

Annei Soanes and Margaret McNeil

Could you, do you want to start, we'll start with you Annei, but the same question to both of you. Um, what er, first took you to Greenham? Why did you go there?

Well, actually, it wasn't Greenham that was my initial attraction. Um. What happened was, I was working for Harrods as a beauty therapist, and I was in Camberley town centre, I bumped into an old friend of mine, Stephanie Tunmore, who I think now works for Greenpeace, but I bumped into her, and we started chatting. And she started talking about how she had joined an organisation called Camberley CND. And I didn't have a clue what she was talking about. So I asked her what she meant, and she explained that it was the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and when she said that there was something about the words that resonated with me, it felt like a right thing to be doing - to be disarming from nuclear weapons. So I turned up at a local Camberley CND meeting. And I remember when I went I was in my navy blue pleated skirt, and at that time, you know, in the '80s blazers were very fashionable for women, um, with my gold heeled shoes on, and there were all these people sitting you know, without any socks on and sandals and looking, in my opinion what looked a bit like a bunch of hippies, so I was quite sort of judgmental, because they were people that didn't look like me. But er, there was a woman who was chairing the meeting. And at the time, I remember um, feeling so impressed by this woman, because she just held the group, and was very gentle and er, very inquiring of other people in the group. And I didn't quite know who she was, I just thought she was quite an impressive woman. And I noticed this man sitting next to her. Um, and what happened was, it turned out that those two people, this woman chairing the meeting, and this man sitting next to her, was someone called Marie Knowles and her husband John, and I thought it was quite interesting at that time that it was her that was chairing the meeting. I really liked that. Anyway, what happened was, um, that bunch of people turned out to be such a delightful bunch of people. And John and Marie in particular, were very

welcoming, very challenging in their, in their um, thoughts about things, and I ended up being, err, I suppose I had the experience of questioning myself in a way that I hadn't questioned myself before, about the world, about politics about being the world of the woman. Anyway, what happened was having become part of that Camberley CND movement, we were protesting, we were demonstrating, we were doing things like there was a nuclear bunker that had apparently been built under the Civic Hall in Camberley. So we went on a protest and chained ourselves to these railings, I think we were, we were dressed as Suffragettes or something. But we would do things like, you know, be in the town centre, handing out leaflets, trying to raise people's awareness around the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. And what happened in the process of all of this, was that the discussion was very stimulating. Um. And got me thinking about lots of have different things, and when eventually we ended up going to Greenham, it was, it was not immediate it was on top of other demonstrations, and being part of what became a, a woman's consciousness raising group in Camberley, that was an offshoot of Camberley CND. So for me when I think of Greenham, it's not just about my experiences at Greenham common as a protester. It's, it was also about my experience of um, consciousness raising, around what it meant to be a woman. And political systems, really - it introduced me to the idea of systems thinking, and how everything has an impact, how everything has a ripple effect, how there is such a thing as the butterfly effect, and what I really - what I do remember thinking at the time was, I loved that feeling of being part of a movement where people all over the world were demonstrating about this single issue. That, that felt enormously important to me. It wasn't just us in Camberley CND, it wasn't just us in this country. I was part of a global movement that was about saying 'No, this is wrong. I want my voice to be heard because this is wrong.' So in relation to Greenham, I can remember the first time I went to Greenham, you know, I was, I was so prejudiced, I was so naive. I, I, I thought, oh my god, what's it going to be like? Because I might meet lesbians. What was I going to do? What was I going to do if I met a lesbian! And also what, I might be arrested or something. So what happened was before we ended up going on any sort of demonstrations, we - I remember one particular weekend, I can't

remember if I'd been to Greenham at that stage or not, but I, what stands out in my memory was there was one particular weekend, and it was called an NVDA workshop, that was over the course of a weekend. NVDA! I didn't have a clue what that meant. But of-course, it stands for non-violent direct action. And again, just, just the notion of that really appealed to me. So I went to this workshop, I was still working at Harrods um, as a beauty therapist on the top floor at the time. And I went to this workshop, and it completely blew my mind. From the point of view, it opened me up to other possibilities, both politically and personally. It opened me up to new ideas. It, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own behaviour, on how I interacted with other people, how I experienced other people. It opened me up to actually, as a woman, err, how I behave differently to men. And how useful was that to me? Why, why did I behave differently? So it opened me up on lots of different levels. So by the time I went to Greenham, it was almost like I'd, I'd had a background, I'd had an experience, I'd had some sort of education, in opening my mind to new experiences and new ideas that were not conventional. You know, I was a disco diva - I used to hang out in nightclubs, you know, dancing around my handbag with with my lipstick and false eyelashes on, you know, there I was with my high heels and, you know, dancing to Motown. This, this was a completely new experience for me. And when I actually went to Greenham I laugh because I still wore my pearl earrings! (Laughs). What I didn't do was kind of wear makeup in the same way. I can remember taking my nail varnish off because somehow it didn't seem the right thing to do to have my nail varnish on. So it was almost as if at one point I was living this parallel life, wearing my you know, my, my dungarees or my - there was a kind of all in one suit what were they called?

Boiler suit?

Yeah, so I was there I was in my turquoise boiler suit, with my rainbow badges, with my hair up and my pearl earrings on, and maybe a little bit of eyeliner that was you know, quite subtle. But no, no nail varnish. Because for me, I was going through that whole process of what does it mean then? What does it mean to be a woman in the world? What

does it mean to to not be a Conservative with high heels and whatever else I thought it meant. You know, what is it, what's it like being in the world in a different kind of way? So at Greenham, I remember having a conversation sitting around a campfire with a woman, who was a lesbian. And I didn't know she was a lesbian. (Laughs). It was only afterwards that I kind of found out - I can't remember how I found out. But what, what really struck me was something about actually none of that stuff really, in the greater scheme of things - I mean, what does any of that stuff matter? It's an expression of how we are as women, you know, I was naive, I was what 24 or something, 25. There was lots I didn't know. And what you know, what that experience of Greenham gave me was an opportunity to learn about myself, and and other people. Um. I mean, as I'm talking, I'm thinking of all kinds of stories in my head - do you want me to continue, or should I stop here?

Yeah, that's - this is a good, hold the stories, because I want to hear them very much. And let's I want to follow up on um, I've got a couple of things I want to ask you for what you've said as well. So let's put that first question over to Margaret. Um, And, but yes, we're not done! (Laughs). It's great, yeah.

But I could go on.

It's great. It's lovely. Okay, Margaret, what took you to, how did you arrive at Greenham? What took you to Greenham?

I arrived at Greenham, as I was about 35, I think at the time, with two young children, married, middle class Camberley. And my background had been that I was always against the bomb, the bomb was a big thing. And in our growing up, there was this Cuban, there was a big thing about what what would happened, the nuclear bomb that that could destroy us all. And our older friends were beginning to say things like they weren't going to have children because they couldn't bring their children into such a terrible world. So we had a beginning of a consciousness as we were growing up, that there were terrible things going on. And at our local youth club, the leader said 'Right

Aldermaston, we're all going on this march to Aldermaston'. And we thought it was the most exciting thing. And we bought the CND badges. And then our father, I was about 15 at the time, and my father forbidden, forbid us to go, and through our badges on the boiler. So that was my first um, demonstration against authority, I think. (Laughs) I was gutted and I was really angry that we'd missed it, because it just sounded so exciting. I'm not sure the politics really struck us, but I remember always being against the bomb, and against nuclear weapons. And so CND was something we had kind of grown up with and it was this big, hippie thing, I suppose, which struck us has been 'Well that's good'.

So not from within your family?

Not within the family. Certainly not. No. I don't think my mother had an opinion, because obviously what father said went. But he was from, he'd been a prisoner of war in the er, so, so I'm sure, um, so his, his take on this would have been very clearly one about protecting his family. He fought for security, and he fought to protect us. Um, so the idea that we thought of, you know, banning the - our safety was absolutely outrageous. But of course, we were 15, so hey (laughs), so that was. So, we never went on the Aldermaston marches. Not until a lot later. And then being in Camberley, I heard through a friend that about CND, about the Camberley group. And so I joined with her. And it was really so different to anything I'd ever experienced, because having been on various committees, like, you know, the political liberals and Liberal Democrats, and then in um, oh the school ones, the...

Like Board of Trustees or parent committees?

Oh, the parent, teacher, PTA, those associate - those what have you, where we had our little committee meetings and our agendas. And these meetings just blew the whole thing apart, because they were so equal, and I think it was the equality that really, really struck me - the fact that everybody's view was encouraged and welcomed, whatever it was. And every body, I wasn't expected to take the goddamn minutes!

(Laughs). Which was something that invariably, if you didn't wear a hat, you ended up making the tea or taking the minutes. If you wore a hat, that meant you were a bit more important as a woman. So there was that sort of hierarchy that just didn't exist. And that was amazing. So, um, different people led it, but on that occasion, it was Marie Knowles, and, and it was so equal, and everybody sat in a circle. Nobody deferred to anybody else. And it was just glorious, absolutely glorious, because it was so unlike anything I'd ever experienced. Um. And yeah, I felt a bit like a sort of middle class misfit, to certain extent, because on the whole everybody was a lot younger than me, and so I felt a bit old, and um, and also a bit dowdy, because they all looked gloriously hippie. Well, in a way 'These are my people'! (Laughs). Because having been a sort of a hard working hippie, it just seemed like coming home to me, it was absolutely wonderful. And the way it was so equal and everybody chipped in, and everybody worked together. I loved it. So that was, that was how I joined. And of course it went on from there.

So what were your first, very first impressions of going to, going to the actual Greenham common camp?

Ah, right. The first time we went was when um, the first time I went, was err, a night when the women had been arrested. And they all gradually came back to the camp during the day, and they were tired, very tired. And so we would go, in response to that, and guard them for the night. So it was - we were guarding the Greenham women so they could sleep, because they were often occasions when they were harassed - either by local people, or by the guards inside. So they couldn't just sleep.

Do you know what sort of form the harassment took?

Well, things like people would draw up - I remember on one - I remember specifically one thing that happened, and that was a motorbike drew up quite close. And there were two guys sitting on this motorbike. And suddenly it went very still in the camp, and they were watching. And, and then it's - a guy put his hand in his pocket, and everybody stiffened. And then he just just lit a fag, and off they drove.

And I said 'What was that about?' And they said 'Well, you just never know. You never know what they're going to do. Whether it's just somebody interested in what's going on, just a sightseer. Or whether that's a bomb in his pocket, and he's gonna chuck it out in here, or whether...' They just didn't, they just did not know what was going to happen, or whether they'd be attacked in the night, and that sort of thing. So they were so brave, those women. And I felt in a way, like we were the, we were the frauds, because we didn't stay, we didn't live there. We lived near enough so we could visit, and so we used to go in response to, and when they needed a hand, and also on the food rotas, as well - especially in winter, when they could do some nice hot food. So, so we really got into it in that way. And obviously the big demos, and so we visited them very frequently. But those women who lived there were amazing. Um, and the things they'd sacrificed as well to be there. Just extraordinary. They were so brave. And so to be able to just go there and support them was brilliant.

Did you do, did you do - was that called night watch? Did you do those together, those sorts of things?

Yes, in fact that was first time I really got to know Annei, because that was on my first time. And it was freezing, wasn't it? A very cold night - I don't think it was your first time I can't quite remember.

I can't remember, Margaret, no.

But Annei had so many clothes on. She, she was absolutely struggling to walk! (Laughs). And she sort of swung over and she says 'It feels like I've got this gigantic sanitary towel on!' (Laughs). And we got chatting - we were on these camp chairs or garden chairs, and we got chatting, and I can remember Annei saying at one point, because she was so glamorous and gorgeous, I felt completely out of her league. So I was a bit in awe of her, and because we really were a mixed bunch of people. (Laughs). Annei was so glamorous and such a gorgeous personality. And she, she said something, I've asked her a question, she said 'Oh, that's a long story.' And I just said 'Oh well, we've got all night.' And so

we sat and talked for a lot of the night, and then we became very good friends. And it was a bit like that with everybody, the connections that you made. And so you know, some of my best friends are my Greenham friends from 35 years ago.

That's amazing.

Yeah, absolutely brilliant.

Do you have, what are your memories of those sorts of nights?

Well, I think the night that Margaret's describing, I think my memory is that, I don't know if it was part of a night watch or whether it was part of a demo where we were there for the weekend, because we stayed overnight. I remember staying overnight. And the weather wasn't very good and it was quite rainy. And I wasn't an outdoor kind of girl. You know, I, I was more kind of gold lame, really, than waterproofs, so what happened was I decided to buy some gear to wear err, for this weekend, when I was going to be out, out in the fresh air, shall we say. And I of-course I didn't know what to buy. So I ended up buying this, this bright yellow err, pair of waterproof trousers, or well they weren't really waterproof, as such, they were kind of plastic trousers with this, this bright yellow plastic jacket to go with it that had a hood. And I think it was one of those sorts of things, if you'd been caught in a shower or a rainstorm, it would have probably been very effective. But then of course, what you do is you take it off and you're kind of in the clothes underneath. But um, it was really cold. And I thought well, rather than get undressed inside the tent, I could you sleep in this bright yellow suit. I looked a bit like a banana, as it was. I thought I could just sleep in it. That'll be that'll be good. But of-course I, because I was unfamiliar with this kind of stuff. What happened was, having slept in it I then woke up completely soaking wet (laughs), because of-course I'd been perspiring all night. So then it was raining outside, and I was wet inside. So it wasn't a particularly comfortable weekend. Um. I think you've got a photograph of that, actually, haven't you! (Laughs).

We have photographs of the outfit, we do! (Laughs).

I'll get those for the archive!

Yeah, I mean, I remember, I can almost still remember the smell of the woods smoke, actually, that you know, kind of people sitting around campfires, just talking about stuff, and regards to the night watch, we had something called a telephone tree, we have something called Cruise Watch, as well. Which was a telephone tree that would alert people as to when the cruise missiles would come out of the base, and be transported around the country. So if that was going to happen we'd then get a call, and we'd whizz over there, and it could be at night or you know, we might go if we thought it was going to be expected, and that kind of stuff. And I remember one particular night it was in response to the Cruise Watch call, we all went over there, and were sitting there during the night. And we realised that if anything happened, and we were all sitting at the camp, or whatever gate we were at, that we wouldn't be able to - how would we alert people that, that it - the convoy would come out or whatever. So I took it upon myself in my yellow banana suit to, to hide in the bushes up the road all night. (Laughs). I don't quite know what I thought I was going to do in my head. I was like some sort of a sort of SAS kind of ninja - I was in my head I was gonna go and find a phone box. Because of-course it was, you know, pre mobile phones, I was going to go and find a phone box, made sure I had some change - I was going to find, so that I could then alert the rest of the telephone tree. So that night I can remember looking longingly, you know, down the road at people sitting around the campfire, having a, you know, an interesting time talking to each other. And there was me further up the road hiding in a ditch all night, just in case this convoy appeared. Um. And it was quite, it was quite an interesting experience, because I realised how ill equipped I was, how this wasn't my life. And I was also feeling quite brave in this process. You know, this was, this was going to be my moment, you know, to really do something important for the peace movement. (Laughs). Thankfully, nothing happened. Um. And after, after about it must have got to about 5 o'clock in the morning or something, I then kind of - I think it started to

get light and I made my way back to the camp itself. But what you were saying Margaret about night watch is I can remember what we would do is we would plan to go to do a night watch. And yeah, that the purpose was as a supportive gesture to, to those women. But I can equally remember feeling that that what I was doing was really important. It felt really important to kind of hold the fort to, for those women to get some sleep. Um. And I felt like you know a bit of a part timer. But also that sense of actually this is what I can contribute I, you know, I, I wasn't in a position in my life to go and do what they were doing. And if I'm honest, I don't know if I had it in me, I don't know if I would have been able to do it. But what was important was that sense of, actually, I am doing what I can, and I want to be involved, and I want to do what I can, according to what able - you know, it is that I'm able to do. Yeah.

Are you happy to tell us a little bit about - were you involved in Cruise Watch, Margaret?

Yes. Yes.

Can you tell us a bit more about it. And your experience of it? I was interested to know what was the point of it, what was it you would be trying to draw attention to?

I think we were (laughs), the whole point of the cruise missiles coming out was that they would disappear - melt into the countryside. And so that, so the Russians wouldn't know where they were. Which waste thought was hysterical because obviously these vast heavy convoys, these enormous trucks would suddenly roar out of the gates, that and all the roads around Newbury all around Greenham common - they were the best roads in the country. They were small roads. But they were magnificent. And they were probably the best ever, they were built for these for these convoys to rush out of Greenham. And so the point of Cruise Watch - so if we weren't, if women hadn't been arrested, we weren't looking after the women, then Cruise Watch would happen. And we'd all go out, and then we'd follow them to show that they couldn't just vanish into the countryside.

Brilliant.

And this was when the men liked to get involved, because um, it was a bit more exciting. And because we've - we'd rather felt that Greenham was ours - women, it was a women's protest. And and I think the men felt a bit miffed occasionally. So they would come out with their cars bristling with antenna, to follow the signals of where it was going to be, and they would come and report to us (adopts gruff voice) 'We're off there, we're off there.' And we'd go okay 'Whatever you like.' (Laughs). And off they'd go. So, it was sort of quite exciting in a way. And I remember on one occasion that we, we were suddenly told oh, we'll need to go to Longmoor.

Oh, I remember that.

Yes, which was peculiar because my father was in the army - when we - when my dad was in the army, that was the first place I remember living in Longmoor camp. And so I thought right, we're off to Longmoor, okay. So we drove to Longmoor, and, and when we got there, there was nothing much to see. And they denied all knowledge. But there were a whole gang, I mean, there were hundreds of us, hundreds of people there. And this guy tried to get us into order. The, the Military Police came out to talk to women and what have you. And, and I told him, I said 'Oh, I used to live here. And my father was - first officers quarters' down there.'" And he went 'Oh, really well you act as spokesperson.' I said 'No, no, no, we don't do that.' And he says (adopts posh voice) 'Well, no, if you would just act as spokesperson that would be terribly helpful.'

Oh would it!

And it was the funniest thing because we just thought we don't do that! (Laughs). Like, I'm gonna say 'I'm your spokesperson, everyone. Just talk to me.' Yeah, right!

So was that absolutely not how Greenham worked? Was it was a very lateral organisation, how did...

It was very mixed. 'Cause I think it was, it did attract quite different kinds of personalities. And so it wasn't the most smooth running of camps, because lots of personalities would have had different ideas about what they were there for. Um. Err. So, yeah, and there were people - unfortunately, it also does attract people who have mental health issues, who tended to need looking after more than anything. But everybody, it was such a melting pot of people, which was, I think the diversity was one of its strengths because women from any background ended up there. And I don't believe there were judgments made - there may have been I don't know, I never felt judged on what I looked like, or what I sounded like or anything like that. We were just all there to muck in I think, and it was to, to make a point that - you know, the women are showing the people that this is where the bombs are. This is where the bombs live. And we're not having it. And a lot later in life, I can remember a young person saying to me 'Well, what was the point? What a waste.' I said 'Well, we got rid of the bombs.' They said 'No you didn't.' I said 'Yeah, we did. Greenham women got rid of the bombs - they went.' They said 'No, no, that was nothing to do with you.' I said 'Do you honestly think that people's awareness would have been raised if the Greenham women hadn't been there? If all those women hadn't gone and been a thorn in the flesh of those people? And all the rumours about them, etc, etc. You know, for god's sake, why were they so scared of us? They had the bombs. (Laughs). And we were a bunch of really awkward women who were just pointing out that that's where the bombs were. And we didn't want them there.' So it was quite extraordinary.

Thank you, that's amazing. Beautifully put, it's really lovely.

I'm thinking about what you were saying about judgments and I, you know, my experience was that I - yes, I didn't feel judged at all at Greenham by the women. There was a strong sense of unity, a sense we're all here for um, a purpose. We all know what we're here for. We're

welcoming of each other and I, I can remember um, being at the base and people would put ribbons and pieces of wool, or pictures on the fence to say 'I was here', and you know, I can remember looking at pictures of tiny children and grandmothers and families. And that's, that's what it was all about. It was, it was about this is humanity. This is the face of humanity. This is why we're here. We want, we want to protect the, the world we live in. And the judgment that I used to be aware of was, was particularly with older people, um, particularly with my mother's friends. They all had an opinion - my family had an opinion. It was as if I was not only doing something slightly eccentric, but it was wrong. What I was doing was really wrong. Because not only was I protesting against um, something politically, but I was also protesting against and serving as a bad example as to what it meant to be a decent young woman. What I was doing wasn't decent. Who did I think I was? Did I - was I one of those women that had burned my bra? Ho, ho ho. And the I think the the, the argument about the peace movement, and the argument around feminism, manifested at that time. Um. Because certainly I, I, I very much identified with much of what was being said by radical feminism. It made perfect sense to me. Actually, we do live in a patriarchy, there is lots that we are unconscious of. It's not until we start looking at what systems are in place, what we believe about ourselves what we believe about men, that we, we can start to address that. And Greenham was a place where, where feminist politics was discussed, and I can remember being judged harshly by people who were not involved. They would see it as odd. It would almost be dirty. You know, it was, it was, it would almost be like, I was doing something to hurt the rest of society. When actually, what for me what I was doing was doing something that was about equality, about justice, about non-violence, because the conclusion I reached was that feminism for me, and I still feel the same now, for me, feminism goes hand in hand with non-violence. And I know that there are feminists who would not agree with me on that level. But for me, that's what it means. It means how I hold myself in the world, how I interact with other people, how I leave my footprint, really. Um. That's certainly where it came from. And without my experience of Greenham, and talking about feminist politics in that context, without any men being there, I don't think I would have had the

freedom in any other context to, to talk about it, to thrash out ideas. Because the other thing that came out of that that was profoundly important to me was the women of Camberley CND created a feminist group, a consciousness raising group, and actually it was, it was led by your mum, she she got it going - err, Marie.

The same Marie Knowles!

Yeah. The same Marie Knowles. The same Marie Knowles that was the chair of Camberley CND, yeah. She, she, she kind of kind of suggested that actually what we could do is have this consciousness raising group, which is, um, which is what happened - because you went to that didn't you, Margaret?

I was rather on the edge of it because um, I was not quite so flexible because having small children - they were 2 and 5 at the time, limited the scope of what I was able to do. But I used to escape every so often, and join in. Yes, and I ended up realising how very far behind I was in the respects of feminism. I was at the angry stage, and it's not fair stage, and most, most people were way beyond that! (Laughs). I had a little way to go. And so I moved on enormously - at least I feel, I felt as if I did, because I was um, made so welcome. And it was just such a safe loving group to be with. And, and I agree with Annei that also, it was a good example of the men doing the women's work while the women got on with the demonstrating. So the women would go, and they would be off, and the men would look after the children, do the cooking, generally take care of everything that was going on back at the home, while the women went and demonstrated. Err, because Greenham was theirs. And I really appreciated that, the fact that they - it wasn't hijacked. Um. There wasn't an attempt to say 'Well, we'll do it tonight dears.' But no, so, so there was a really really good feeling about that. Yeah.

And in relation to the Camberley CND women's raising, consciousness raising group - it was eye opening for me, um, in the sense that we would talk about not only politics, feminist politics, we'd talk about kind of issues that felt really important, whether it be sexism, or pornography,

or racism, you know, what did that mean? How did it manifest? How are we being that actually on some level was anti racist? Or how were we internally sexist? You know, what were we carrying internally that was manifesting that in ways that we weren't aware of? So, so talking about all that stuff was really interesting as well. And what I forgot to say was that NVDA workshop, that non-violent direct action workshop that I did - after I did that, I went into Harrods on the Monday morning and I handed my notice in.

Really?

Because I realised that I didn't want to be part of propping up that, that system on some level. Um. And the err, the, now what was I going to say? The workshop, prior to that, I can remember I used to have, I used to have Fridays off. And sometimes we used to go - we used to take food over, so we'd go on the food run. So we'd make like macaroni cheese or cauliflower cheese, and take it over for you know, at lunchtime. And so on a Thursday night I used to take my nail varnish off so I had no nail varnish when I went to Greenham, and put my boiler suit on when we took the food across, and then I'd you know, paint my nails back for, for Saturday morning. So I was living this double life. And I realised after that weekend that I could not - I would not do that anymore. So I handed my notice in, and decided to take a different course in my life. And here I am, much later on - all those years later, and all of my learning of that time has influenced the rest of my life. And that, that philosophy around non-violence, that questioning, that recognition of the power of the human spirit, that sense of us being interdependent, but not codependent - what it means to have healthy relationships, what's my view of the world, existentialism, whatever, you know, all of that stuff grew out of that time for me. And actually laid the foundation for me to want to be a psychotherapist. So that led to my working in an industry where I could use my makeup skills in a different way err - for period dramas or whatever, in television, that then led to my um, that gave me the means to train as a psychotherapist. But it's actually - what I hold now in my career, in my work as a psychotherapist, all of that actually - all the seeds of that came from that time in the

peace movement at Greenham, as part of being in a women's group, it came from that time. And as I say that I feel quite tearful thinking about that, that tells me of the profound effect that it had on me, and I am eternally, eternally grateful and um, pleased that I was, I was able to be part of something so profoundly important for women. And you know, when I look at young women in the world today, I, I find myself being very respectful of those young women who are campaigning who are still questioning. But also I'm left with immense sadness, that actually, the work that I feel that I put in around feminism when I was in my 20s, isn't being picked up by younger women - women are still being exploited in lots of different ways. Women are still being put down, women's voices are still being silenced. You know, and I feel sad that there aren't more younger women kind of carrying on the banner really. My, my legacy was of the Suffragettes, you know, I almost feel their blood in my veins, I feel part of that movement. And I feel sad sometimes that I don't always have the same sense that it's being carried on now.

Thinking about that, so I think that's - I share a lot of those concerns, and partly that's why we we're trying to, you know, pull up a lot of these interviews together - comes up part of that concern. So I'm, I'm interested in two things about that, which one of those is um, a question that we're sort of including in every interview actually, so the only question that we are asking everyone is could you explain, so I'll ask you first Annei, and then I'll ask you Margaret, because I want to move on to another question with you as well. Could you explain why you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

Because I think it not only honours what it means to be a woman in the world, it represents questioning of ourselves, of society, of the world in general. The personal is the political. So that's, that's kind of the, the centre of it for me. And I think as human beings, we always need to question that. Who am I as the person living in the world? What do I contribute? How do I impact? What do I need? How can we build a better world, a better future for generations that follow us? Um. And I think there's something about women's history that historically has

always been forgotten. So it feels important to remember this, you know, and it, it reflects my sense of at the time, I want my name - you know, it's almost like invisibly written. I want my name to appear, you know, on that list of people that says 'I do not think nuclear weapons is the right way to go', you know. Um. So for me, it's about that - it's being part - it's putting my name to this invisible charter in ways, that says 'I was there, I witnessed this, this is important', you know, on on some level, I contributed to that, that feels important to me. Because we all, we're all responsible in this world for contributing, we're all responsible for ourselves. And to some extent, we're all responsible for other people. We have to make ourselves accountable - we, we, we share this world, so that that personal sense is carried on to that political sense. Does that answer your question?

Yes, that's lovely, really lovely. So I'll just repeat the question. So it was why do you think it's important I don't drop the microphone! Why do you think it is important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations? If you do?

Well, I really welcome this - the chance to talk about it from our personal point of view, because um, I think it was um, so misrepresented at the time as being a gaggle of unruly women, who - shrill lesbians - who were very - well in their boiler suits for heaven's sake, what did they look like? And so it was just a gaggle who were causing a lot of trouble for and and, and the fact that then, the people in Greenham hated them - they didn't, some did. So I think they were really misrepresented. I think it's really important that lots of women's voices who are involved in it are heard, as to what it meant to them, to be part of a huge groundswell of opinion amongst women to say 'Enough, this is enough. This is obscene - shipping in your great big bombs, your cruise missiles to Britain, so that you can use us as an airstrip to send your bombs off to another country that you would have no control over.' Because make no mistake, make no mistake, Britain didn't have any control over those bombs - they were America's bombs. And so therefore, we were giving up our liberty and freedom to America, to choose to bomb the world. Um. And so in our way, we were saying "No, we're not having it.' We

refused to put up with it. So that group of women were highlighting the obscenity of the whole nuclear industry, of weapons and saying 'No, we're not putting up with it. We have so many better ways of using our wealth and distributing our money, and being nice to each other.' And so I would never ever want people to forget what an amazing movement it was. And the fact that so many different people could come together and rise up and say 'You know, we're really strong' - some of our songs were saying how strong we were, we are women, we won't be moved, etc. And it felt really, really powerful from a point of absolute powerlessness. And I would want that message to carry on to women everywhere, that joining together into something that you really are passionate about, and rising up and just working together and showing the rest of the world um, what's going on is one of the most powerful things you can do. And that - huh, what, what would be the occasion that they would rise up next? I don't know. Um. But I want them to know that that's what they can do. (Laughs).

That's lovely. I was going to ask if you ever took your children to Greenham? Because that's my early memories - of my mum taking me to Greenham. And that's how my early memories of you both as well, you know, come from my childhood of my mum taking me along. I wondered if...

No, I never took my children to Greenham, and one of the reasons was because they are boys, and there was a kind of feeling about this is a women's camp. This is a women's demo. Um. And I chose to respect that. And I knew that most people would probably be absolutely fine. They were little boys. But I did not want to raise any sensitivities about it needlessly. And I was lucky enough that I had a husband who was, was going to care for them. So I didn't have any childcare problems. So err, I didn't take them and I have to say they're furious! (Laughs). As adults, they are so disappointed that I never took them. They would have loved to have gone and seen what these women got up to - these women who cooked, and went out in the middle of the night. And weren't there when they woke up in the morning, because their dad was

looking after them, or somebody else was looking after them. And they actually were quite miffed about it. Missed opportunity!

That's very sweet. Um, I was thinking about what you were saying, um, when you were saying about the older generation really disapproving of um, what you were doing. And I was thinking about the media, you were talking about the (inaudible) of the media as being quite negative. Do you think that fed - do you think there was a relationship between the media's depiction of Greenham, and the way that most people who hadn't been thought about Greenham, and judged Greenham?

Err, I, well, I think that, that it was considered shabby, you see. I think us as women, and our behaviour was considered shabby, and therefore not to be taken seriously. And I, you know, certainly for me, there was a sense that err, media, the media, err, was judging us because we weren't really kind of living up to the expectations of what a decent woman is. We were breaking the rules, we were...

What were the expectations?

We were speaking about things that were unspeakable. Um...

So what was the expectation and as you perceived, as you felt it was given to you?

Well, for a start...

Being a decent woman?

Well, for a start, we were you know, certainly the Greenham women, obviously they couldn't have access to, you know, showers or whatever. So they might have been a bit smelly - as anybody would be if they'd been outside for a few days without having access to water. They were seen as grubby. I mean, I remember one of my mother's friends actually, um, when he was ridiculing me about what I was doing, he said 'And you know what, those women?' He said 'They've ruined

Greenham.' I said 'What do you mean?' He said 'The wildlife.' Do you know, he said 'There's no wildlife around Greenham now, nothing. Why? Because of the women.'

And the huge American air base!

I know, exactly! But, but that's an example of how people made judgments based on nothing. You know, it was, it was, there were lots of fantasies around it. Um. And these women, what were they doing? Why weren't they at work? Or why weren't they looking after their children? Why weren't they at home looking after their families? Because that's what women do. You know, these, these women were breaking the rules - they were, they were being oppositional to to what was judged decent.

How about you, Margaret? Did you feel that...

Yes, definitely. I think we were interfering with men's work. This is what men do. What do women know about warfare and security? So the fact that we'd risen up against - and, I guess they might have taken it personally. I hope so. (Laughs). Because there were some boring old farts out there. One of my husband's relations - he was a civil servant, and he used to take me to one side and warn me that we were being infiltrated - women were being infiltrated by undesirables.

Really?

'Really! How awful.' Whereas to my mind, the undesirables who'd infiltrated us were the Americans with their sodding bombs! I'm sorry I mustn't swear.

That's fine!

So, um, and it was this, their shock that we might be infiltrated by ne'er do wells who might want information about how they could steal the bonds, it was hilarious.

So who did they think might be infiltrating?

Oh, well, foreigners obviously...

Communists, maybe?

Well, people who wanted the wherewithal to steal the plutonium, or uranium, or whatever ghastly thing it is that makes these bombs - terrorists basically who are going to be amongst us, so that when we broke in, they could break in and steal a bomb or something. I mean, it was absolutely hilarious. And, and also, I was at an evening class once and this - and I said, I was rather tired because I'd spent the previous night at Greenham, and she said 'Oh, my goodness, are they all lesbians?' And the teacher - he sort of said 'How the hell should she know?' And I thought, oh my hero - exactly! Why - what is this? So yes, there was this huge amount of misinformation. So we - all of the women could be discredited because we were lesbians, we'd left our families to fend for themselves, etc, etc. So therefore, we were the dregs of humanity. So yes, they had lots of material that they could use against Greenham women. The press, of-course enjoyed every minute of it, in the same way that they do now, with Brexit, and with Muslims, and other outrageous acts. So yes, we were just a laughing stock to a great extent. Um. But the fact we won! (Laughs). Kind of trumps it!

I think, I think that that notion that we didn't know what we were talking about, was, was um, was very strong, you know, and actually, for me, I was holding a philosophical position. And because I didn't have access to all the facts in the way that the government or the military might have information, it was as if the information that I had about, you know, the world and human relationships and what we want in our world, from a philosophical position - it was as if that didn't count. And, but I think, I don't feel anti military. I think that - even then I didn't feel anti military, I felt that people who were in the military were people of honour, they, they were holding those roles because they did care about people and their country. And I actually felt angry on their behalf, because I felt

they were having to defend something that was morally wrong. And they had no power in that. So, um, but I think that historically, that's always happened, and it's still happening now. You know, women's opinions about things are still being devalued. We still live in a world where women's voices aren't being heard in the boardroom, where you know, you only have to think about the MeToo movement - it highlights what women have had to put up with throughout their life. And, you know, I think it's still happening, that there is still sexism in the world that we live in. It's still happening in parliament. You know, when, when people are reported - when the media reports on something, they still talk about a woman's age, or what she's wearing. When do they ever do that with a man? They, they come at it from a different angle. It's still happening, it's still happening.

Yeah, I was looking at a newspaper the other day, and all - a double page spread about Brexit was all reported by men - not a single female journalist being given that work.

Yeah.

I was really struck by that being ongoing.

Yeah, absolutely.

Did you ever have any relationships or conversations, or anything that struck you with the men on the base while you were there for night watch or a...

I didn't.

I remember the first night I was there, and I'd because I'd never been, and it was dark by the time we got there. And so I thought, well, I'll just go along and see what the fence is like. So I walked along the fence and I was just sort of walking along, and I suddenly realised to my horror that there was a guy inside shadowing me with his rifle. Because I was - and I thought, well, at first I was quite frightened. So I sort of scuttled

back to our crowd and then I thought this is laughable, this poor chap is reduced to stalking this middle aged woman! (Laughs). You know, because I might be a threat to him and his bombs. So there was that. I remember one time when we were there, and we we did get chatting - I can't quite remember how it happened. But the guys inside, they were new to their duty, the military police or whichever troops they were that were guarding the base. And it was a day time, one of the weekends, I think, when we went on a demo there. And they'd come from Ireland, and they were Irish soldiers for heaven's sake, which seemed really bizarre in the circumstances - that we had Ireland going on. And we had Greenham going on, and Irish soldiers were over here. And they were homesick. So we sang Danny Boy to them. (Laughs). And it felt like quite a moment at the time. Err, because yeah, they were just doing their job. The bigger question to me at the time was why would somebody choose to do that job, I guess? I wondered what kind of 18 year old young man would want to join an association that trains you to kill people?

Um, yes I've always wondered that as well.

Yeah, so that seems to me a bizarre thing to want to be - in the same way I wonder why people young people want to become police women and men, because it smacks of being a bit scared of anything other other than law and order and complete control. So yeah um...

How did they receive the Danny Boy?

Oh, they, they thought it was really sweet. (Laughs).

That's lovely.

Yes, they thought it was very sweet.

Do you know that they had to change - they had to rota them every 6 weeks, according to the woman I've spoken to, because the soldiers

would become sympathetic to the Greenham women. Because they were...

Excellent!

They learnt they had to move them on actually, fairly fast.

I remember hearing stories - I remember hearing stories about men who, um, who, who were sympathetic to what we were doing. And um, I heard stories of people leaving the Army, or being moved on or whatever. So I mean, how can it not affect people?

Did song plays a big part in your memories of Greenham?

God yes!

Yeah. Do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Well, that - from my memories are that it could be both joyous, but also very moving. So, I mean song is an immensely powerful way of uniting people, and giving them a voice to express themselves being part of the whole. Um. So I learned some good songs, I learned some variations on songs. I mean, it was quite a creative place. You know, there was one particular gate that was all about, you know, arts and crafts as it were. Um, and I remember a lot of drum playing and singing going on, and people used to take instruments. So yeah, I mean, it was - it on occasions had a bit of the festival spirit. There was a sense of celebration around it, it wasn't all it - certainly for me, my experience was that it wasn't all about being angry about the government and what they were doing - it was also a place of celebration, and celebrating life. And yeah, singing was an important part of that. Because it rouses the spirit doesn't it? It gets people going. It gets people on side. We all feel like we're literally singing from the same page. (Laughs).

Yeah, my son was at school - they were doing Frere Jacques, and the teacher said 'There's lots of different versions of Frere Jacques, does

anybody else know any different versions?' And 5 year old Nick, and he said 'Yes, I know one, it's (sings) We are women. We are women. We are strong. We are strong. We say no, we say no, to the bomb, to the bomb.' (Laughs). And his teacher who was 6' in her jackboots from South Africa, lovely, lovely woman. And she just said 'Um, I'm not surprised.' (Laughs).

(Laughs). That's lovely.

But we had lots of songs - I don't know if I can remember them - something about you can't kill the spirit.

(Sings). 'You can't kill the spirit, she is like a mountain, old and strong, she goes on and on and on. You can't kill the spirit.' And that would just go on in a round, and people would kind of join in. But you know, that's that's all part of the tradition, isn't it - of the protest movement, throughout history. That's how, that's been part of protest, hasn't it? That singing has been part of protest.

Yeah.

And that happened at Greenham.

I've got photographs of that too!

Oh lovely, we'll move onto the photographs in a minute, that will be really nice. I just want to - but before we do that, ask about any individual actions that you remember - whether you took part in anything particularly, or whether you were ever arrested? Or any things that sort of pop out around what did Greenham women actually did - when we say actions, when we say NVDA, what were the things you might have been personally involved in?

The first thing I think of is it wasn't at Greenham, because you know, it continued outside of Greenham. Um, what I mentioned earlier about chaining myself to err, to the railings. And I remember um, the local

press came, and they took some photographs and afterwards they said 'Oh, it's okay. You can let yourself go now. You know, we've got the photo.' 'No, we are chained. This is a demonstration. This is for real. We have chained ourselves with - this isn't just about the picture.' So I remember sitting there, being there quite uncomfortable for the rest of the afternoon, chained up.

What were people's reactions, not just the press, but people going past?

Well, it was interesting. A lot of people could be sympathetic, you know, they'd be cheering us on, or they'd be laughing at us, or there would be men driving past shouting obscenities out of the window - very mixed result. We, I certainly don't remember feeling in any physical danger. But I think, but I think the fact that we were wearing kind of costume - Victorian costume - it might have been on International Women's Day or something. It, you know, it was a spectacle I guess.

(Sound of dog snoring!). Just gonna calm my snoring dog there!

(Laughs).

In the middle of your empowering story!

Bored?

Heavily asleep.

But the other, the other actions that you know were, were very prominent - were being out in Camberley town centre, you know, leafleting, doing all the kind of groundwork that, that happens in any sort of um, movement. That's, that's about wanting to raise people's awareness about stuff. Personally, I wasn't, um, I was never arrested. I was never in threat of that. But also, I was one of those people who was very aware that if I, if I was in that position, you, you know, it would be very difficult for me to, to be in because of what was - what what was happening in the rest of my life. So I didn't take risks, I suppose as some

women might have done, I had to do what I could, I had to do what I can. But I can remember blockading somewhere - I can't remember where it was we were blockading. And literally sitting on the floor, arm in arm, we weren't going anywhere. And the police kept trying to, to move us, and they would peel people away from the edges. And they'd go away, but then they would come back at a different part of it. So it would be - we would be like rows of people sitting on the floor, arm and arm, you know, in non-violent direct action.

Wow!

And putting things on the fence, and singing.

And when you say non-violent direct action in that blockade, does that mean you behave physically in a very specific way?

Yeah, we were...

We've heard that you flopped?

Yeah, we were sitting on the ground, kind of cross legged, linked arms, so it was difficult to separate us. And we weren't going anywhere. So, you know, however many times we were told to move...

You'd come back in?

We weren't going anywhere. So if the police peeled people off from the edges, they would get replaced, you know, in the line behind kind of thing.

And when they carried you...

It was a continual process.

...did you have a way of, was there something about being carried, did you, how did you, how did you move when they tried to move you?

Well, people did it individually. In terms of, if you like, the spirit of NVDA, it is about showing no resistance. It is about being a dead weight, it is about kind of being dragged along the floor, or you know, in other words, not doing anything, that, that represented violent action. It was about the power of non violence. You know, it was about holding the presence, and saying no.

Excellent. Thank you. Margaret, any memories of actions or demos or anything you...

Oh, lots and lots of memories, but nothing that I did specifically because, again, like Annei, I wasn't in a position to get arrested because my husband would have been furious. (Laughs). And it was walking a bit of a tightrope at that time anyway, about how much support I was going to get on this. So, um, no, I didn't want to get arrested. But we were really there to support people who either had been arrested, um, or just to support the women to live there. Um, so no, it - there was no heroism (laughs), wasn't a hero. I think the nearest I got to being arrested was once when we were driving away from a demo, and realised that there was a woman up a tree inside the fence with policemen all around her underneath, and I went out and got the camera, and I was taking photographs of her and she told me she was she Sheila, and she was from Scunthorpe. And that she, she couldn't get down the tree because she was a bit dizzy. And the policemen were trying to get her down. And then suddenly I realised it was the policemen had run outside and they were chasing me. And I just sort of ran up this bank and jumped into the car and drove off. So that was a bit of a shaky moment because I thought, what are they going to do - they're going to impound my camera so I can't have a photograph of Sheila from Scunthorpe up a tree? And so that was about as exciting as it got for me. I think it was just a question of just being there as much as we could. And just doing - quietly doing the bit. Singing as loudly as we liked, and being as noisy as we liked, but just persistently being there, and not ever going away!

Great. Shall we have - is there anything that you were expecting me to ask that I haven't asked? Or anything you'd like me to have asked that I haven't asked?

No.

Great shall I come around that way and we have a look at the photos?

Sure.

That'd be really nice.

Would we be better here?

Yeah nice idea.

I'll just check, I think it'll be fine. It's fine. If you talk me through some of this.

Oh, right okay.

We've got a Greenham situation right here where we are working in one room and my partner, my male partner, is cooking the lunch in the other room.

Which which brings it all back!

Exactly. Just feels right, honouring it.

It does, it really does.

So what we got on the first...

So this is the very first demo I went on. And there's my son aged 2.

Oh, in a pushchair.

Well, 1 and a bit. So yes, this is a press photograph, because we were able to get the press photographs from them. Um, and so I tended to just tie it up with what we were doing, really.

And I noticed there, Margaret, you've, you've above the date of 29th of February 1984, you've described it as a civil defence demo. Which is interesting, because actually, yeah, it was, it was but it was a different kind of civil defence.

It was probably, I can't remember, I can't remember what it says now. What's it, what we were actually complaining about - because it would have been a specific cause. And it might have been a civil defence demo. (Laughs). I can't remember.

I love some of the - you're all carrying banners in this press photo. And it says funded by the ratepayers, the chief planning officer question mark, whose bunker is it anyway?

Oh, it was the bunker underneath the Civic Centre. They would building - this is the the fence of the building site that they were building the new Civic Centre, and the Tories were proud, the fact that there was going to be a bunker underneath, which we thought was hilarious, considering we was so near Camberley, Sandhurst, Aldershot, like anyone was going to survive. (Laughs).

But luckily they did survive, it will be those important town councillors.

All of whom were men at the time, and we wondered whether they would be looking, scouting around for some women to go in with them at the time, so yes, that's what it was. And no children allowed, there you go.

On the pram! (Laughs). Lovely.

But we did all sorts of things...

Oh it was Lasham, lovely Lasham - for a picnic.

What was lovely about it?

Yes, I mean, what a lovely way to protest to have a picnic. A peace picnic. It's just brilliant.

I expect you were there.

Yes, I expect I was - I'm probably one of those small children, aren't I?

Yes bound to be. So that was the sort of thing I took my children to.

Okay, so what sort of things would this be - explain this for people listening. This is slightly different, are these pop up cameras almost?

This was, um, Lasham was a, was a...

Air field.

Air field, but they, they took in bombs. (Laughs). I believe. It was really bizarre.

So you'd just go up for a day, would you?

Yeah, yes. And on this occasion and we had our own cruise missile with us on the car...

Oh god, I remember that. That's so strange.

You can see a great big model of it. And we just took a picnic, and we'd sit there and I, on the one occasion I went, um, a car was zooming towards us from the base, and a guy started taking photographs of us from his car. And then he came over and told us that it was illegal, we had to clear off. And we said 'We don't think so.' And so we started

taking photographs of him, and he got really, really pissed off and he drove off again, never saw him again. (Laughs).

How flimsy his sense of well being. (Laughs).

Absolutely. Absolutely. So it was a bit of a jolly, but it was making our point at the same time.

Yeah, and would press sometimes come to these things, or other people in the area see them?

Sometimes they would, yeah.

It was more things like this. We used to have a vigil every year for Hiroshima day. And we would go and light candles. And outside the Civic Centre there was a little pond, and we would float our candles in the pond there, and we would all sing, stand around and sing. And of course my son was always drawing pictures of us.

Yes, there's some lovely, very young illustrations on these pages. And I can remember doing the same thing - being - my mum writing newsletters for CND, and me writing my own version of that covered in peace...

That's, that's reminded me, because actually, I was newsletter editor at one point, and you were my assistant weren't you, Margaret! And your parents had this old fashioned printing machine. Everything used to come out like a pale purple. But it used to be such a mess with loads of ink, and you'd have to turn it around like a drum type - do you remember?

Yes, it used to be old radio machine, and we used to have to type it on these wax sheets.

That sounds maddening.

It was.

It was awful!

But this was us decorating the fence of the bunker at the Civic Centre, we decided to have a civic day - and my children decided that they'd like to do some things for it. So, and I said if they'd like to, they'd like to do some pictures for the fence. And I can remember that and also our friend's children too. So another Knowles, Judith Knowles.

Oh yes.

And her children, and so they all got to it and did these pictures. And I can remember Nick doing this picture, and it was supposed to be a line of soldiers. Um, but one of our members looked at it and she said 'They look like happy surgeons!' They're all smiling and they're all in this green colour. (Laughs). And that night, there was a terrible wind. And because we'd decorated all - put all sorts of just like a Greenham fence. This was our Greenham in Camberley. And that evening um, the wind got up really badly. And so my husband was a bit worried about it because he drove past it and he said 'The stuff's really blowing out, blowing around.' So he went back and cleared it up and took all the rubbish, where upon the police stopped him and said 'What are you doing?' He said 'I'm clearing up the litter from the fence that's blown off.' And they - one of them went round his car and studied it and kicked the tyres and what have, you while they've talked to him. And the said 'Well, did you do this sir?' And he said 'Well, could have done but I'm just clearing up the mess.' And they said 'Well, we've had reports of people damaging our fence.'

But you weren't damaging it were you? You were just pinning things.

No, no. But actually, you can see that, actually, when we were decorating the fence, the policeman came, because he'd been told he'd had reports of us - these terrible people - lesbians probably, putting their balloons...

And their children's pictures up. How terrifying!

Yeah, I know. There's the children. And then of-course, we had the party.

Christmas party, Santa - I hope played by a woman, but you never know!

NATO war games. This is - we were protesting against police, the police who had to spend the day pretending to incarcerate known agitators.

Oh wow.

So of-course we were known agitators, so we went to give ourselves up. (Laughs). So we marched into the police station and said 'Here we are, we surrender.'

What did they do with you?

They were completely bemused! Denied all knowledge of doing any exercises at all. This was happening over the whole country. And the press took a photograph. Unfortunately, we didn't have any placards, and we looked like a right motley crew don't we!

No, not at all. You look quite delighted with yourselves, which I rather like about that picture.

Yes, yeah. Any opportunity, we were out there! Yeah, I think stuff happened.

It's amazing they did this stuff and they didn't - they thought that it was a secret. And you were like, we know what you're doing! Oh no, how do you know? It must be the Russians!

Oh, this is Longmoor. This is a Cruise Watch, press bus and we were asked to go and meet - there you are in your yellow.

Oh is this the banana suit?

Well, top half.

It's not too banana-ry, it's lovely! The whole outfit is quite special.

Yeah, we used to hang out at Orange Gate and Green Gate, did we?

This is mostly Orange.

I'm glad you've documented it, because I couldn't remember.

This was, that was my favourite.

Which was your favourite, sorry?

Orange Gate was my favourite.

So what was, tell me a bit about why, what made it...

They had, different gates had different vibes. Yellow was the main entrance, so we were doing the - they called it Alpha, Beta, Charlie, Delta.

I don't remember that.

We called it Yellow, Orange, Red. And so we were rainbow colours, the gates, but they were definitely the...

The military had their...

Their own, yes, of course. And so it started at Yellow, and then it went round to Orange. And that was kind of round a corner, which had quite a lot of space around it. So we used to go there a lot.

And why was Orange your favourite?

There was something laid back about it. I think that's where the creche was as well, so the children were brought there, there was a creche there on the demo days. Green was very musical, Red was quite militant, shall we say. So there were different kinds of vibes.

And places you might fit?

Well, just places where you just felt more you somehow - I don't know.

That's lovely.

Yeah.

Do you remember that, Annei?

No, I don't. I don't, I don't remember that too much. But um, yeah, I think partly it was because, because it was it felt circular. If I didn't quite - it's a bit like hands on a clock. You know, or the symbols on a clock. I just knew I was around Greenham, I didn't necessarily know where I was at!

All a little bit a little bit overwhelming! Wonderful.

This is where people would decorate the fence. And these are life size. So they actually look like life size people.

That's reminded me, there was one really, really big demo called Embrace the Base - that was really powerful, because we literally were standing next to each other all the way around the base, and we did embrace...

And it's 9 miles around it.

It was surrounded by women. And you know, just just that sense of everybody coming, really. People from all over the world. It wasn't just this this country.

Wow really?

There was a big Quaker presence there. The Quaker women were absolutely gorgeous. And they were just so peaceful and so gentle, and they were a real big presence there.

Yeah, I'd forgotten about that, actually. That was really important to me. That was the first time I met Quakers. And in fact, years later when I went on to get married, I got married in a Quaker church. And, you know, my discovery of the Quakers was at Greenham, was part of the peace movement. Because the thing about Quakers they seem to - they live what they believe. For them, the political is the personal, and they quietly just get on with stuff.

I meant to say, actually, um, you, you were talking earlier about, we didn't get to - because we had a problem with batteries. You didn't get to finish your story about why you'd voted Conservative. And I just wondered how Greenham had influenced both of your lives politically, I suppose. Do you still take an active political role? So I wanted you to finish your story - you were saying that you voted Conservative because you wanted to get involved as a feminist statement to vote for Margaret Thatcher because she was a woman. Is that right?

Yeah, I feel I've kind of answered that along the way, probably in that um, what I what I learned as being part of Greenham, and and the women's movement generally, is that it's, it's not about that, and I would never, and have never voted Conservative again.

No. Do you feel it's changed your politics in any other like, do you is it? Or is was that part of a general sense of how you operate now is just part of...

Well for me, yeah, my left wing politics definitely grew out of my experience of Greenham, and radical feminism. Absolutely, absolutely.

Well, I'm slightly different in that I don't, I'm not left wing - I'm radical. I'm a Liberal Democrat, and I have been for many years and I was before I came to Camberley and joined Camberley CND. And to me, it seemed the sanest choice at the time, because neither the Conservatives nor Labour actually did anything to get rid of the bombs. They never actually decelerated them. They just kept on going with the nuclear option. So I couldn't trust either of them to, to actually represent me in something that was really important to me. And so one of the reasons I became a liberal and then a Liberal Democrat was because they were the one party that actually said no bombs, no nuclear. And they were absolutely clear about it. And they still are. So, and then I found that a lot - everything else, their principles, their basic beliefs, I agree with them. So it's very much to do with equality.

So yours sort of started, yours solidified a place you were already in?

Yes.

Whereas for you Greenham changed...

Oh, yeah, absolutely. I went from from one end to the other. Yeah.

(Laughs). Thank you so much. This has been absolutely lovely. I know that we probably all want to eat our roast dinner now. So I'll call it in!

Okay.

But thank you so, so much.

That's okay. It's a pleasure. It was lovely to talk about it, wasn't it?

Yeah. I can't remember the last time we've had a chance to actually talk about it.

Well, we can - I'd quite like to look at the rest of the album over dinner, if that's alright?

(Laughter).