

Kate Whittle

First question I've got written down, how did you find yourself at the camp? And how long were you there for?

Okay. Um, I never stayed at the camp overnight.

Right, okay.

I visited on at least three occasions, possibly more - such a long time ago, I can't remember. And I came to it because I've been in CND ever since I was at school. Went on marches, quite a long time as you can imagine! (Laughs). Um. So I went on my first Aldermaston march when I was about 16. How my father let me go, I have no idea because he was incredibly protective. Um, but I did go, and then one year I went with my brother. And it was amazing. I met some fantastic people, people I'd never met - the kind of people I'd never met before. Who we're really accepting, everybody, people that were different.

Yeah.

And I was a terrible teenager, I was really shy - tall and skinny and really shy and I didn't feel I fitted in anywhere. But there were those people, I felt completely relaxed, at home, and a lot of them were Quakers.

Yeah.

And we did a lot of singing and it was just wonderful, wonderful atmosphere - with blisters! (Laughs).

Oh no!

And so really on and off, I mean, I have to say I'm not an active member of CND anymore. I still believe in it. But that's what brought me to Greenham common, really - my kind of more or less lifelong interest in

being against nuclear weapons, and then subsequently against nuclear power.

How did you hear about what was going on?

What, Greenham?

Yeah.

I would have been, it would have been through my local CND group. I was living in Kingston at the time, in Surrey, and I guess - I'm guessing that's how I knew about it. Or it might have been at that time I was also at college as a mature student, and it might have been through the Students Union that I read about it. Because I went with some friends that I had - they weren't at the same Uni as me, but they were friends I had around that time.

Okay. Um, could you explain why you think Greenham should be remembered by subsequent generations?

Well, I was just - it was a formative experience going to Greenham. It was incredibly powerful. I was there and, and the women, all of, all of us were really angry. And I remember occasions when we just got hold of the fence and rocked it with the aim to bring it down. I don't think we ever actually did bring it down - at-least not the bit where I was. But I remember the faces of the young soldiers on the other side of the fence, and they were terrified. We were like their mothers, and their grandmothers, and their aunts, you know, and they had never seen women so angry, so many women together so angry - it was really, really powerful. And and I met some great women. And there - I saw some wonderful sights, and it was fabulous knowing that I wasn't alone. Yeah.

Did you keep in touch with a lot of the women from the camp?

No, not really. No, no. I met friends there from other parts of the country - already my friends who arrived there. And I went with friends,

and with my daughter one year - my daughter must have been about um, 12,11 or 12 - I've written some notes.

Okay, that's fine.

And I yeah, yeah. So '82, '82 I think I would have gone with Lucy, and she would have been 12 because she was born in 1970. And so very, very - I was asking her about it recently, if she could remember things I can't remember.

Yeah.

And the only thing she remembered was peeing in the woods! (Laughs). It was a very long time ago. And she's had three children since then. But I do think it was a formative experience for her.

She must have been one of the youngest there, I imagine?

There were loads of children there.

Really?

Yeah, yeah. Because we went for the for the demonstrations. So we went in, we went in - we went to Embrace the Base in December 1982, and I've got some photos of that.

Okay.

And we also went in April '83, I went with some friends and I've got some photos of that - when we made, there was a human chain from Aldermaston to Greenham.

Okay.

So I've forgotten the question now!

So have I!

(Laughs).

Just about....

Oh, what did I remember about it?

Yeah. Yeah. What was I going to say? These are just questions have come to my head now. How come you didn't stay over?

Because I had work, and I had Lucy, and I considered those to be my number one responsibilities.

That's fair.

Yeah.

It's crazy when you think people stayed...

I had every respect for them. Every respect for them, but it wasn't for me. So that was my bit. I did go my own once and took some food for them. So I did go to some of the different camps, the different coloured camps around the, around the perimeter. Um, but I really thought it was most important to be there for the, for the Embrace the Base and for the human chain - for the big, when you know, there were going to be thousands of women there - I really wanted to add my voice.

So you wanted to go for the, like the bigger, like you said, demonstrations.

Yeah.

Not all the all the time as such.

No.

Yeah, that's fair enough.

Yeah, I was a single parent. And if I lost my job, my, you know what I know, you know, who knows what would happen? So I was not prepared to sacrifice my whole life. But I just wanted to to be part of it.

And that was important.

Yeah.

It's important that you were there at all, really.

Yeah. So I've got a few things here - I wrote down some impressions. So one thing was the fantastic imagery and poetry of the posters and the art tied to the fence. I've got some examples of that.

That'd be really good. Thank you. Wow.

That's really powerful. And that one.

Thank you. Wow

And there she is - Thatcher seeing the error of her ways. Unfortunately not. And women morris dancers.

Oh I've seen morris dancers actually, in Marshfield.

Yeah. And then there was um, the wonderful art that people did around the perimeter with tree, tree roots.

Oh right.

Where are they? Oh, there they - look. Isn't that phenomenal?

Yeah.

They're like creatures coming out of the forest, and climbing over the fence.

Oh my gosh, it really does look like it as well.

So I could scan all those, and email them to you if you, if you want them. I've got more here.

They just told me at the minute just to write that you've got them down, and, I guess they'll be in contact - I'll message them after the meeting.

Okay. The other thing I remember was this curious combination of humour.

Really, yeah?

And joy and hope and fury.

All those in one?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then we sang - we sang You can't kill the spirit. She's like a mountain. And um, yeah (becomes upset).

Yeah, sounds emotional.

It was - I don't think I'd ever experienced the power of women together until that moment, to be honest.

No, I've sort of - it's weird, because when I heard about the project which was about 3 months ago, they were starting to get people in and call people into interview - before they even got any funding or anything, I had an email from my UWE lecturer saying we've got this project. Because it's in - I think UWE are sponsoring it.

Oh, are they?

I think so. I got an email that said do you be part of it? Like, and I emailed back and said yes I would love to. And I then had to Google what it was. Because I don't know even what it was.

Oh my god.

And I thought this is like the second biggest women's movement in the world. And I didn't even know what it was.

Yeah.

It's crazy that - and I asked my parents, my mum's 50, and I said to her about it, and she was like 'Yeah, I remember that it happened', but it just hasn't been passed down.

That's terrible.

I don't know if that's just me. Or if it's a lot of young people don't know about now.

No, I don't think anybody knows about it. It's really bad. Really, really bad.

It is bad. Do you know why that would be? Do you have any sort of thoughts?

Oh I don't know, I suppose, I suppose there wasn't an organisation in that sense to carry the ideas forward. It was thousands and thousands of individual women, groups of friends. Um, I mean, something I was doing this morning, I've got some other photos that I would like to share, but they're photos of my friends, and it suddenly occurred to me I needed to ask their permission. And I just hadn't thought it through. So I've emailed this morning - because they're friends I'm not in touch with, or only very, very rarely see - maybe once a year, something like that. Who live in Brighton some of them, and or Devon, somebody else lives

in Devon. I don't even know where half of them are. But um, and so I thought, yeah, I really want I really want to talk to them about it and see what they remember.

We've got two in Brighton actually on the on the sheet.

Yeah.

Don't know who they are, but it might be them. I've got so many women at the minute have come forward.

It's great.

From everywhere - Isle of Wight.

That's fantastic. That's fantastic.

People from abroad.

People did travel from abroad. Yeah.

They did. Was it a lot of people?

I don't know, I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know.

They did mention that - we had a meeting about it, we all met up in November, and there was woman actually there that was at Greenham as well, which was quite nice. And we were all talking about what happened, and we have a slideshow of all the photos everything, and we had some videos. And the young guy was interviewing, like I'm doing to you now he was interviewing a woman at Greenham about 10 years ago. But you could tell that he just didn't know a lot about it. So the interview wasn't very good, because he didn't get a lot out there. And it was just trying to learn how to get people to open up, but I don't think, because he was, I don't know. Maybe because he was also a male, I don't know if that made a difference. I'm not sure, but it was, and that

was the first time I've ever seen the photos from Greenham as well. It was really overwhelming that day. I came home I just wanted to like just tell everyone everything.

There is a fabulous video about Greenham. Have you not seen it?

I think we...

You probably have done. Because I found it pretty quickly on YouTube. So yeah, yeah.

I think we probably did.

And I think people just moved on. There were other things to fight about. There were other things going on. There was, you know there was just the terrible Thatcher years, and there was the miners' strike, wasn't there? I was really involved with that for a few years.

Okay.

And you can't fight on every front, and I think once we realised the cruise missiles were going, it kind of, kind of felt like well, yeah. (Laughs).

Done what you were there to do?

Yeah.

Do you think it's because a lot of things happen at the same time...

Could be, it could be that. Yeah.

Okay. And it went on until - was it 2000, the camp?

Yeah, I didn't go back - I think I only went in the early '80s. Yeah, the missiles left the base in 1991.

1991. Okay. Yeah, so that was just before I was born, but still crazy that the Suffragette movement was so massive, and there's hardly any media, hardly any media then.

No.

And yeah, but then again because I think - we were talking about this to somebody else, because they got the vote and that was such a massive thing for women, and it changed everything. Err, maybe that was why, I don't know. I don't know because if - I don't know. Been trying to think about it for ages. But it's difficult when I'm I don't know - 'cause I wasn't around in that era, I don't know what happened sort of close to that. Because you had the media back then as well.

Yeah.

So it couldn't have really been.

Well, no - we didn't have social media. It was newspapers. And I guess the Guardian probably would have been sympathetic, would have written synthetic articles, and the Morning Star. But that's about it. All the other, all the other newspapers would have, would have said we were mad, lesbian feminists, anarchists, communists. (Laughs). They would have just painted us as you know, just mad women. In-fact I think I remember that's what they did.

I think I read some stuff, stuff like that.

Yeah, yeah.

Do you think it got more negative than positive?

Yeah, definitely. Definitely. Well, the media is just the same as it is now. Was owned - although it's worse now than it was then. But even so in those days, there was really only, well, maybe the Daily Mirror. The

Morning Star, and the Guardian would be the only ones that would report in any way positively about, about what we were doing. But even then, you know, they were, they, because of the women who did stay at the camp, had um, abandoned their role as mothers and wives and whatever. Um. You know, they were accused of neglecting their children and all the rest of it and you know, yeah. So it was, you know, the usual kind of stereotypical descriptions of, of women who speak up for themselves, who have got an opinion and who want to change things.

And it's ironic to me because the fact that they are women makes it even more - I don't know what the right word is, but because they were the ones that had the children and, and they left their families, or they brought the families with them, because they were the ones that don't really have as much of a voice as men, that's why it was so important for them to be there.

Absolutely. And they were thinking about their children's future, most definitely they were.

Exactly. Exactly. And I sort of thought well they were thinking of people my age, they were thinking - I wasn't even born then, but they were thinking of people like me and how my life would be more peaceful. Yeah, it's really, really amazing. Just looking at what other questions I've got on here, so I don't forget to ask any. Oh I think you've answered a lot of them, actually. Oh that's a good one. How did your experiences change your relationships with men, or authority figures?

They didn't change my relationship with men at all. Um, except, well, I don't know if it would have changed my relationship with men. But I - as I said, it was the first time in my life I'd ever seen this amazing power of thousands of women together. That was just mind blowing. But I had a very supportive boyfriend at that time.

Oh that's good.

And yeah, and I was living - in no way was I constrained by my relationship with him I was living the life I wanted to lead, I was at college as a mature student. Actually no in 1982 I'd already split up with him. Yeah, but, it was not, it was not a kind of fractious or difficult breakup, it just wasn't working for us. But, yeah, I was living the life I wanted to lead, I'd gone to university, um, complete without any idea of, this is what you could do in those days - I had no idea of a career, just I didn't want to be a typist anymore. Because I was a typist in a translation agency, which was really interesting. And they were lovely people. But all I was ever doing was other people's work - just typing it up, because this is before computers. So we had these word processing machines. So going to uni, I did Development Studies, and I was absolutely fascinated by it. And I, you know, I was one I was, I'd do the homework, I'd go to the seminars, I always had opinions about everything, because you've been working in an office for 5 years, and you're bored out of your crust, going to university and being able to sit in the library and read interesting books, just like being in heaven. So...

Exactly the same as me. Literally the same. I worked for 5 years, I'm 25 now. So I worked from when I was - full time work from when I was about 18 to when I was about 24. Then last year I went to uni.

Yeah.

And it's freedom.

Yeah. So I didn't you know, didn't really feel constrained by a relationship with a man in that respect.

Okay.

And the men that I knew were - I got on with them okay.

Yeah. Okay.

So I've been very lucky in my life, in that respect. I've never suffered any, any abuse or any issues or problems.

That's awesome. That's really good. You hear some...

So I'm afraid it didn't - I wouldn't say that going to Greenham really changed my relationship with men.

Okay. That's fine. You didn't have to. Yeah, that's fine. Let's have a look on here. What was your relation like the local residents?

Didn't see any of them.

Didn't see any?

No. No.

Oh, interesting. Okay.

I mean, it's right out in the country. You know, the women that lived at the camp would have had relationships with the local people, because they would have had to go to the shops, and get food and other kinds of supplies.

Yeah. Okay.

And so then the locals would have identified them because of their appearance, the clothes they were wearing and their behaviour, I guess. And I'm imagining somewhere like, what was the nearest town is it Reading? I can't remember. But anyway, it's like English small town. And, err, you know, I imagine it wouldn't have been terribly easy. But going there on the demonstration - one time we went on a bus, a friend of mine had a bus, and took us in his bus. (Laughs). I can't remember why now. (Laughs). I think that's the time I took Lucy. She was most impressed that we went all the way in a double decker bus driven by this friend of mine. And then another time I went in my car, I had a little

Morris Traveller. I remember that we saw - one, with my friends, and one of my friends saw the police writing down my, or making - taking a photo of my registration number. I thought well, so they've got my registration number - so what? You know, they were probably taking them photos of everybody that was arriving.

Yeah, I assume so. Yeah one thing I actually wanted to ask was did you see like how they ran the camp like how they brought in sanitary products or clothes?

There was just masses of sharing really, you'd arrive there and there'd be a bonfire or fire or some kind, and people would be sitting around drinking tea usually. And there'd be somebody in a tent making tea or whatever, maybe making some food, and then you know, you just give them the food that you brought, and then sit down and you know, people will share everything and just have a cup of tea with them, have a chat with them.

Yeah, we were all really interested in how they brought the food and the clothes.

You'd have to ask somebody who lived there. Have you - will you have interviews with any of the women who lived there?

Yes, I believe so. I've got one in Taunton, I think, next week.

Excellent. Now that's when you'll get your really useful information.

That's fine. Yeah. No, what you've given me is super useful though.

Good.

Let me see what else, 'cause there are some really, really good questions on here. Um. Did you go to a certain gate when you got that?

I can't remember - I went to the main gate, certainly.

That's fine.

Yeah. I can't remember.

There were so many. Blue Gate? I'm trying to figure out what they all were now.

Yeah, I don't know. Honestly, I don't remember. I think the main gate - maybe the Yellow Gate.

Okay.

I certainly didn't go to the Violet Gate because I'm not religious. I might have gone to the Green Gate. I really can't remember.

That's fine, it's a long time ago.

Yeah.

A lot happened as well.

I mean, I think, I think that some of the most powerful things were when we circled the base. And so, and we were all holding hands and there, you knew that there were thousands of women because it was huge. Oh look, there's a squirrel in the tree. (Laughs). He's going to get the seeds. He hangs upside down. Have a look! (Laughs). He can't quite get at it- sorry to distract you. What was I saying? Oh yeah, when we, and that was very, very powerful, and when we linked hands - when we, there was a human chain between Aldermaston and Greenham. That's the one I've got, I've got photos of that.

I think I've seen some photos of that actually, at the...

That's a good one. So there's some of the people - we had this wonderful marching band used to come on events.

Really?

Yeah, they were great, there's another one, and some great banners.

Thank you.

And so there's some women holding hands, and so knowing that that chain was going on for I don't know how many miles that is from Greenham to Aldermaston.

I don't have a clue. It looks quite cold.

Yeah, it was, it was December. Was it December? No, it was April, April. 14 miles - human chain from Aldermaston to... that's pretty powerful. Yeah. I think that was at the main gate, that caravan. So err, yeah, that thing about holding hands was just really powerful because you just knew there were thousands and thousands of other women doing it. And we all, we were all trying to stop this evil thing that was happening to our country and to the world. It was really empowering.

Yes. To see other people doing...

To be part of it.

Yeah. And just seeing it happen.

Yeah. Yeah.

Emotional.

Yeah.

Seeing everyone's the same as you, and everyone had the same sort of - everyone was there, and you couldn't see how many people were there, because it was 14 miles long.

Yeah.

Just tells you how many people were in that chain.

Well, we were hanging around for ages. It was really cold, you can see in the photos.

Yeah, looks cold.

And then finally we've got the signal somehow, somewhere that the chain had been formed.

That's crazy.

Yeah. It's really, really moving.

Yeah. Wow. And there's one I wanted to ask you,

Yeah, ask away.

Um, trying to find it. Yeah. So you talked about you had experienced of...so it says what were and have subsequently been your experiences of NVDA - nonviolent direct action - you talked about that bit at the start?

No.

Okay.

No, I've never done anything like that.

You've never done...

Since, no.

Okay, that's fine. Um...

And quite shortly after that, in 1984, um, I got my job, got the job more, I started the career that I've been following ever since, which is working with cooperatives. And so that really took up my life full time. And I felt like, and still do that in my work I was living my politics. So I did - I mean, I've been on demonstrations, obviously - against the Iraq War, although it seems kind of pointless to be honest. Because nobody pays any attention. But I you know, you go because you just want to feel that solidarity with other people. So I've been on a few demonstrations, but I've never, I've never sat down in the road and allowed myself to be carried off and arrested, or any of that. I've always kind of wanted to keep my - I've never, I've never wanted to, it was never my, my way of working. My way of working is, is different to that. And I respect people that do it. But it's not for me.

No, that's fine.

So, yeah.

That's fine. So when you left the last - did you say you went three or four times?

Yeah.

When you left the last time, did you know that was going to be the last time that you were there?

I couldn't remember which one that was actually.

Okay. That's fine. I was just interested.

I mean, I didn't - when I left, I wouldn't have realised it was for the last time.

No, no, of course. You wouldn't have said nope, not coming back anymore?

Yeah.

No, that's cool. So how would you sum up your experience do you think in like a sentence - if you can, or in a couple of words? I don't know if it's too big for that?

No, one of the most moving and powerful experiences of my life.

Wow, okay.

Unforgettable, although, 'til you got in touch with me, apparently it had been forgotten - just was part of my past. I think I'd never forgotten it. It was just like part of my history. Part of what made me the person I am, I guess.

Were you quite young when you went there?

Early 20s.

Okay. What did you think when they got in touch with you? Or you got in touch with us?

Oh, I was delighted. Absolutely delighted, because then I realised, of-course, no one's talked about it since. And nobody knows. So I think it's a fantastic initiative. Well done. Brilliant. Excellent. Excellent.

It is, yeah. How did you hear about it?

I think there was an email.

Okay.

Maybe it's Bristol Woman's Voice.

Okay, cool. Let me see what else we've got, there's some really good questions people have put on here. Um, if - is there anything you would change, if you went back, that you did? Or you did everything you wanted to do?

Yeah, no, no, I think there isn't - I mean, yeah. No, I don't think there is really anything I would change. No, in the circumstances, I did what I could at the time.

Yeah. Did you have any sort of I don't know what the right word is, interaction with the police or people that were there?

No. Saw them.

Okay. Okay.

Probably shouted at them! (Laughs).

Yeah. Probably - a lot of people did to be fair. How did your - I don't know if you're living with family then, because you were, had children.

Yeah.

How did they feel about you going there? Even if you didn't stay over - just being there?

They um, I can't actually remember.

No. That's fine.

They would have supported me. I really can't remember. My father was extremely radical - he got more radical the older he got. Normally people get more conservative with a small c the older they get. My father was completely the opposite.

Wow!

(Laughs). It was great.

You think that's why you did things like that?

I guess. Yes. Yes. I guess I was brought up in a, in a, in a quite a radical - well not that radical to be honest, not that radical. But certainly I think you could say my family was - my father certainly was quite left leaning. And he was a Labour candidate in Hammersmith when he was a young man. But he didn't have much time for the Labour Party, ever really. He wasn't a joiner - he's the kind of person that sits in his armchair and criticises! (Laughs).

Oh right! Yeah. People!

But I think he would have - yeah, if I told him about it, which I would have done, I imagine, I'm pretty sure he would have been really supportive. Yeah, he certainly wouldn't have been - he wouldn't have criticised me for going.

No, doesn't sound like it. Okay, where did you grow up to? Did you grow up in London, did you say?

I was born in London, I grew up in Haywards Heath in Sussex, and Cuckfield in Sussex, school in Brighton. Yeah, I'm very grateful for that my parents decided to move out of London when we I was about 10, and my brothers were a bit younger. It was great. We grew up in the country - I was just young enough to enjoy climbing trees and messing around in streams and stuff like That was great. Yeah, we were very lucky.

I'm from a town, so I'm pretty jealous. Countryside now. How did you come to Bristol then? Was it when you were older?

Oh, it's a long story - I've lived all over the place.

Oh have you?

Let's not waste your...

It's fine!

Yeah, yeah, I came to Bristol to be nearer my daughter, my grandchildren to give them a bit of a hand.

Yeah, that's fine. Um, let's have a look at what other people, just trying to find the questions that are best - there's a lot on here. Um, yeah, do keep in touch with anyone. I think we've answered that pretty well. Sorry about this. There's just so many that I wanted to sort of pick out.

That's fine. Take your time.

Sort of some questions that are a bit too - I wouldn't like to be asked them myself. So did it sort of, so being there, did it sort of affect you - for, has it sort of stayed with you, I'm guessing because it sort of stayed with you for quite a while, is it one of the biggest things that you've done in that sort of field?

Yes, yes, yes in protests. I think - I didn't, I didn't really discover feminism 'til I was quite old. So about probably 1981 when I went to, when I went to university as a mature student. Until then, I was a bit of a hippie in my youth. And so I kind of thought all of that stuff about sexism and gender didn't really apply to me because I was a hippie, which is absolutely the stupidest thing ever. (Laughs). Because, you know, all of that stuff about free love, you know, well it benefits the men, it benefits the boys, but you know, it's the women who get, get pregnant or whatever, you know, perhaps they're not really ready for it and all the rest of it. So, and I never, I was just blind to all of that. But when I went to uni, I joined the feminist society, and I would say going to Greenham really strengthened my belief in feminism. I would say yeah.

Just because you could see how big...

Just seeing, just seeing the power of women together - acting together.

Yeah, sounds amazing. Similar to me, I didn't get into feminism until I started uni, because I think it opens your eyes to a lot of stuff when you start uni.

Yeah, yeah.

Because you're around so many different people and everyone's got their own voice and you think oh my gosh, I've been working just full time. That's all I've been doing. Um. And going home and going back out again, haven't really been getting out too much and meeting a lot of people. I sort of came out a bit really into feminism, and it was crazy that I'm now so into it, because 2 years ago, I wouldn't have even, I don't think if people would have said that something to me in the street, I wouldn't have even - I would have just laughed it off, I wouldn't have even bothered to - but now I would be I'm just crazy. I just go a bit crazy. (Laughs).

No, it's not crazy, it's very important.

It is very important. And I feel sometimes I'm - there's too much I do, but or go too far, but I don't know. It's just crazy how much..

If you can't go too far when you're at uni, when can you go too far?

That's true.

(Laughs).

In every aspect. (Laughs).

Yeah, yeah.

No, that's very true. So was it your first year that you that you joined the feminist society?

Yeah, yeah. And then I joined um, the Women's Aid, there was a local refuge and I joined the management committee of that, and found out all about domestic abuse and, you know, just absolute horror. So I guess I kind of got involved in all of that, really. So that would have been as a result of going to Greenham, so I think it you know, made me more aware.

Yeah, and were you part of that for the whole time of uni?

Yeah. And afterwards, yeah.

Wow. Okay. I'm thinking about joining mine. So after this I'm definitely going to. It's having the time to do all my stuff. Yeah, a lot of things at the minute. (Laughs). Do you sort of, you mention Greenham to people that you've sort of been friends with over the years?

Never.

Never?

Well maybe years ago, but recently, in recent memory no never. As I say, I kind of consigned it to my my history. And really it was just this project and thinking about it and thinking, trying to remember what it was like, and thinking what I wanted to say about it. Um, has made me want to talk about it more.

Wow, that's amazing.

In-fact, when I found that video on on YouTube, I, I forwarded it to loads of people.

Did you?

Yeah, because it's great. It's really great.

It is. Yeah, we were worried that - well not worried, but we didn't know sort of whether woman would if they would want to talk about it. Because it was quite emotional for a lot of women, I think.

Oh, yeah, especially if you actually lived there.

Exactly. And yeah, and if they had suffered abuse or...

Yeah - there will be women who had very difficult experiences who won't want to remember it. But in itself, I think must be remembered. And those of us who have positive memories must remember it. And you know, my grandchildren - my granddaughter knows nothing about it whatsoever. I've got to tell her.

Yeah.

I've got to talk to her about it.

Yeah. Definitely.

She's 16. And just, you know, coming up really feisty and really opinionated, which is kind of irritating sometimes (laughs), but no, she's lovely. She's really lovely. But she really knows her own mind. She wants to work in the conservation of animals.

Nice. That's really cool.

She's at Sixth Form college.

Yeah, nice. Um, so the women that you saw - were they around same age - were there a lot of people that were...

Oh, all ages, all ages. I must have been using, about my late mid to late 30s when I went there, and there were women, younger than me - much

younger than me, older than me, and much older than me. There were very old women there, and very young women, and children. Mostly, I would say around in their 20s and 30s and 40s. But certainly, I saw loads of older women, and loads of younger women.

Okay, that's cool. I was sort of interested in...

Really wide age range.

I suppose everyone - it's not really something that you can not want to do.

Yeah, I imagine the people who stayed at the camp would have been younger women, because it would be quite difficult to live out in those conditions if you are older. But certainly the people that attended the demonstrations and Embrace the Base and all the rest of it, were all ages.

Okay. And were they - were some of them quite similar to you. In that they went there only to - for certain, or demonstrations or...

I guess because there were there weren't thousands of women living there all the time. There were a handful of women at each gate. But then hundreds of thousands of women would turn up for these events.

So they were quite big...

Huge. Yeah, yes.

So a lot more people went. Yeah. Sort of makes sense in a way. I sort of just pictured this massive sort of like, community and loads of tents, I guess, I wouldn't know what...

No, no, no, because the gates, the gates came out onto a road, so there wasn't a lot of space for camping. So they were quite small the camps at each gate. So it wasn't like a festival or anything like that. No, it was

not. No, no. Yeah, it would have been like, but you need, as I say, you, if you talk to this woman at Taunton who actually stayed there, you'll get much more accurate information than I can give you.

That's fine. That's fine. People have got different experiences haven't they - a lot different...Some more interesting questions. Has it made you quite emotional talking about it?

Yeah, sometimes it does, some things. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, I imagine it does. Has it made you talk about it more? Since you've been in touch with us?

Um...

This isn't a question, I'm just curious.

Yes. Not really. But I will do, I will do. Yeah.

That's good. Did you ever take anything into the camp for women to use? Did you ever...

I took food. Yeah.

Oh, you said before. Yeah. That's good. Yeah. Okay. That's cool.

You'd always take something.

Yeah.

You wouldn't go empty handed.

No, that's good, it means that there was a lot of stuff there at one time, and people could live there because they were able to.

Yeah.

Because they had the stuff there.

Yeah. There's a video I found on YouTube that actually films the women dancing on the silo on New Year's New Year's Eve. Yeah.

Oh, wow.

Yeah. You not seen that one?

I don't think so.

That is fantastic. It's on YouTube.

I'm going on YouTube when I get home.

Have a look.

I see one or two, at the thing-y, at the what was it called? Presentation evening, meeting we had. I don't know if you would know this or not, what was the medical treatment like there?

Never saw it.

Never saw it, that's fine.

I imagine it was DIY. Probably herbal medicine.

You think so? Yeah. Maybe. Um, what detail or like specific moment would you say summed it up for you, if there is one that summed it up for you?

I think the women trying to pull the fence down, and the scared faces of the soldiers the other side of the fence. They were just like kids really. They had never seen anything like it.

When they quite young?

Yeah, they were. They could have been our sons. Grandsons in some cases. There was some older women there as well. And yeah, just this absolute fury of just we're going to get rid of this, it's going to go, and you just kind of forgot yourself, and just got hold of fence, and rocking it back and forwards. I think it was too strong for us to pull down but maybe they did pull it down in some places. I can't really remember. But I think that was probably a pretty unforgettable moment.

Yeah, because it just seems like they're just overwhelmed, they don't know what to do. They're supposed to be there to, they're supposed to be there an authority figure.

Yeah, and we were symbolic of figures of authority in their own lives, because we were like, as I say we were like their mothers, or their aunts or their grandmothers.

And it just didn't bother you - it didn't stop you from doing anything?

No, of course not. They were poor misguided sods, I felt sorry for them. (Laughs).

Yeah I think I would as well.

They just joined the army 'cause they would keep - just you know like any young person joins the army because they're just lied to, and seduced by offers of learning a trade, and learning a skill and seeing the world, and all the rest of them stuff they go on about you know. And we thought you know this base was threatening our security, and our safety. I can remember being terrified to listen to the news sometimes, and I would go under the pillows, put the pillows over my head so I couldn't hear it. And then I remember thinking there was - hearing a plane coming over, and thinking it was gonna stop, drop a bomb on us or something. I was really, it wasn't like the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was really scary, but it was a very um, it was a very kind of, I can't think

what quite what the word is. But we were all very, very aware of the fact that there was this arms race going on between the United States and, and the USSR. And um, you know, and we knew there could just be an accident any minute for a kickoff, you know, and since then been vindicated because there's some really terrible stories about near misses, that, you know, where nuclear war actually was avoided by, you know, only just avoided.

You just don't know, do you?

You don't know, you don't know. But you suspect, and it was a really frightening time to be alive. Well given that it's bloody frightening now, let's face it, sorry, excuse me.

That's fine.

But, um, yeah, so I just thought they were misguided fools, really - kids, you know, I felt sorry for them. But all I'm saying is I don't want to criticise them especially, and I wasn't thinking about them critically. I was just noticing the fear on their faces and realising that, you know, the women on this side of the fence were, were threatening to them.

Yeah, they might not have known that they could find women that threatening.

Yeah, no, never. Never

It's crazy. Were you scared when you were there that anything was gonna happen?

No, I felt very safe, there.

That's really good.

As I said it was this bizarre mixture of, of joy and humour, and blind fury. (Laughs).

I can't imagine it to be honest.

No, I've never been involved in anything before or since. Because you go on a demonstration, like, you know, go in Hyde Park, all the rest of it. And it's all jolly, you've got songs to sing. We used to sing 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out'. And it's all very jolly and it's fellowship and you're realising, yeah, there's solidarity and other people feel the way that I do. But you know, the demonstration's not gonna change anything. You might hear some inspiring speeches at the end, but there's nothing to get angry about. It does - not you know, not to me anyway.

Okay.

But this was just different really was. It was more personal.

So you felt that you had to - not had to be there but um...

Yeah, I did feel I had to be. Yeah, I wanted to be there.

Definitely.

As much as I could.

Yeah, definitely.

Yeah.

It was something that was so close to you, that you wanted to be a part of and you were proud to be there.

Yeah.

I'm guessing you were proud to be there?

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I'm glad I'm remembering it and it's coming back to me.

Yeah, that's great. It helps me!

Yeah.

I'm not, I don't know think jealous is the right word to use, but I'll maybe never get to experience that myself as a sort of feminist - being somewhere like that and doing something like that.

You never know!

Never know. And I kind of wish that I, I was there. Made me think a lot actually. Was there, I'm guessing there was - was there many men there?

On, not, on the demonstrations there were some right. But the vast majority were women.

Yeah, of-course.

And you can see in the photos, the men were...

I've got a question here that says it seems that aggression and violence from the military and the police was quite prevalent

I never experienced that.

No, it's it's um...

That's as near as I got to the police. Trying to see this photo.

They look very young in there.

Yes, it was the young soldiers behind that were standing behind the fence that impressed me.

The horses! That's the only way they could be higher than everybody else.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Give some real psychological advantage being on a horse.

Yeah, it sounds like it.

There looks like there's quite a few men and that was the Aldermaston chain.

Oh yeah. Giving directions. People just having bags handed down, there's houses. That's really good. One of them's actually smiling - police officer.

Yeah. Yeah.

Looking at the camera. Did a lot of people sort of take cameras in and things, and take photos?

I guess they did. Yes. There's no photo of me there. I seem to be the one with the camera.

Seems to be yeah, seems to be.

Shame.

Your photos that you took when you were there.

Yeah. Yeah. These are all photos that I took when I was there. Yeah.

That's really good.

So we did - there wasn't so much snapping of photos then as there is now, we just take photos of everything all the time. (Laughs).

Yeah. I imagine have been a lot different now if it happened because it would have been social media everywhere wouldn't it?

Yeah, yeah.

And it would have been photos, and it would have been people joining in from everywhere all over the world. Well, they did anyway. But you can do live feeds now, you can see everything when you're - wherever you are in the world. You can be together when you're so far apart. Especially because that's how I've been raised, well, with mobile phones and things I can't really imagine a time where people didn't have - I remember phones, like house phones, but before that, I can't imagine not having any of that.

No.

As people - obviously they lived. They lived. That was their teenager years. Um. Do you think that Greenham still plays a part in activism? It's - I don't know if I worded that right or not.

Well it doesn't exist does it?

No. What tactics from Greenham do you still see at play in activism - politics, or you don't think there's a lot there?

It's difficult to say, because Greenham common itself was a place, it was an object that you could go to and demonstrate against, and say we want we want this base closed down, we want the cruise missiles gone. Whereas there isn't - I suppose, I don't know - is there still a United States Air Force base in Scotland?

Not sure. I'll be honest.

Because there was, there were lots of demonstrations there. And I guess they might well have have used, um, but I think in a way the tactics have, have developed, because um, and people are doing things now, like going into um, airfields and stopping flights taking off that have got people who are being forcibly returned repatriated.

Yeah.

So I think there's people who've been in court for that just recently. Um. So I think I mean, it's hard to say that the tactics, I mean, I don't know enough.

No.

Because, again, I think you probably - that would be a really good question to ask the woman that you're going to interview who actually stayed there.

Okay.

But I think probably the tactics are the same, but they've evolved according to the different situations that people are faced with today. But it's still putting your physical body on the line, isn't it? I mean, with all the roads protests and everything, you know, people were chaining themselves to, to dumpers, and things like that, you know, all of those tactics that I think they would come, would have come out of Greenham, but evolved to suit the situation.

That that makes sense. That makes a lot of sense. So how does your fear, how does your fear of nuclear weapons sort of compare to when you were there, to what you're like now?

It's just part of part of the environment now. I don't even think about it. Unless I'm reading a newspaper article or listening to the news, like the latest thing that President Trump has, has said he's, he's gonna withdraw from some treaty.

Yeah.

And so now Putin has said he will too. And so you know, another step nearer a very dangerous environment. So you get scared when you hear that kind of thing. But mostly if you live your whole life with, you know, whatever the fear is, if you live your whole life with it around, eventually it just kind of merges into the wallpaper, you know. It doesn't keep me awake at night anymore like it used to.

Okay. That's interesting. Just a few more on here that I think would be good. What did you know about Greenham before you went there?

Nothing.

Nothing, absolutely nothing?

Well, I would have had um, some information from either from the CND group or from from the Students Union or wherever I found out about it. That would be like maybe one side of A4 - nothing, you know.

Okay. How did you sort of feel when you got there? Was it what you expected it to be?

I didn't know what to expect.

No.

No.

I suppose you just go into it a bit blind.

I just went open minded. I thought it was amazing what they were doing, and I just went there to support them.

Yeah, exactly.