

Rosalind Clark

So, so if we start at the beginning, you know, how did you get involved with the peace movement?

I've absolutely no - it was just around. I was living in Lancaster, and the women that I knew - university, I suppose, the university there - I was doing a teacher training course at a time, my daughter was about 2, and (exhales) - how? I've no idea how. There were there were women's discos, there were, there was a women's aid place, there was a refuge in Lancaster, and somehow I got to know these women that were involved in all those things, and in singing and music and all sorts of things. And my friend Sue used to hire a minibus and drive down to Greenham. And it seemed to end up being my job to keep her awake by talking to her. And she always drove with bare feet. I remember for miles - and we just, it was just fun. You know, it was the thing. It was the latest thing that was on - happening.

So did you start by going down on the odd occasion?

Yeah. Or for big demos.

Right.

Yeah, that's how it started.

Right.

And then I left Lancaster and went live in this women's commune up in Scotland near Laurieston. And those women were much more, I would think, really more radical than I was. And they all got arrested, put in prison. And then we had endless streams of women coming up to stay with us to recover from whatever they've been through.

Right.

So I think it became a bit of a centre really, probably.

In Glasgow?

No, this is in South West Scotland near Laurieston.

Oh right, sorry.

Kirkcudbrightshire, Laurieston Hall, it's a community.

Right.

And er, we were just young and idealistic. That's what I think now. Very idealistic! (Laughs). Challenging everything, really.

And so did you go down for the big Embrace the Base? What was that like?

Great, lots of singing, big crowds of women. It was great fun. I enjoyed it. It was good. (Laughs).

And where did you, where did you stay?

Green Gate, mostly.

Right. And what was - was green, what was the sort of the, because all of the gates had their own character didn't they?

They did. Green Gate was the more um, welcoming to ordinary women. Let's put it like that - who weren't really radicalised or anything, I think that it was more we were there to welcome women really, that's what it felt like - to make them feel okay about - you know, not to - whereas some of the others were very harsh and if you didn't look right, you didn't get in sort of thing. (Laughs).

And did you have experience of that when you first arrived? Because I guess you must have made your way to...

And then there was all the class stuff as well, and I'm very middle class, so that was a bit of a issue in some places. Soon as I opened my mouth people would go 'Oh, she's one of them', you know? (Laughs).

So what were the, what was the issue with, with class then?

Well, because we were challenging everything, I think middle class people like me had been - I'd been taught how to speak, if you like - or to speak up. I had elocution lessons at boarding school, you know, all that stuff. So I knew how to address people in a way, to some extent - not that I did much of it, because I'm quite shy, really. (Laughs). But the working class women didn't like it. They didn't like to be - just in the same way that men think that everyone ought to listen to them, they felt that middle class woman, because they spoke out, or could speak out, only spoke about one lot of people - it wasn't about everybody. And it wasn't equal, it wasn't fair, it wasn't - well, we didn't, I didn't speak for them, basically. I didn't. That's true. I can't deny that - I only spoke for myself. But um, it got to a point where I was afraid to open my mouth. I can tell you that much. You actually became so aware of all those issues. You thought oh my god, keep your mouth shut, Ros, you know. (Laughs). It was heavy, you know, it was it was making you think about all the power issues everywhere in your life, and making you think about it - whether you bloody wanted to or not, actually. (Laughs). You had to, and you had to have an opinion, and you had to have thought about it. The worst thing you could say was 'Oh, I haven't thought about that', and be naive and ignorant. That was the worst you could be.

And, was that - was, was that, did you have sort of big collective meetings where you would all get together?

Yeah. Yeah.

Because it doesn't sound like Green Gate might have been so judgmental in terms of your opinion?

No, it wasn't - it was much more vanilla-ry, I suppose you might say. (Laughs). Much more, probably more middle class as well. My impression was that the Blue Gate was much more working class, harder - women who were prepared to do more violent things as well. And that, that, and go to prison. I mean, you did have to think about am I - and I wasn't prepared to go to prison because I'd had her, and I was the only one responsible for her, and I was not going to put her in that position. So although I didn't, I wasn't completely clear about that in my own head, I didn't ever go to prison, you know what I mean, I just didn't, I didn't do things that would have got me into prison, whereas other women deliberately did. You know?

Yeah, and I think that's, you know, just nothing - I mean, the collective nature of it presumably meant that people could choose whether they did or they didn't?

Definitely, yeah, definitely. Yeah.

And how, how did you feel the collective worked - was it an effective, non-hierarchical - I mean, you've already kind of suggested there was a hierarchy in some respects - politically, or in class terms, if nothing else.

I think with most people there, there was an awareness of trying to avoid being hierarchical. So, middle class women like me, didn't, deliberately didn't take over and say - however, when it came to doing things like giving um, paper reports, or talking to the police, or dealing with authority in one way or another, those women who were middle class were much actually better at it, in terms of being on the same - knowing how to be polite was helpful, you know what I mean? Whereas if you were just screaming, shouting 'You bastards,, dah, dah, dah, dah.', you know, it wasn't gonna work. Know what I mean? So in some situations, the more middle class people inevitably did the talking, I would say, the negotiating.

Yeah, I do get the impression that um, women were very, because of the non-violent direct action, that violence in language as well wasn't really the way that, you know, it seemed cleverer than that.

Yes, exactly.

And humour seemed to be used quite a lot as well. To, to almost, you know, in - sometimes in a gentle way and sometimes possibly not, to mock the authorities.

Yeah.

And you know, prick their bubbles sort of thing.

Yes, definitely. There was a lot of creative things that people, people did, individuals did, that were really clever, really clever and really, um, what's the word circuitous - or sort of, you know like clowning can be very revolutionary actually, but it does it in a way that the you don't even realise they're doing it - very clever, very not direct. So there was a lot of stuff that happened like that, that was brilliant, you know really good.

What sort of stuff? Can you remember anything?

I remember there was, there was a woman artist there who did some amazing work. I can't - oh, what's her name? Blimey. Was it Jay. I think she went up and lived in the Hebrides at one point. She did some really clever art stuff, using, using rubbish - in effect, stuff that was just around. She would make things - like make scarecrow like wild figures - and just great, you know, really imaginative, and she definitely worked on her. She just had a particular quirky way of seeing things, and would get on with doing it her own - very quietly, but just do something, but it would be just spot on, you know, just, yeah, great.

And were there any sort of art as protest type things that you can remember?

No.

No?

Not really.

No, I mean, I think, I think the the sanitary towel on the, on the fence is, is...

Yes.

I mean that for me is quite an artistic protest.

Yes. Yeah, definitely. Yeah.

Sorry, go on.

Shocking, but in a, not in a harsh way, I suppose you could say. But clever in undermining, devious ways. (Laughs).

Yeah, undermining is a good word I think, from what I've seen. It just, yeah.

And in terms of the contact between the guards and the police on the gates as well, we talked to them, we laughed with them, we, you know, we tried to get them to see our points of view, you know, not be our enemies - not be - and some of them, it worked with some of them, you know. And in the end, I think that is what worked. You know, it did work - it did stop - that whole base closed down. And I think it was all those much softer, direct communication things that worked best, really.

So how, how did they respond to you, the police and the soldiers?

Well very differently. Some of them were not even going to talk to you, you don't even exist. Others were chatty, and humorous, and fine - just

depended, you know. But it did depend on part how we were with them as well. It was an exchange, you know.

And are there any conversations you can particularly remember with them?

No! (Laughs). I can't.

That's alright. Yeah, it's again, some of the women have told me that they had conversations where soldiers had said 'Oh yeah, I've got a sister on the other side'.

Yes, exactly. You got to know them, because they were there for a while, you know? And they were bored anyway, standing around on this gate, in the freezing cold middle of winter. They loved it when we were all singing and dancing! (Laughs).

So were songs a big part of Greenham?

Oh, big. Yeah, yeah. Well for me anyway, because I'm a bit of a singer, so I loved it.

And were the songs just sung - was it around the campfire sort of thing, or was it just all time?

Lots around the campfires. But when we did the circling of the base things, songs would come round - I mean this, it's few miles long, would come round - different songs, lots of different songs. Um, circling around, circling around the - what's that one? Um, (songs) 'Wearing my long tail feathers as I...', you know that one?

Yeah.

There were lots of songs that went around that people knew, and that just sort of got taken up and moved around. You know?

What, what difference do you think singing made?

Oh, I just think it brings people together, I think it's a wonderful thing, enjoyable, uniting thing really.

And do you think that, that feeling of being united was important to the, to the protest? Or just to the women generally?

Yeah. Yeah, it was for me definitely.

And was it...

And empowering, because we were all, because I suppose - yeah my one of my best friends Aggie had a car - she was a mechanic, and it was all the sorts of women who could do things like that who became really important. Because she could mend cars, and that was really needed. We didn't want to go to garage where there was a man who's gonna do - wanted Aggie to do it, you know? So 'Aggie, come over to this gate, battery's run out' - you know, du du du du du. She was quite a heroine really, and she ended up going all around Canada doing talks about Greenham as well. Nearly knackered her completely, but yeah, she became quite heroine.

Wow, what an opportunity, though.

Yeah. Yeah, she was paid for - everything paid for and looked after - she went all around Canada, giving talks and slideshows, and everything.

So did you ever get involved with with the, the money at the camp or anything like that?

No.

No. And what, what was, how, how were the, the sort of meetings where everybody came together - the sort of more collective meetings, were

they - how were they sort of run in terms of the, the non-hierarchical collective manner? How did women get to...?

I don't remember them. I'm not really somebody who enjoys meetings much, to be honest. I probably just avoided them like the plague. My impression was that they were very mixed, and that some - that there were big arguments that went on as well as, you know, that it was like it was just, it was a time of questioning, everything. Everything, even the language that you used was liable to be jumped on, you know, you had to be really careful what you said, for fear of being 'Bloody patriarchal' language (laughs). You had to mind your Ps and Qs. Definitely. So I think I tended to avoid actually, I tended to avoid all those sorts of situations really. And what I enjoyed doing was the singing and the dancing and the more sociable stuff, I suppose, really.

And so, when - you started visiting when Hannah was 2, and you were, you were still, but did you then go and live at Greenham at some point?

No, I never actually lived there. But some of the women that I lived with in Scotland did.

Right. So you - from when she was 2 'til 4 you toed and froed?

Yeah.

Right. Yeah. That's quite a long time of, particularly if you'd moved to Scotland, that must have been quite a commitment?

I mean, I moved all the time, I was one of these people who just, I think when I was young, I just went where the energy was to be honest. You know, I just thought, oh, yeah, this is good fun, let's go there, you know, this is where - I was a right hippie before that, you know what I mean. I just, I feel like I was just born in 1951, at a time when, after the wars, I suppose people wanted something better. And all that optimism that we were born into somehow, I just rode that wave, I think, with, you

know, gurus and meditation and going to India, all that sort of stuff. I just did it all - just did it all, and I loved it.

That's a really interesting connection, I think, - the post war, because I think you know, women had that, that sudden liberations -

Exactly.

... jobs and what they were allowed to do, and then just went straight...

There would be mothers - my mother hated it. She'd been a nurse in the war and loved it, and hated being a suburban housewife. And I think her frustration, and her sense of women can be more than what she was brought up to be, certainly. We inherited that, you know, we picked up on that, and it's free education - all the things we had free, free education went to university and didn't pay a penny. You know, it was brilliant. It was a brilliant time to be young, and you could just get a job if you wanted. There were hundreds of jobs. It was easy. So much easier than it is now - so much more difficult for young people, now - much, much more difficult. I felt, I felt and I had had a very supportive father, who was, you know, certainly much more enlightened than most men, probably. And a Quaker, and all sorts of good things. You know, what I mean, I had a lot of good upbringing, really, that encouraged me to be very confident and believe that I had the right to do what the hell I wanted. And I did.

So, so was the, was religion sort of visible at the camp?

Oh, it was interesting. A lot of the Quaker pacifist groups came to the camp, and you could tell them - they were mostly older women for a start. And they were quietly very strong. You know, and you had to admire their quiet determination - you know, they were great. I really enjoyed meeting some of them. And some very intelligent, highly educated, um, and articulate women. Yeah.

So how old were you when you went there - so you would have been...

27/28.

Yeah. And in the conversation with Kate, you said that you also realised that a lot of the women who had gone to Greenham were quite damaged. Can you tell me more about that?

Well, after I left the community, I lived in Scotland and went to live further south. I did a therapy training, and - which was a bodywork therapy training, and er, became a therapist. And with Aggie, actually did lots of workshops all over the country. And the style that we were trained in was very much about expressing yourself in one way or another. And it actually involved a lot of screaming, shouting, bashing - letting it all out basically, (laughs), which for a lot of women, they had never been given permission to do that. And so it all came out. And, you know, now I think it wasn't very um, perhaps not wise in some ways to get people to do that sort of thing on a weekend and then send them home to cope with the results. You know, what I mean, it was a bit irresponsible perhaps. But it did sort of - it did allow a lot of expression of things that hadn't been expressed before, put it like that. And a lot of abuse stuff came up - hell of a lot, hell of a lot. It was like a sort of a hidden thing, that actually was coming out at that time, you know, beginning to come out, as it has done more and more, I suppose, ever since. And a lot of the - a lot of the women certainly that I met in Todmorden, I lived in Todmorden in Lancashire for a while, which is quite a lesbian stronghold now anyway. They hated men because of the ways that they'd been treated by their fathers, uncles or whatever. And didn't know that a lot people didn't realise that that was what was behind it, and only through doing therapy did they discover that they'd been abused, or whatever you know, so. I mean, oh I don't know. I don't hate men. I never did hate man - let's put it, so I'm different like that, I had a very good father and um, I did find it all a bit - why do they hate men so much? Why are they so - 'All men are absolutely...' - you know, that's what they used to say. Really? 'All men are absolutely...', wait a minute you know so and so isn't, or so and so isn't, you know what? And although I was really into creating a society which worked without men

in lots of ways, I didn't hate them like that, really I didn't, so I think I was coming from a different place.

And were these, these were women that came up for these workshops from from Greenham for the weekend?

No all over the country, this was later.

Right, right.

It's, this was - that would be more in the 1980s.

Right.

And on the training.

And do you think that was a an attitude that was held in some of the camps in, at Greenham?

Yeah.

For the same reasons, do you think? The same kind of, the same route in terms of abuse, or..?

Well, there was all the political stuff as well of-course, I mean you know, patriarchy, basically, but also, I think it was the first - maybe for a lot of people, it was the first time they had been in only women situations, and just living without men makes you realise a lot of things, you know, it just does. 'Well, what can't we do? What can we do?' 'Oh, we can do, we can do this, we can do that. We can do everything!' You know, I mean, it was great. It was very empowering. Very empowering. And very supportive. I met Monica Sjoo when I was on a demo going across Salisbury Plain, and we became good friends. And she was an amazing woman. I really liked her - a lot of people found her difficult, but I think perhaps because I was tall, and loud, and confident - like she was, you know, we just 'Yeah, you're alright', you know, we handled each other.

And I remember where there was a circle, I think at Green, Green Gate probably, where - I don't know, how did it happen? I don't know whether I was already starting to do therapy in effect, or counselling, maybe it was the co-counselling thing. But we were all getting into our feelings about men, let's put it like that. And she just went for it, Monica did, and er, I held her and grounded her. And I suppose that's partly where I discovered I could do that, you know, I mean, I could actually be a rock. So, even for someone like Monica. Yeah. I think my personality is such that I tend to be more of a support person than a rebel rouser. Let's put like that - that's my character. So that was the role that I found myself in more.

So, um, in terms of how er, you lived when you went down there, would, would you stay in somebody's bender, or did you have...

Or make a bender. Yeah.

Right, right. Yeah. And how did you learn how to do that?

Looked at others and worked it out, I suppose. But, I mean, there were all sorts of benders, and all sorts of amazing structures. Some more successful than others! (Laughs). Oh dear! I mean, I'd camped all my life, so I've always been an outdoorsy sort of person. I've always had those skills, really. Yeah.

And so, you were obviously there sort of towards the '84 was it, when they started doing the evictions? And what, what was that like - that must have been quite, quite frightening in some respects? Because the bailiffs were fairly...

I don't think I was frightened by anything - I'm in, when I was young I rode motorbikes, I went travelling, I did anything I wanted, and nothing really fazed me. I wasn't the sort of person to be frightened by anything, really. (Laughs). I'm a bit more cautious nowadays - in those days I was up for anything, really! (Laughs). 'Yeah, come on, let's do it! Yeah, come on!' (Laughs).

So how was, how - what happened during the evictions? What did you get, like any advance notice?

Sometimes there would be screaming 'Wooooaaahh'. You know, various things, you'd all wake up and grab your stuff, and run, or stay there and get caught, or do whatever you did, you know.

And if you got caught, what would that mean?

If you resisted arrest, which some people, women did, they would haul you off, and take you to the cells and book you, and then the whole court process thing went on. Um. I don't know how, but I managed not to get caught somehow - one way or another. I didn't actually get caught. (Laughs).

And did you ever go on to the base?

Yeah. Oh yeah, did all sorts of stuff - I was cutting the fence, all that sort of business.

And those things sound like the sorts of things that you could get arrested for?

Yes. But I mean, to get arrested you had to stand your ground and be arrested. If you hightailed it off, they wouldn't catch you.

Right.

I mean, so I mean, that's what I did, basically, I didn't get - I made sure I didn't get arrested.

And have you still got your bolt cutters?

No! (Laughs). Bolt cutters just came and went through one's hands. I didn't own any! (Laughs).

(Laughs). Some women have still got theirs.

Have they? Painted green and purple! (Laughs).

Who knows! I haven't seen them. So how, when your daughter tells you things about how scared she was, and her getting arrested and so on. How do you feel about that?

Guilty, thoroughly guilty. I don't think I should have exposed her to that. I should have looked after her better. I certainly should have recognised that she's a Cancerian, I'm an Aries. I mean, she's a quiet, creative - she's not like me, know what I mean. I should have recognised that and given her more security than I did, I think. I think it was hard for her being my daughter. I do think that now. But I mean, she's okay. You know, she's now a very successful theatre designer in London. She's very creative. She earns lots of money. She's doing brilliantly. Yeah. So, you know, I don't think it was the end of the world.

No, no.

I think, I think she must have had a strong enough character to be able to manage it. (Laughs). When we were at Greenham we all dyed our hair pink and blue at one point, so she, of course wanted her hair dyed pink and blue. So I took her to her working class, Middlesbrough grandmother's house to be looked after, who just freaked. 'I cannot have my granddaughter out in the street with pink hair, it's not gonna happen', put a hat on her, on Hannah's head and took her down to the hairdresser's and got her to dye it brown again. So Hannah had everything. She had a really lovely, she was a wonderful grandmother, much more supportive than my parents were, and she was the first grandchild of a Catholic family. So she was, she had a big place in the family. And they adored her, they adored her, she loved going to stay with them. So Hannah learned, she learned you can have blue hair up in Scotland, but down in Middlesbrough, you do not have blue hair. It's not going to happen. (Laughs). And I think that's good for kids. They learn.

They learn there's different rules in different places. Very different rules.

Yeah, 'cause there were, there were women who were quite scared that they were going to, that being at Greenham was going to create a situation where they might have their children taken away from them.

Absolutely. Hannah's father went to Australia, luckily, when we split up. He was very, very upset. It was dreadful. But I was adamant I was going to become a lesbian. I was not having anything more to do with men. That was it. Sorry, mate, bye bye. And the we tried to share her, but he couldn't hack it. He couldn't hack it at all. So he went off to Australia, and I was really glad. That was the best thing as far as I was concerned he could have done - because he could have taken me to court in those days, and got her off me. (Exhales). Yeah.

And did that happen to anybody that you were aware of?

No, no. Not that, but I'd heard about it. I'd heard that that can happen. In those days I think the courts thought lesbians were not fit mothers, fundamentally. And yeah. I did hear about it happening. I didn't know anyone personally. But um, yes, I was glad that he went to Australia basically.

And where is he? Is he still there now?

Yes. Yeah, we're back in touch. Things are fine. And he's, he's back in touch with Hannah, and yeah.

That sounds good. Sounds healthy.

Yes. Yeah. I'm glad I want her to have a relationship with him now, I didn't in those days. But now I do.

Well, I think, you know, that, that kind of um, ability to, to say I'm taking her is, you know, it's not an equal relationship, whereas hopefully now it

is. So, and she gets to choose as well, doesn't she, she can do what she wants to do. Um. So, do you think - do you see anywhere where the sort of non-violent direct action is, is used in sort of more recent protests? Have you seen anything you think, oh yeah, we did that we did that at Greenham - we did - any of the sort of occupy type protests or anything like that?

I really like that um, that bloke who dug tunnels - what was he called, Swampy?

Oh yeah.

Do you remember him? I loved all that sort of stuff. I thought that was brilliant. You know, and some of the - there were some demos in Derbyshire about the quarries, that they were taking all the quarry stone out you know, distributing it around the world and decimating the quarries. And there were people living in the woods up near, um, Nine Ladies stone circle, just near here. And I used to go and take them food and stuff at one point. I mean, basically, I think my whole orientation has changed from being very political when I was in my 20s - maybe this happens to a lot of people, I don't know. And then settling down, then get into therapy, then bringing up children, and then becoming an artist, you know. It's like, that's a pattern that probably goes for a lot of people. I had to earn a living somehow, so I became, partly because of that became a therapist. Now living on a state pension now, I haven't got to fucking earn money at last, and I can do whatever I want, and I bloody love it. (Laughs). I have no one else to support, and I can live you know, on my own terms, and do what I want. It's fucking great! (Laughs). I'm just lucky. I'm so lucky that I've got all that, what reserves of self reliance that mean I can do that. You know? Shall I show you some of the things I've just made?

Yeah.

Let me show you - I've got pictures on here. It's not going to be good on the recording.

Don't worry about it.

I've just made some shields for a Shamanic group locally. Don't want that, want du du du du duh, that, so press the thing - they're made out of willow frame, and then wet strength tissue paper, with cellophane and wool, and all sorts of things on them.

Oh, I love the seahorses. Do I swipe to get...

In the bottom there are four of them - four directions: air, water and fire one.

Fantastic. That's lovely. The wood at the bottom is gorgeous as well, this bit here.

So they're sort of see through - they're a bit like stained glass as well - you know you get the run in the right position, you can hang them up and see through them.

Fantastic. They're gorgeous, really lovely.

Thank you.

Yeah. Yeah they look pretty solid, as well actually.

Oh yeah, yeah they're quite - wouldn't be good to get them wet, but apart from that they should stand up!

So is that for something that is happening locally?

Yeah, have you heard of Glennie Kindred - she's written various books about trees and Celtic spirituality, I suppose you would call it. And she's got a group called The Elementals, who are all big - they do a lot of eco protesting about - I've forgotten what the latest thing they're doing is, it's got a name, but I can't remember what it is now. But I'm - what's the

word? I'm much more reclusive than I used to be. Let's put it like that. I don't want to be in lots of groups, and I'm much happier being on my own, doing me own thing these days.

Yeah, doing your art and giving it to them.

Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, I think again - so I've interviewed, I interviewed a couple of women in Glastonbury, and one in Weston Super Mare. And generally, they live on their own, or they live with another woman. And um, they have, yeah, they are pretty self sufficient, I think. I mean, reclusive is - implicit in that as a judgement, isn't it and I think um, I just think they're happy, you know, with themselves.

Yeah, exactly.

Which is, you know, quite something in this day and age, isn't it?

Yeah.

So yeah. Um. So what would you say would be, if you were talking to women, you know, if you're running a workshop and you're talking to young women now, you maybe haven't even heard of Greenham, um and the protest, which, which a lot haven't. What would you say would be the legacy? What's, what, what is it that you would like to know about them to know about Greenham? What is it that future generations should take from it?

We did it - we succeeded. That's the best thing about it. We actually got that bloody place closed down. And the strength of women together was just mind blowing, really different from working or demonstrating with men, where it often gets violent. It's just different. It's very different and very um, well, very effective, and very quietly powerful, I would say, really.

So what do you think the main differences are? The non-violence is a big one.

A big one, very big one. I mean, I'm quite sure there are some men who would not be violent. I'm not saying that all men are violent at all, but (exhales), just saying 'No', just saying 'No, I'm not doing that.' And having the confidence to stand up and say 'No', it's very good. It's great. It works if you really mean it. And you say 'No, I'm not moving.' Know what I mean? I just think it's - it works. Think it works fundamentally, or something - because anyone knows if somebody means it, or they don't mean it. And if you mean it and you really stand your ground, other people back away, they don't, they don't bother, you know.

So, what was the relationship er, like as far as you were concerned with the local residents?

Mixed - some people invited us in and gave us food, and came with food, and were very supportive. Other people were absolutely terrified of us, and literally shut their windows and curtains when we came past. 'Oh my god it's that lot again.' I think um, a gang of us went up to Callanish stone circle in Lewis one time, with the kids, several kids. And the people, I mean Scottish people - they were just so wonderful. They, it was pissing with rain all the time - we were sort of squatting in an old cottage, you know? And they just said 'Let us have the kids' - poor bloody kids were getting soaked. And they entertained our children while we did whatever we did around the stone circle. And despite the fact that they took one look at us and probably thought, oh my god, what we got here? They were human, and they were kind, and I don't know, I think - and the kids felt that, and they felt really safe. And they just watched telly and got fed meat and god knows what in these people's houses, and they loved it, you know? (Laughs).

Because Greenham particularly I think is quite a Tory kind of area. And Although I know that that you know, there were some really nice people there, my understanding is that the general population - when you went

in for food, or to go to the shops, or to go to the pub or something that there was...

It was very tricky going to the pubs. Yeah, I think that was a bit - I don't, well I don't think I hardly ever went into the pubs around there. I think you would have encountered a lot of antagonism, especially from the men. Because I've just had my knees done, and I've been staggering around unable hardly to walk for about a year, I've had incredible amounts of help from people - and I've been so touched by complete strangers 'Can I help you? Can I do this? Can I do that?' - everywhere I've gone, and I think that when I was young, I put myself outside of society very visibly in the way that I looked, and my attitude to the rest of the normal people. Wrote them off - arrogant, arrogant, really arrogant. And I really feel differently now. I really feel like actually, ordinary people like those people in, in, in Lewis, are just amazing, and wonderful and kind. And I wish I hadn't been as arrogant as I was when I was young. And I feel like I'm just a human being now, you know what I mean? Like everybody else, I'm not this bloody world saving champion or something that I thought I was. (Exhales, then laughs). But it's the youth, isn't it? That's just what young people think - they're going to change the world. And we really thought we were getting used to the word.

Yeah. And you look at people who are ordinary, in inverted commas, and you think well, I'm not going to be like that - it's not going to be my life. Which is which is a good thing in some respects because I don't think otherwise you'd have gone to Greenham.

No.

It's important to have those times...

But look at the house I live in now. Normal normal-ness, couldn't be more normal in the world, really! (Laughs).

Yeah, but nice and comfortable, you know, it's your your castle, and people only come in if you want them to.

Exactly.

And I think that's, you know, and what happens in here and what you do in here and how you know, what spaces you have for what - you know for your art or whatever, is how you run the inside of your house is completely up to you. This can be as alternative as you want.

I'll never live communally again as long as I live, I can assure you of that. Never ever again. (Laughs).

Did that run its course then, eventually?

Oh you god it did - it just, woah, dreadful, absolutely dreadful. No, and I never want to hardly ever go to meetings anymore, I just think it's full of egocentric gits that want to be heard, and I can't be doing with it. (Laughs). No, no, no no no meetings, communal things (sighs), it's my idea of hell, absolutely bloody hell. Much rather just go out and do it, wherever it is, than spend hours talking about it. (Sighs). I'm an Aries, you know? (Laughs).

Yeah, I think, I mean, it's a massive generalisation but I do think that is a factor of age. I mean you know some people with age like to get more into meetings, but...

They love it, they want to talk about it all. I'm just not like that. It's not in my nature. I'll do it, I'll do something - fine, but I don't want to talk about it for days on end. I hate it, absolutely hate it. (Laughs).

Do you think Greenham had an influence on the rest of your life?

Yes.

Greenham specifically?

Oh god yeah, definitely.

In what way?

Well, in the fact that I became a lesbian, I became a - someone who thought, you know well, I suppose that always - I did always have a sense that I had a right to an opinion. But, something about being in a gang as well. It's a bit like when you're a minority group, there's a big um, sense of belonging and almost like family, like sort of feeling about it all, and I did love that. I did love the fact that we're all doing this together and wow, you know?

A sense of belonging?

Good, good fun, you know it's good energy.

So were you not out? Or did you not think that you were a lesbian before you went to Greenham?

Well, I don't think I am, I don't think I ever was just a lesbian, I think I'm bisexual, and probably most people are if they let themselves be. (Laughs). But I mean, I took that out as my identity. Um, when was it? No, it was before Greenham, just before - feminism, and I was living in Bentham Mickey.

My sister in law lives there.

It was just the latest thing, that's what I think. Like being a hippie, you know, that's where the energy, that's where good, great things were happening. So I was just drawn to it.

And how important for you was the women only space at Greenham?

It was great. I liked it. It was - I enjoyed it mostly. It was empowering. It was - we're doing this - it was a sense of us. Yeah, that's what I got out

of it. Us. Yeah, that us thing. It's a bit of a cop out really, I suppose. I mean, you know, in some ways, I don't think I was terribly responsible. I'm not a deep thinker, you know, I don't - I know some people do think about everything they do and really analyse it, and I'm not like that, you know, I just go where I'd have a good time, really. (Laughs). That's awful, but it's true!

It doesn't at all. I think people are allowed to have a good time. And I think people had different motivations for going there. But I don't think people would have gone there...

If it had been miserable.

Yeah.

Exactly, exactly.

Yeah. And as you say that, you know, once you've found your tribe, and you were in your camp, you know, then, there was, you know, there's a, I think there's an incredibly supportive and almost um, sort of self discovery element to being able to sit and talk to other women. Because where else could you have done that in the '80s?

Exactly.

Where else could you do that now? So, yeah, it was an unusual set of circumstances, I think for women to be able to go and talk about whatever.

I just feel so bloody lucky to have been born when I was, to the parents I was, and to everything. I just think I've had an incredibly rich life, you know, I've travelled all over the world, you know, done everything - I've done - it's just brilliant. What a life, it's great.

Yeah, no, that's great. That's really good. It's really good. And I think it's good for, um, I would, you know, would very much like young women...

To know that's possible.

Yes.

Don't be satisfied with what's not really, you know, what you're not really enjoying. Go for what you want. Definitely, yeah.

Yeah. And I think there is a, there's definitely a message from Greenham, you know, in terms of, in terms of history, you know, that sort of political, social political history, but also just in very human terms from, you know, from older women to younger women. Um. Which just gets lost, and I think, why do you think the Suffragettes - because I know it's the 100 years centenary of some women getting the vote. You know, so the Suffragettes who were a protest group, and quite violent have been, you know, very much celebrated. But Greenham is never mentioned in that.

I think it will be - I think it's too early. I think probably when we've died, in 20 years time or something, or 40 years time, it will be.

Why do you think they'll have to wait?

That's just the way history is. Personally, I should say probably, I mean, it's just the way. I think it's too close. I don't know. I just think that's how things happen. Somehow - maybe it's not until you've lost something that you recognise it's gone. But I mean, it hasn't gone. I mean, my daughter, she wouldn't put up with any shit. Know what I mean? She wouldn't, I know she wouldn't, and she'll stand up for herself, and she'll go for what she wants. All that role modelling has been instilled in her, and will be instilled in her children, all the way through.

That's, that is a great legacy, isn't it, for a mother?

Yeah. Yeah.

Is she your only child?

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm glad I had a child, I nearly didn't. I am glad I did. Because I think that whole experience has been very grounding for me as well. I had to work - I had to keep the house over our heads, you know, all that stuff. I think I could have gone off with the fairies a bit more than I did, if I hadn't have had her to keep me grounded and sensible. Just spent 6 months up in Findhorn community in Scotland, and that was quite an experience. But, and I feel more down to earth than most of the people out there! (Laughs).

So is that, communal living something that you still do from time to time, then?

That wasn't really communal living, I had my own house. It's the living with other people that I find difficult, because I'm quite a sort of organised, um, I like to know where things are. I like to have my pencils sharpened, and not blunt or whatever. You know what I mean, all those practical things. And er, other people don't and they drive me up the fucking pole! (Laughs). And break things. They're broken - in Scotland, Kate, every time she was coming on for her period, she'd just dropped things. Oh! There'll be nothing left.

So how were things like periods, And like, I mean, not that it is a medical thing, but how we were kind of, you know, illnesses and things like that and periods - just that that normal kind of day to day life stuff that women have to deal with, how was that managed at Greenham?

Very openly! (Laughs). Not hidden, I would say - like that picture of Sally, yeah. Overt. I mean, in a way that was being a bit revolutionary, we felt I think - there was a bit of that about it I think, but I mean, I was lucky I had very straightforward, no great period pains or anything awful you know, other people had you know, days in bed. 'Aarrgh', you know, in agony. So I was comparatively lucky like that. But er, I think, I think probably because I'm, I'm basically got a strong constitution. I've always

been very healthy and able, until recently, and er, that brings with it a certain confidence and a certain set of assumptions. And I think I found weak, moaning, pathetic people difficult. (Laughs). Oh dear! I think I did. And there was a lot of that around as well 'Eeeugh, I've got my period, I can't do anything.' I don't have a lot of patience for that, because that's not my experience.

Yeah. Do you think you're a bit more patient with people now, a bit more tolerant?

A bit more! (Laughs). A bit more, but not enough probably, probably not enough! (Laughs). Oh I don't know.

But it sounds like you were you know, as you said with Monica, you know, you could still be a rock for people.

Yeah. Yeah. And the whole community that I was in broke up when I left actually. I didn't recognise how much I was a stabilising influence. Let's put it like that. I think I must have been more than I realised - much more than I realised. Practical - just sort of down to earth sort of person. Know what I mean? I don't know, I just I had a very comparatively easy upbringing compared with a lot of people as well, really.

Yeah, I think those survival, those outdoor, you know, digging the pits and making the benders.

That was easy, that was no problem at all that stuff.

And I think that's, that's, that's, you know 80 or 90% of everybody's life, isn't it that sort of, you know, getting food and all that sort of thing. So those things are important, aren't they?

Yeah, and I killed the chickens, and skinned the rabbits and yeah, a lot of people wouldn't even touch them. You know what I mean, I would just do that stuff. (Laughs). My mother was a nurse. My father was a

**doctor. So it didn't faze me, know what I mean, but some people
'Eeeeuurggh!'**

I thought because, wasn't - weren't a lot of the camps vegetarian or
vegan?

Oh yeah, yeah, all that as well.

But obviously yours wasn't?

**What were we? We tried various things at various times. But the truth
of the matter was I would take Hannah out for bacon sandwiches every
so often, because I got fed up with it. So I was um, not a very er, correct
vegan or vegetarian, really. I was a bit of a rebel. I was always a bit of a
rebel, whatever that rules were, I was going to rebel against them
wherever I lived living. And if people were too fucking, you know, high
and mighty about how perfect their diet was, it just pissed me off. If
they wanted to go and have a bacon sandwich.**

So where did the rabbits and the chickens come from?

**Well, the rabbits were always getting caught by the cats. And the
chickens, we had chickens, and you have to kill the cockerels, you know
that is what happens when you have chickens that lay eggs that have -
you know, you have end up with too many cockerels, somebody's got to
bloody do it. Muggins was the one who always seemed to end up
having to do it. (Laughs).**

I dare say everybody managed to eat it?

**Yes, exactly. Exactly. Once it'd been plucked and dealt with, they could
eat it. Oh god! (Laughs).**

So is there, is there any sort of - with your artistic head on, is there any
kind of um, particular um, piece of like iconic sort of um, picture that you
have in your head that represents Greenham? Because...

Yeah, Monica's goddess giving birth.

So that was, that was a picture that she did?

It's in that big book of her, that great big book, is a book of all her paintings. And that was flaming the goddess, really.

And what's Monica's surname?

Monica Sjoo, S-J-O-O, it's a Scandinavian name.

And what's the painting called?

Goddess Giving Birth to the World, something like that.

Oh, was that something she did after Greenham or after Greenham?

Around that time. I don't know when exactly she did that.

Right, and what is it about that that makes - represents Greenham to you?

It's very powerful - woman figure. And it, I think it sort of says, it's about the importance of motherhood, really I suppose, really and giving birth, and celebrating that really, yeah. Power of women to do that.

To make life. And if there was um, if there was three things that, that you felt were the, were the memories and the legacy that you would carry forward for future generations for Greenham, what would they be, do you think?

I don't know, something about the power of women. The power of women coming together, and determination to make this thing stop. We were determined to make it stop, really determined - it was not

going to go on on our watch, you know? Definitely. That's what I felt like.

And was it, was that political activism, your motivation for going?

Yeah.

Right. So it was primarily, the cruise missiles, and not the not fun and the women only and the belonging?

It was both if I'm honest, it was both. I didn't know that it would be fun until I got down there! (Laughs). It was. And very, a lot of very intense close relationships were formed, which I've still got. I still know women who I met there, now, you know, which is wonderful. Having known people that long is great. Lovely. I love it. I think that's one of the best things about getting older is having known some people. My friend Gabrielle, who I met at nursery school is coming to visit next week. I love that. She knows me in and out, bad, good, whatever. She knows me. You know. I love it. I think it's a wonderful thing.

And so, the friends that you still have from Greenham, are you, have you both - are you all kind of moved through that pattern that you described before, in terms of, you know, the arc of your life from young to, to older, have you moved through that arc in similar ways, do you think? So have you still got things in common? It's not, it's not just stuff from from back then?

Some people have, some of those people are still man haters. Some of those people - women, I should say are, stuck on the whole, what you will eat or not eat sort of thing, and a bit moralistic for my taste. I have to say, as you've already gathered, I'm not really very consistent (laughs), or what's the word? Deep thinking about a lot of things, not as deep thinking as I ought to be probably. But I'm not - it's just not my nature. So I'm not, and er, some people are - I do find it difficult. Some people are still a bit strident. I was, but I'm not anymore. I'm not out to change the world, or convince everyone I meet that women are the best

thing in the world. It's not my focus anymore. But some people are, I know are still a bit like that, or very lefty, very anti-establishment, and they sort of rant - she's off on it again. You know what I mean? I think I've mellowed. (Laughs). Let's put it like that. Much, I'm much less extreme than I used to be. I feel like that was part of that youthful exuberance. And I'm a bit boring, and an old fart these days, but that suits me fine! (Laughs).

Yeah, pass the baton to somebody else to do that?

Yeah, definitely. My daughter's just gone bloody vegan as well. (Laughs). She's sending me YouTube things all about, you know how you shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that. Oh....

Yeah, well, it's supposed to, you know, it's part of our environmental responsibility and all that sort of thing.

It's, I mean, logically it makes sense. Of-course it does. But I'm sorry, I'm not keen on cereals and nuts as a diet. Just don't do it for me! (Laughs).

No, me neither. But I'm sure at some point we'll be forced to do something, won't we?

Yeah. And cars, things like riding motorbikes and cars. I love riding and driving, it's gonna be weird when we can't do that anymore. Get in a car and drive fast. It's good fun. (Laughs).

Yeah, it would have made my life a lot more difficult coming up here, for instance without a car.

Yeah.

Would have taken god knows how long.

Trains and buses?

Yeah. Would have been a nightmare.

But maybe if we all had to give up our cars, they would sort it out. It's also partly, it's chicken and egg, isn't it?

It is. That's exactly what it is. Yeah, definitely.

So there are arguments for - but I (exhales), it's lazy I know, but I sort of really think I've done my bit. I'm not trying to change the world anymore. I'm just trying to get by in it, you know what I mean?

Yeah. I do, very much. Yeah. No, yeah, I do. I really do. So is there anything else about Greenham that you would like to say? Anything that you haven't said that you want to talk about?

It was very empowering. Very empowering. It was great. I really thrived on that. I think it was a bit, well, I know it was a bit troubling for my parents. They were afraid I was gonna get put into prison and god knows what was gonna happen to me. And at one point, my father even came up to this all women, men are not allowed anywhere near women's community, and insisted on coming to see his granddaughter, which was very, very brave of him. And they all really liked him. It was great. So yeah, it wasn't the end of the world, and I did grow up. And I did learn from it, and change, and continue to change. And I think life is all about being able to do, that being flexible enough to be able to adjust to what is you know, what you can and can't do. Finding a way through.