

Atlanta Kernick

Okay. We're ready. Right, if you'd like to say your name first.

My name's Atlanta Kernick.

Okay. And maybe to start off, you could just tell me something about your background before you were at Greenham?

Sure. Well, my background was that - in that sorry, I've not even started very clearly. My background was an army family. And I moved around a lot. I was born in Singapore. And I'd lived in Germany, and Denmark, and Britain in two, three different places. Um. And I moved to Greenham from quite close to an army base that I'd lived on. So it was quite extreme but connected.

So that's how - is that how you knew about Greenham, the fact that you lived so closely?

Um. No, not really. No, I think army backgrounds can be quite sheltered, to a certain extent. And I found out about - when I left school, I kind of dropped out of school and university, and um, I got involved with a political bookshop in Winchester, which was the town where I was living at the time. And um, there was an older woman there who was a political activist, I suppose, and who I liked. And she told me about Greenham, and I'm still in contact with her her now.

So did you go to Greenham on your own? Or did you go with friends?

I went with a school friend. And neither of us had done anything like that before. So, we were both quite naive.

Tell me about it. What was it like the day you arrived?

Well, we, I think by the time we got there, it was dark, or it was certainly late afternoon. And it was in the winter, it was December. And we had bought some plastic to make bender because we knew that Greenham women had benders, but we didn't really know what to do with it. And when we arrived, it turned out that it was actually really thin, as well. And not really suitable. So we, we were rustling around, kind of in the dark. And the women living there were kind of extremely sarcastic. And we're taking the piss out of us. And they were sitting around the fire, and going 'Oh, what are you doing over there, you know, rustling away in the dark?' And we said, I think I said 'Oh, I'm trying to blow up my air bed. And it's gone down.' And they were quite scornful of creature comforts as well. And then one of them said 'I know, I lost the plug off my iron, the other day'!

Which gate was this?

Green Gate.

Is that where you stayed the whole time?

No, I initially went to Green Gate and I stayed there for a few months. And certainly through the winter, and in maybe into the spring. And then I moved to Blue Gate.

Was there a particular reason you went to Green Gate?

I think it was one that was a little bit further back from the road. Um. Possibly, possibly the woman who recommended to me that I went to Greenham had told me about it. Um. As far as I know, I didn't know anyone who was there already. But after being there for a while, I found out it was a very separatist gate as well. And um...

What do you mean by separatist gate?

There were no men allowed. I mean, there were no men staying at Greenham anyway. But there were no men allowed to visit.

Even during the day?

No, no, no. By separatist it meant that they didn't mix with men at all. So having said that, I think it was quite good for me at the time because I'd come from a very conservative and sexist family. I'd never really been in that type of environment before. So I think it took me quite a lot of good.

What year was this?

1984. And I enjoyed my time there. It was one of the only gates that was more secluded, um, which was also probably why it was the separatist gate. It was about a mile away from a major road. It was reached by a narrow road that had tarmac on it, but it was like a single lane road. And it was very beautiful - it was in like a Silver Birch wood. And there was a little stream. And we had some benders that were hidden in completely inside bushes.

A lot of women have talked about nature, and how they enjoyed being outside living in nature.

Yeah, I mean, I think I've always liked nature, and parts of Winchester and Hampshire are incredibly beautiful. Um, so it's definitely not something that would have put me off. No, I did enjoy my time there in relation to...

Did you do any actions while you were at Green Gate?

Yes, quite a few. It was very common for us to take down sections of the fence. That was, was, you know, an almost daily event. And um, we'd sort of developed some techniques, I suppose, whereby you could take down lots of sections at once, by rolling the chain - rolling chain link fence. So you'd sort of cut a vertical line, and you had to make sure that you cut through the horizontal retaining wires. And then you could roll

the fence just by cutting along the bottom. So it was quite common for big sections to be removed.

And did you go through into the base?

At other times, yeah. Um, I was involved with several actions like mass trespasses. And I also, I broke into an American vehicle depot and - with another woman, and they were keeping a goose as a warning goose. Like an alarm.

Gosh, I haven't heard that before.

Yeah, geese have been kept. There's a kind of tradition of keeping them as, like guard dogs. And um, we, a lot of us were very much into animal rights. And we weren't very impressed with the goose being kept by itself. So she went back with another woman and stole it. And it was released in Newbury. Err, I didn't do anything else specific, like, dance on the missile silos or anything like that. No, just..

General disruption?

Just marauding around, yeah!

Did you follow any of the convoys?

No, no, I did. I only saw the convoy once. And it was in the middle of the night. And it was absolutely terrifying. It was far more imposing than I thought it would be.

In what way?

They're huge, really big.

What each vehicle?

Yeah, yeah, they're absolutely massive. And it was the middle of the night as well. So that obviously, didn't help.

How many vehicles would there have been, roughly, in a convoy?

I think they varied. I mean, they had the main kind of missile carrying vehicles, plus smaller vehicles around them for security.

Did you meet any of the personnel - army, US Army personnel?

When we we broke into the base. Yeah, quite quite a few.

How did they behave?

Really horribly. (Laughs). Well, one time I was ill, and they laughed at me, and poked fun at me. Yeah, they were very impressed, really. I think they were pretty appalled by us. We had quite a lot of aggression from the people who lived in Newbury as well.

Yeah, I was gonna ask you about that. What form did that take?

Err - especially when we were at Blue Gate, which is more problematic because that gate is near the road. So yeah, they used to drive by, shout abuse throw, throw rubbish at us, that kind of thing.

So just verbal abuse?

Yeah. But I'm sure I did hear of people being attacked. We had to be careful when we walked around Newbury, obviously. Somebody had a go at me once when I was walking around Newbury.

Were there - did you feel the whole of Newbury was hostile towards you...

Not at all.

...or were there people who did support?

No, we had places that we could go to in Newbury, in particular was the Quaker meeting house called the Friends' Meeting House - who were sympathetic to us, and we used to go there for meetings and we were allowed to use their facilities. They allowed us to shower and things like that.

Any other places?

Um. There was a cafe called the Empire Cafe that we used to like to go to. And back in the day, when we were all vegans, we'd probably have beans and chips - something like that. And there was also a fantastic health food shop as well. I think it was just called something like Newbury Whole Foods. I don't really remember - we used to go there and stock up on goodies.

They were supportive?

Yeah. And the sort of early vegan products were very important. So we used to go and buy halva and chocolates for dessert, and hummus and things like that.

Why did you move from Green Gate to Blue Gate?

Um, because there was a younger crowd at Blue Gate. And I think I was probably tiring a bit of the separatism by then. I think one of my friends had tried to go there with her son, who was quite young, and they turned her away. And I think the Blue Gate crowd were just more fun, really.

How many have been at Green Gate?

It was difficult to say specific numbers, because women were coming and going all the time. So at any of the gates, it could vary from a really small number, like three to quite a lot. But I suppose at any given time,

they'd probably be about, I don't know, hopefully about eight to ten, but sometimes more, sometimes less.

So how long were you at Blue Gate for?

Well, for the rest of the time that I was there, which was 'til, 'til the following winter, which would have been the winter of '85. And then um, I think I mentioned in my message that we set off to go and do an action in the SAS training base, which was on the Welsh - in Welsh borders.

Can you remember exactly where that was? Was...

I probably could.

Was it a place called US Harold?

No, it wasn't. No.

Because that's an SAS base, right on the Welsh border.

US Harold?

US Harold - it's literally on the border. And it's the major SAS base.

If it was, then we might have known it by another name, like maybe the name of the nearest village or something like that. But it doesn't ring a bell. I used to remember the name - I'll try and recall it.

What do you do when you were down there?

We broke in and just trespassed, really. We walked for a long time. And we didn't get to anything whereby we could actually, you know, do any actions as such, but I think the main aim was to highlight the lack of security.

That was going to be my next question.

Which, which is, is why we did it. And then we got arrested.

By military personnel, presumably?

Yes, on the base. Yeah.

What happened then?

Um. We were put into a small building, which had windows that opened which was a bad idea, because then we climbed out and escaped! (Laughs).

Any pursuits?

Yeah, I think once they realised, I don't know, I think I escaped. And I think a few others did. I don't recall anyone getting arrested or getting retained after that. I think they were probably a bit embarrassed about it all, to be honest, and they let us go. And then after that, we went and camped in a kind of abandoned quarry. And then I came to London with with a friend - with one of the women.

But you did that action from Blue Gate?

Yeah. And then after that, I moved to London, I came straight to London from Wales.

Um. What do you think the biggest impact of Greenham was on you personally?

It was probably the women that I met while I was there, and I'm still in contact with quite a few of them, and made friends via them as well in a friend - met friends of friends via them.

Were you a feminist, or would you have called yourself a feminist when you turned up at Greenham?

Yeah, yeah, I would have done definitely. I would say feminism was probably the first form of politics that I came across, or I got interested in, and that was for about the age of 13 because you could buy Spare Rib in the shop near where I lived. So I am started buying Spare Rib. So yeah, I would say feminism was pretty, pretty important to me. Yeah.

And living at Greenham did it - how did it inform your views of feminism? Did it change them at all, did they develop them in any particular direction?

Um, I think yeah, my politics were kind of invigorated and strengthened by being at Greenham. Um, I met women from a really wide range of backgrounds, and some really powerful, and very lively women! And they probably - a lot of them would be considered extremely eccentric by mainstream standards, because I was so young, err a lot of being at Greenham didn't really strike me as being that unusual.

Were you still a teenager?

Yes, I was 16 in '84, when I first went there, so it was also a big part of becoming an adult as well, really, I suppose you could say I kind of came of age there. But I' met women from a wide range of backgrounds, and a wide range of ages, as well.

Did you feel it was a space where you could sort of experiment a little bit?

Yes, definitely.

In what way?

Um, in many ways, really, I don't feel as though we were really that constrained at all. Apart from the rigors of living outdoors, and things

like regular evictions, um, which could be a bit of a kind of harsh wake up call (laughs), literally, in some cases. No, um, and I suppose we were constrained by having sometimes having to kind of remove our benders as well, but we were able to experiment in loads of ways. We weren't really constrained by having to look after families, pressures from parents or partners. We could dress however we wanted, and make our benders however we wanted. And um, have lovers. So yeah. We often were quite creative, you know we used to make, you know, decorate the benders, do art work.

You do any sketching or anything?

Yeah, I did do some drawing when I was there, but I haven't kept any of the drawings.

I know it's annoying - things you wish you'd kept now, you chuck out when you're younger. What did your family think of you living at Greenham?

I think they were pretty horrified. My dad used to take me up there sometimes, drop me off there, which was quite shockingly liberal of him. I think it was because my mother was so terrified of me hitchhiking, she probably, I think she probably made him do it. Yeah, they weren't very happy about it.

Did you talk about it in detail? Or did they just...

They probably didn't want to know. um, I remember my dad found an arrest warrant in my pocket. And he was really upset and horrified by it. And he said 'When you were young, your mother and I used to sit and wonder what you'd be when you grew up, and now you've got a criminal record, and you're not even 18'. Poor dad. I think they were a bit upset. And, they, they were quite liberal for an army family. And I think that they were worried more than anything else, as you would be, you know, if your daughter was kind of living outdoors and breaking into bases.

Did your mum ever talk about feminism?

No, no, my family weren't a political family in that respect. No, they were sort of conservative with a small c. And I wasn't really, I wasn't brought up to be aware of so-called, alternative politics at all. I didn't - I wasn't really aware of people who weren't monarchists, and conservative. I wasn't aware of any other ideas, aside from, from that kind of thing.

So it must have been quite a leap to go from that to Greenham, at 16?

I think that I'd had a kind of gradual awakening which started with things like reading Spare Rib, and other political things that I managed to get my hands on. Like I said there was an alternative bookshop in Winchester that I used to go to. So I started reading kind of anarchist and green, you know, magazines. And um, then I went to Stonehenge (laughs), the day of my O' levels, the day I finished, my O'levels, and at that time it was, had really grown to be quite a big festival. And um, that was a real eye opener. Yeah. And because I just hadn't really known that anything like that existed. And I was quite happy, really! (Laughs). I think I kind of for a few years, I just threw myself sort of headlong into anything sort of countercultural that I came across really.

Were you involved in any peace movements? Were you a member of CND or anything like that?

No, no, I've never really been involved with, as in being a member of any organisations. I've always been kind of involved with very informal groups that did direct action. And after I left Greenham, I became involved with a group of feminist squatters in Brixton that I did political actions with, but it was always on a really informal basis.

Yeah. So not part of a big group?

Well, one of my friends who I knew at the time, has subsequently made a film called Rebel Dykes. And she's just in kind of like final stages of getting that finished. And because she felt really strongly that the

things that we were doing at the time, should be recorded. Quite a few things have been made about um, bands, film, documentary films have been made about squatters, and other sort of like political activity around that time. But there, we came to realise that nothing had been done. There was no record of what we had done.

Had she been to Greenham?

Yeah, I met her at Greenham, yeah.

That's really great, when's it gonna come out?

Well, I've been informed that, like many things, you know, it's a kind of financial issue. But I know, it's got a lot of animation in it as well, which is really labour intensive. But I have been informed that it's nearly there.

Fantastic. I know you weren't involved in any peace movements. But did you feel under a nuclear threat when you were a child, and teenager, bearing in mind you're a military daughter?

(Laughs). Absolutely, my father worked for NATO during the height of the Cold War. And one point, he was stationed in one of the top three NATO bases in Northern Europe, which was at Karup in Denmark, and um, it was called BALTAP, actually, the Danish one. And he worked in an underground bunker, and which I obviously never, never visited. And found out later that, that my parents had tiny radiation, radiation suits for me and my brother, which fortunately, I never saw at the time. But um, so, yeah, the threat of nuclear war was very real, and very present, I would say.

And did it scare you, or were you so young, you didn't sort of think it through.

I think I was kind of numbed by the time I reached my teens, I think that it seemed like a real present reality, but I was also kind of quite used to

the idea as well. So that was in um, '77, when I lived in Denmark, yeah, '77 - '79.

You were a SparRib reader, what did you think - or were you, you must have been aware of the media representation of Greenham women? What did you feel about how...

I didn't, I must admit I didn't really relate to the, what I sort of perceived as being the most well known image of Greenham women, which was kind of housewives for peace, holding hands and hanging nappies on the fence. Um, the women that I connected with were, I think, a younger and punkier group. And we, we weren't - we were far more interested in having a good time, as well as um, protesting. And we were often told off by the kind of um, older senior members of the camps. Because some of the older women obviously had made major sacrifices, and they also didn't want to bring the camps into disrepute, any more than they had, you know, than they were already. And so to have us around sometimes was quite problematic. Especially at Blue Gate, we had really bad reputation, even for Greenham women.

And the bad reputation was for what specifically?

Um, spending all our camp money on drugs, and not having any left for food. And spray painting everything - being naughty. (Laughs). They were lucky we did get looked after. Because the thing is, the thing about Greenham is that people constantly brought things to us. The thing about Greenham is we you know, peace activists constantly came to visit, and they, and they were really lovely people, you know, they used to bring this hot meals and...

If you had spent all your money on drugs, um, would the older women bail you out with a hot meal?

Well, people brought as meals there, it wasn't just the Greenham women, there were visitors, like Quaker groups and peace activists from

other parts of the country used to bring us hot meals. And sometimes we used to get given, we used to get things from the other gates.

So you wouldn't starve?

Sometimes we had to just eat porridge. But that served us right. And we - a really good time was when we got given bales of straw. Because it was very muddy, and so the straw used to soak up the mud, and we could sit on them. And we could throw it on the fire as well. So that was a really happy time when we had straw yeah, we were very happy when we had straw.

Were you ever evicted?

Yeah, lots of times.

Tell me about that.

Um, the, the evictions could really vary enormously. It depended on all sorts of things as well, like the time of day they were done. Which bailiffs were involved. And sometimes they also decided, they - the evictions used to sort of vary in ferocity. Like, sometimes you just only had a couple of quite lackluster bailiffs, and they weren't really that bothered. And they would just make you move off the land, you had to move down the road, a few hundred meters, and then once you had gone a certain distance, they would leave. And then we just went back again. Um. But sometimes occasionally, I don't know why, for whatever reason, they they were sort of more ferocious, and they would - some bailiffs, individual bailiffs were worse than others. So they would try and grab our stuff and put it in the back of their truck. And then we'd have to try and grab it and get it back again. And so you'd have to be kind of really super quick if they were like that. And sometimes, you know, it would end up being a bit of a scuffle - not like physical fights, because we were peace activists who weren't supposed to do that. But some people used to, you know, do things like stick sanitary towels on to the their wing mirrors and things like that. But some women at the camp

didn't even like us doing that kind of thing, because they thought it was aggressive.

Do you think the bailiffs treated you any differently because you were women?

Um well, I'd never seen an eviction of any other people. So I don't really have anything to compare it to. Um, I think some of the bailiffs I'm sure we're quite intolerant of us, and some were just kind of indifferent - they were just sort of doing their job. And at Blue Gate - another sort of, at Green Gate in particular because we had hidden benders, it was really important that the bailiffs didn't find them. So we used to try and do things to sort of throw them off the trail if they looked like they were getting too near to the hidden benders, we'd try and do things to distract them.

What sort of things?

I can't remember, now, you know just general just causing a scuffle. Yeah, arguing with them, chucking things around, stuff like that. And at Blue Gate, the evictions were different. The evictions kind of varied depending on which gate you lived as well, because of just the sort of layout of the gates. At Blue Gate because we were right on the road, and we also didn't really have anywhere to move our stuff, we used to have a spray painted van, which we called quite Crazy Daisy, which was completely, I think it was an old Comma van, or, you know, a sort of Morris Minor van, that type of thing. It was quite big. And we used to throw everything into, into crazy Daisy and drive her down the road. And once - sometimes, we'd drive it a little way, and the bailiffs, and we'd stop and the bailiffs would say 'No, it's too near, you've got to move it'. So we'd move it further away, and then like, go, and then go.

Did you meet - well you obviously met the police because they were on the outside of the fence. How did you get on with them? You just ignore them? Or?

Again, it was a real mixture. Yes, some of the police and soldiers were friendly or, you know, would tolerate us. And some were more hostile. I mean, a lot of it, I think, you know, came down to their individual personalities.

And did you meet any journalists when you were there?

Yeah, I remember being interviewed by a young woman journalist. And I remember um Greta Scacchi, she was there, who was an actress at the time, well known at the time. And journalists wanted to interview me because I was young, and I had come from an army background. So it was a good story. And I didn't live that far away, either. I only lived about, I had only lived about 30 miles away. So it's quite, you know local army girl.

Can you remember what sort of things they asked you? I can see that as a headline - local army girl turns to Greenham.

Yeah, I think they were quite excited about that. (Laughs).

Um. Why do you think it's important for people to remember Greenham?

Well, it was massive, I think, really. It went on for a long time - about 7 years was it, something like that?

It lasted 1981 to almost 2000. Or 2001.

Okay. Okay. Far more than 7 years!

It changed hugely, because then it became about returning the land to the people of Newbury.

That's right. Yeah. Of-course. Well, that leads me on to my last point, which was, apart from it being a very, you know, big and influential demonstration that went on for a long time, it was successful, as well.

And it was one of the few sort of major political actions that succeeded in achieving what it set out to do.

What would you say that achievement was?

Nuclear missiles were removed from the common, which was the main aim of Greenham - was to have it returned to common land, which it was. I was just going to say I often say to people, you know, what's the point of political activity? I say, political activity has been successful in my lifetime. And I cite Greenham as being one of those things.

And do you think young people, I mean, I, I keep saying young people all the time, I never know quite what it is, I suppose people under 25, really - do they know about Greenham, are they aware do you think?

No, I don't think so.

Why do you think that is?

I think because of what I said to you earlier, before we were recording, that so called alternative history, and by that I mean, you know, um, feminist and class - working class, and also the history of non-white people, other races hasn't been documented, and doesn't get documented, and tends to get forgotten or ignored. And I think sometimes quite actively overlooked as well.

Why would the state, presumably, want to not recognise that history?

Well, I think successful political activity is threatening to the state, um, it's influential. I think that it's quite important for the state to keep people separate. And, um, yeah, not to encourage people to unite in any kind of successful political activity.

Apart from obviously, this project, what ways do you think would be good to tell the Greenham story to not - just young people - to a wider

audience, really? Because I think there's quite a few adults who don't really know much about Greenham.

Well, I suppose by any means necessary, really. (Laughs). I think what you said earlier about, I know you, you just said aside from children, but I think that teaching children about it is really important. And obviously, with adults um, it has to be any medium that they'll pay attention to really, um - documentary film, I think, is probably a good idea. It's probably the main thing, the main kind of art form that adults pay attention to.

Um.

I was also, just going to say that I think that Greenham was important in the history of feminism as well. I think, particularly at a time when I think that feminism started to become about breaking the glass ceiling, and in achieving a kind of equality with wages and um, various other battles like that which are important. I think that um, more kind of alternative feminist histories are important - um, especially in relation to um, political actions that weren't part of mainstream political organisations. I mean, I know you could ostensibly say that Greenham came under the umbrella of CND, but there were quite a lot of women there who weren't in CND, and probably wouldn't have joined necessarily, and um, who would have seen themselves as being more like anarchists, or they wouldn't have necessarily joined a political organisation. And um, some of them wouldn't have organised with men. And um, yeah, I think they would have just wanted the freedom to do other things.

Do you talk about Greenham much these days? To friends and things, or is something that's in the past?

Intermittently - no, I mean, it is fairly alive for me, because I'm still in touch with quite a lot of women that I met there. For example, I went to the XR um, demonstrations recently. And um, when I was at Marble Arch, I was texting to women who had been there. And they were old

friends from Greenham. And unfortunately, they had just left and gone back to Wales, but I hope to meet up - I had hoped to meet up with them there. And one of them was really young when she was at Greenham, she was only 15. And she was from a Traveller background, and she used to steal jeeps and drive them around and turn them over. So um, she was, she was great fun. And she was really impressive. So I'd hope to see her, but yeah, I've met up and still in contact with quite a few women I met there.

Do you have any children?

No.

Nieces and nephews. Just wondering if you...

I have no children in my life. Um, well, Swara - my friend here saw me entertaining a big group of children earlier on today in the library, but I only really have contact with children through my work.

Would you do it the library as a project - a Greenham reenactment?

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Teach them how to build a bender. Not sure their parents would be entirely happy about it.

Useful skills.

Absolutely. I was going to say subsequent to Greenham I found it really easy to go camping in the middle of nowhere with absolutely no resources, and um cook elaborate meals on an open fire.

Life skills. What made you decide to leave Greenham?

One of my friends got ill because of the cold - it was particularly cold at that time. And we had to build a fire to thaw our water (laughs), so that we could make drinks. And she got ill and got taken to hospital. And I think, because I was so young, and I'd only just started my adult life, I

thought I should probably actually try and experience adult life in other ways.

Did you find it difficult to adjust from sort of Greenham to sort of more normal...

Well, my life in London wasn't normal either. I had a really small puppy, who I had got from some travellers when I was at Greenham. And she was only 2 months old when I moved to London. And so she was consequently not house trained. So I had to set about house training her pretty quickly. And she got me into quite a bit of trouble because she was weeing everywhere. (Laughs). When I came to London, I moved into a squat in Brixton. And um, we were getting our electricity from the house behind us. And um, we, there were four women there and two dogs. And um, I lived there until we got evicted.

Did you ever go back to Greenham?

Yes, but only to visit. Not to, to live again.

Regularly, or..

No, very intermittently.

Have you ever been back in the recent past?

No.

It must look very different now.

I want to go ahead. Yeah, I had dogs up until very recently, and my last dogs were sort of very anxious rescue dogs. So it wasn't really suitable for me to take them there. But now I'm freer I will go back, yeah.

Because they have a museum, don't they? A small museum.

Yeah, yeah, there was actually an exhibition of photography there recently that I really wanted to see. But um, I am in contact, as I said, with quite a few women who used to live there so I still see, you know, their photographs.

Did you go to the Imperial War Museum exhibition couple of years ago?

No. (Laughs).

I didn't either. But they had a bit - it's on sort of protest against Greenham war, I think...

Actually no, I did, I did. Yeah, I tell a lie - I did actually see it. And I'd forgotten about it. And I did recognise quite a few of the women in the photos as well.

Was it a fair representation of what went on? Did it sort of manage to put over the...

Yeah, I would say so. I mean, everything like that is only a partial representation, I suppose. Especially photography is just a moment in time. But um, but yeah, it did convey some of the, the energy of it, definitely. I mean, I think as with everything, these photos, they often only represent particular events, maybe like when there are a lot of women there. And there was, you know, a big, big gathering.

Yeah. Of course, you were there before the age of mobile phones.

Yeah, yeah, there was no computers or phones.

Sending images everywhere I suppose, now?

Yeah, I'm sure there would have been a lot more photography, definitely. I have got a few photos from those times. And um, quite a few were taken, as you can imagine. I wish I'd taken more obviously, and I could say that for my life in Brixton afterwards, as well. But I think people

were suspicious of people taking a lot of photographs in those days as well. They didn't like it unless they knew you really well.

Did you ever feel there were sort of people watching you that would be reporting back to the authorities on you?

I think undoubtedly we were probably infiltrated. I think it was pretty widespread.

Greenham generally, or your gate?

The group - think all the gates probably were at some point. I think it was pretty widespread that type thing. Um. When I went at slightly diff - this is going off on a tangent - but at a slightly different time I went with a girlfriend at the time to visit her father, who was working in Germany on a base, he was a lawyer. And we met an American service woman who we befriended, and she turned out to really be a secret agent of some kind (laughs). And we thought it best that we sort of distance ourselves from her, yeah she came to Brixton and hung out with us a bit. And we thought, it's probably not - as we got to know her a bit better and found out sort of, what kind of work she did, we thought it's probably best not to spend (laughs) any more time with her.

You mentioned earlier the arrest warrant that your father found in your pocket. How many times were you arrested?

I was a bit worried you were gonna ask me 'cause I can't remember, but it was a few times.

More than once?

Yeah. It was three to five times.

So you had to go to court?

One time I did. Yeah.

Where would that have been - Newbury?

Yes, it was. And I did go to Holloway because of something I'd done at Greenham. It would have just been for trespass. I don't think I ever got got done for anything else.

So you went to...

I spent a week in Holloway in um - let me think it would have been the Spring of 1986. And that was interesting.

I can imagine. Do you want to talk about that?

Yes, I wasn't really very adversely affected by it at all. Um, I wasn't there for very long.

Were you the only one to go there? Or was there...

No, I, I remember that one of my friends was definitely in there at the same time as me. But I think initially, we were put in a cell together, but then we were separated. I liked it! (Laughs). I was taken into a dormitory, um, where, in the middle of the room, there were two women lying in bed together. And I walked towards them. And one of them turned to me and gave me a joint. And I thought, oh, this is great, I've come to the right place. So I suppose as a young lesbian, I was, was quite happy, really. Um, I hadn't really been torn away from my family, and didn't have a lot of responsibility. So I didn't - my dog Pandora was being looked after by somebody. And so I wasn't very adversely affected by it. I think the only thing was that um, even then I thought that a lot of the women that I met, didn't seem to have done anything very serious and shouldn't have been in there. Um, I met women who were in Holloway because they didn't have TV licenses. And some of them had children. So they'd been incarcerated because of that lot, mostly economic for economic reasons. And I remember meeting some women who'd been drug mules. And the only woman I met who maybe

deserved to be in there - she, she admitted herself, she sort of said 'You know, I, I admit, you know, I should be banged up', and she was an armed robber. And um, she, she kind of um, thought that she deserved it but, er, I think that I did have some guilt after I left, because I hadn't been there for very long at all. And I used to think about the women who were left behind. And I think there were quite a few that I heard probably come from you know, really difficult backgrounds, and had mental health problems. And so er, I used to worry about them or feel sorry for me.

And did your parents know you were in Holloway?

I don't think so.

Did they ever find out?

I don't think so. Not as far as I know. No. Yeah, I think just knowing I'd been arrested was really enough for them, really. I didn't feel the need to share that with them, no.

I can understand that.

Thanks for all the questions. It's been really useful.

It helps lend a bit of structure, I think. Sort of last question maybe - unless there's other things you'd like to talk about.

Sure. Um. Let's do your last question and I'll have a think.

Well, the last is the soundbite one. What do you think Greenham's legacy is?

Wow, okay.

...What its legacy is.

Well, that's quite difficult to say, because a lot of people don't seem to remember it (laughs), or know anything about it. But I think that if people do, and if people could be said to be influenced by Greenham, um, I would say that we could see it in things like the XR, the recent XR rebellion in its energy and creativity, and um, the degree to which we approached protest from a different - I would say a very different angle, and point of view. I would say it was the first - well, it was definitely the first women only protest. And I have to say, actually, Greenham did start out as a mixed camp. But there were problems with, um, I think it was one particular guy, but there was a problem with um, sexual aggression. Somebody was accused of being abusive, or even raping someone. And so the women there at the time, were very angry, and they turfed the men out. And they made it into a women-only demonstration. So I think the fact that it gave women the opportunity to organise together, and independently at a time when second wave feminism was still kind of - is still relatively early. Um. And I think the scale of it as well, in that it was a massive and long running demonstration. So I think if it could be said to influence political action today, I would say that it was creative, it was long. And it was the first time women had organised together since the Suffragettes on that scale. Um. And also in that it was peaceful, as well. It was successful, it was peaceful, so, um, I hope that Greenham does have a legacy. Um, I think that on an individual basis, I would say that it introduced me to a very wide range of creative ways that women could be, and at that time, what seemed to be almost completely outside of mainstream culture. Yet showed me that women could live creatively together in a positive way, outside of sort of mainstream ideas about women being bitches etc., and competitive.

Were you a lesbian before you went to Greenham, or did you...

No. (Laughs).

Explore and find out about it yourself...?

Well, I mean, that's complicated as those sort questions can often be for individuals. Um, I had been attracted to my friend at school. So Greenham didn't make me into lesbian. Um, I was kind of aware of it. But I also, um, because I'd had an army background, and it was very er, sort of sheltered in that respect. I had never met any gay people, people that I knew to be gay. And I had really bizarre ideas about lesbians. I thought that lesbians were almost like, mythological creatures like werewolves, and I thought that there were hardly - maybe about five lesbians in the whole country. And I thought that lesbians - if you became a lesbian, you would grow hair all over your body and you couldn't go out in the daylight. So in my mind, yeah, lesbians were almost monsters, really. Yeah, like werewolves (laughs), and so unsurprisingly, I thought I should put that out of my mind being a lesbian, because I thought it would ruin my life. And so I set about trying to be heterosexual and I got a boyfriend. I got several different boyfriends - not simultaneously - for about 6 months, until I went to Greenham. And I announced to my mum that I was giving up men when I was 16, which was really alarming for her because she was quite concerned that I had had men to give up at that age. And she said 'Oh, you're very young to be thinking like that.' Um. But I met and slept with my first girlfriend at Greenham, and had - subsequently had a relationship with her, and also with some other women, several other women. And I came out when I was 17, and haven't looked back since!

So Greenham have had its place in your story?

Yeah, I would say Greenham was really positive for me, because although I kind of knew I was lesbian. And I'd also had a crush on another woman who I mentioned earlier on, who was quite a lot older than me. And she recommended to me that I went to Greenham as well. So yeah, I would say that Greenham allowed me to meet other like minded women, and to have the confidence to come out. We had a lot of fun. We had a, we had a Summer of Love. (Laughs). So yeah, I would say that Greenham introduced me to a wide range of different women. There were lots of heterosexual women there as well. And um, yeah, a lot of really strong women.

Lovely. Thank you very, very much.

Thank you.

It's been great.

Cheers.

I could sit here all evening and talk, it's fantastic.

Aww, thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk about Greenham.

Not at all.

Cheers.