So you know. Anyway, that's another story altogether. But yes, it was the International Peace Conference, and I was on the platform with Kofi Annan. I spoke, with translators. There was like this big glass cabinet there. So you have to stop while they translate, and then you have to carry on. And at one point, I'm saying something really serious and the whole place starts laughing. And I'm thinking, oh my goodness, keep going, keep going. And I kept going, and I kept going. And, you know, sort of. Anyway, Kofi Annan then goes up on, and he's like 'What a fantastic speaker. I'd like to pay tribute to the last speaker.' And I'm like thinking, that is Kofi Annan, that really is, you know, one of those sort of moments where you think I don't think this has happened. But at the end, at the end of it, this, this guy comes up to me and he was Dutch. And he just went, listen 'I'm just going to tell you what happened. They translated what you said incorrectly. And they said,' and he repeated to me what they'd said - I'd said something about, the policemen had just squashed me onto the floor. And the heat - it had been translated as I squashed someone on the floor. So everybody was laughing at that. So he was sort of saying that 'Oh, and thanks for the speech.' And that was just really lovely. But the fact that I was then stuck in Italy for 6 days with a separatist who wouldn't stay with the people that we were with because they were male. They had men in the house, so she wouldn't stay there. So we slept on beaches and we did whatever for the for the week with no money. No, no money. No nothing.

And you had to to find your separatist way around - whereabouts were you?

Turin. (Laughs). We just headed out on the train, we just headed out on a train, and we just got off when we got to the sea.

Yeah.

And we stayed there.

Very good.

And then we got back. I've never been so frightened in my life. I didn't have any Italian at all. And a priest was prepared to help us, but she was having none of that. So it was, it was it was a lesson It was a lesson learned.

But you can find yourself in quite like crazy things that happen?

I enjoy - it showed me I enjoy public speaking. I've also public spoke at Glastonbury. I was usually quite good at that sort of, that sort of thing. It doesn't bother me until afterwards - I go to pieces afterwards, not during, which was quite a useful thing, actually. But I didn't really like the idea of speaking, I always thought, you know, it ought to be one of the people who were used to doing it. And I'd very much not taken that role in the past, because there were lots of people who did it, and did it really well. You know, there were lots of people who perhaps did not have the bobble hat image, the lesbian bobble had image, and they were speaking, and people often listen to them more. And I think that was better, that they did speak. But every now and again, you get one like that, which I thoroughly enjoyed giving. I was dressed for a little sit down chat, I was not dressed for this kind of, you know, which was perfect because I was, I was who I was, and people could see that. So I think that that was actually very good for that particular speech. But there were a number of things that happened like that. But women would trick each other very much. You know, I don't want to do that, who can we con into doing that? And so there, it was always a sort of, it was always done with good humour, you know? And we all looked out for each other in that way.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about for this project? Which is - I'll just tell you something interesting. When we - all the interviewers met up in Bristol, and there was mostly women of a certain age, and then one young woman who just said, 'I'd never heard of Greenham.' And I said to her, do you think that's partly our responsibility - that we

didn't think about it? Or we're too busy living or, you know, just kind of assumed that - I think sometimes we assume that stories are being passed down and then we realise actually, it's our job to do it. Is there anything that you just think well, the now needs to know about Greenham?

I think that what was important for me about Greenham was the fact that it was, it was like an education. It was like, the best education you'll ever have. Because you do not very often in life, get an opportunity to sit side by side with someone very different than yourself. We all sort of emanate to people who are like us, or who do things like us. We naturally do that. But when you had a campaign like Greenham, which was - the state were going to kill us all. It was insane. They were, they were housing these nuclear weapons that were making us a target for for, you know, other countries to blow the hell out of us. And I think because I felt so strongly about that, I didn't particularly care who I was sitting next to, I knew I had to sit next to someone. And I think that for me Greenham was about sitting next to someone with your arm linked to them, grounding yourself to stop this from happening. I didn't care whether this woman was an accountant, or a lawyer, or a solicitor or a nurse, or a teacher. It didn't matter to me what colour she was, what country she was from, what religion she had. It was the fact that we were here united as women. And we were going to change the world. We were going to stop this oppression from happening. We were going to stop the state from putting us all - you know, putting our children, and our sisters, and our mothers - hands tied, while they just did this to us. We weren't going to do, that we were going to peacefully say no. And that was the point - it was about women working in peace, to say no. It was not about aggression or violence. It was about women linking arms with each other. Sitting in the dirt, refusing to move. And no matter what they did to us, you would find women going, why are you doing this? You're oppressing me, you're hitting me, you're hurting me, why are you doing this? And it was questioning the authority, making the police react, making them have to see and justify and acknowledge what they were doing. And I think that the publicity that came from that made it much easier for nuclear weapons to, to be shoved out. I think

that if we hadn't been doing what we were doing, that would have just got so much worse - they would have started housing them all over the place. And I think the fact that we highlighted it, and kept in the news, and kept doing things to make sure it stayed in the news, kept in the minds of people, and I think the fact that we as a bunch of disorganised individuals! (Laughs). You know, we were not a united front. We all did things so very differently. And that was the beauty of it - you can't find something that comes at you in so many different ways. And I think that was it. There were the letter writers still. But there were the demonstrators, and demonstrations were happening of various types. And in order to change the world, we were prepared to put our lives on the line. Yeah, we were. I knew that they could shoot us, I knew that they could hurt us. Did I care? No, I didn't. If that had to happen to make them stop then so be it, we had to stop them. And so for me, that working together thing, knowing we were all different, knowing that that woman probably would stand up and argue with me for half an hour on one tiny little thing because we don't agree, but she will sit here and link arms with me, and make sure that we stop nuclear weapons, is all that I needed to hear. And I think for me, that is the Greenham women are everywhere. That's what I took with me, and I took that understanding that all women are different. And that their - somebody's opposing view to mine has just as much right to express it. And I need to hear, I need to listen. And if she's wrong, in my view, I need to persuade her. And if I'm wrong, she needs to persuade me. She needs to enlighten me, and I need to enlighten her. That's both our responsibilities. So is it the responsibility of those at Greenham to share that? I've told as many Greenham stories as I can my whole life, because for me, they form who I am. They made me see the things that I will accept, and the things that I will not. They taught me lines that I will cross, and lines that I will not. I will never refuse a woman water or food. I will not do that. I will never step over that line. And that's a line that I don't think any real Greenham woman would.