

Muswell Hill Women

Can we just go around, and could you say just say your name for me, is that alright?

I'm Sheila Noiling.

I'm Lucy Craig.

I'm Diana Luck.

I'm Jane Harter.

I'm Marianne Scott.

And I'm Chris Barnard.

Thank you very much. Um so, um, I guess the first question is what took you to Greenham in the first place? Did you go through the peace movement, or the feminist movement or what, what took you there?

We were all in Muswell Hill CND weren't we?

Yeah.

That was...

1980s we really did think that we're going to grow - blow up, grow up, Margaret Thatcher.

Yeah, indeed.

Ronald Reagan.

Exactly.

And all they could talk about was nuclear war, and then they came up with a neutron bomb. I was in Russia when that appeared in the press. Yeah. Oh, great, we can wipe out people without destroying the cities. How wonderful.

Wow.

It was very scary. And so we all joined and went to Greenham and that was me anyway.

I think local CND was, was really large.

Yes.

Yeah, one of the largest groups in the country.

I mean, I belonged in - I've belonged for a long time, obviously.

You were the chair.

Yes, I was, but I belonged in Leamington. Then when I came here I looked around for the nearest group, and they sent me in Lucy's direction. Yes, it was quite, it was a very bonding thing between us all.

Yeah.

As you can see we still...

Most of us had children.

Oh did you?

Yes, yeah.

How did that play out, then? Did you take the children there or did you have people that supported...

They...arrested!

Brilliant

Photos of our children here.

I remember when your son was arrested, because he'd cut his way into the base, and they came and said to you 'Madam, if you don't control your son, we'll take him into custody,' and you said 'Oh will you? How long can you have him?' (Laughs). He was only about 8 at the time.

No he was older, he was about 10.

'Shall we make it a week or 2?' (Laughs).

And did they take him into custody?

They did. Yes. I mean, and they took him into Newbury police station, which was 8/10 miles away from Greenham. And we were all down there having gone by coach. And the coaches had gone off to park for the day, long way away. So there's no way the coach could take the other mother, and myself into the police station. So we had to hitchhike there. So we didn't get there for an hour an hour and a half after they had been driven off. And, you know, there were a lot of women down there for that day, just for - it was a day action. We were all sitting around having a picnic.

That's right.

And some women came past us and said 'Do any of you have two young boys with you? Because we've just seen them driven off in a police van.' And so the other mother, friend Sue, she and I hitchhiked in and got there about an hour and a half later to find the two boys in a cell.

(Laughs). And, and as they came out of the cell, and then we were taken into two offices to be questioned separately. Um. My son was saying to his friend Harry, who had never been before, and my son knew Greenham better than most of us did. And because at that stage, you could take young boys, but when they were a bit older, they didn't go. And my son was saying to Harry 'Don't cry, don't let them see you crying.'

(Laughter).

And he's still like that.

(Laughter).

And they took us into two separate rooms, and the young police officer who was interviewing us, er, there were two at one point, but the one I remember, was a young woman, and she'd only been in the police force for a year, and she had been at Greenham as a protester (laughter), a year or 2 before. So she was actually very nice. But at one point, so my son was being questioned and asked all these questions about it and so, and I think male, male police officer joined us by then. And he said to him 'Do you realise it's an offence to um, damage other people's property or you know, property that's not yours?' And my son aged 10, said 'Well, my parents are taxpayers, and therefore I feel I have a right to...' anyway.

Damage, damage.

It's our fence. And he'd taken - I'd just left a school that I'd been working out for 10 years, and they've given me as a leaving present a huge pair of Chinese wire cutters, bright red!

Because they knew that you would use them?

Oh yes, oh yes! I was always collect from the staff at school, you know, stuff to take down to Greenham, so they knew my proclivities. They

gave me this wonderful heavy duty pair of wire cutters that you know, would have got into Fort Knox they were so good. And the little bugger, he got them confiscated. I never saw them again.

Aww!

Have you still got any wire left? I've still got bits of wire.

Have you?

The razor wire.

The fence wire.

The green...

What the razor wire?

No, the green fence wire.

I've got some of the razor wire from there, but anyway.

One of the things that I remember when we did surround the base is you know, if you were really tall, and you know, the concrete posts were really strong. But, if you shake thousands of women, all shaking, but not in rhythm, you know that kind of, you know, the fence started come loose, and the posts actually started to sway. I think about like the Millennium footbridge. When you have that many people - not expending that much effort, just had to shake it a bit and it started to loosen all the posts.

Wow!

There's the fence.

Oh yeah.

So it was quite formidable.

You asked earlier about how we managed about staying - some of us managed to stay a bit more than others because we'd got slightly older children.

Right.

Some people who had very small children didn't stay. And some of us took our children to stay with us, but none of us were down there for any long sessions. Probably about 10 days was the most I think I ever did.

I don't think I even did that.

But I still think that one of the funniest things when we first went - we were very much Muswell Hill group, you know? Muswell Hill's known as Muesli Hill. And the first time we went down to stay as a group, I think we were all there, and we being nice ladies said that we would cook the dinner, and it's quite challenging, you know, cooking the dinner out in the open air, and we said what would they like for dinner? And they looked us straight in the eye and said they would like stuffed pancakes.

(Laughter).

And we produced stuffed pancakes!

Do you think they were laying down a bit of a challenge?

I think they were, yes.

(Laughter).

A little test. Did you all stay at the same gate? Or did you go to different gates?

No, we went to different gates.

No, we most of the time. Yellow Gate were we?

Yes, Yellow Gate.

They had jewels names rather than colours.

I think it was colours.

It was colours.

But you're right, because there's Emerald Gate in there. And then Blue gets changed to Woad at some point. So I think there's a bit of a mixture.

Topaz, Amber, something like that? I think - I can't remember...

Such a long time ago.

Well they were originally, but then they changed. But the answer was I think when we stayed we usually stayed - because there's a woman called Hazel. We used to always be at the same gate with her. Because the main gate was a bit challenging.

Jane and Hazel they were friends, and they shared.

I think they shared.

And one of them had been beaten up I think on one occasion that we went, had been beaten up quite badly.

By police, or by locals?

By squaddies.

How horrible.

And then somebody was hit by a car, weren't they?

Yes.

Yes that, a young woman was killed.

Oh, at Main Gate they used to sort of drive like crazy sometimes.

'Cause the roads were very narrow and there's no footpath and, you know, you'd be hugging the hedge walking along, and vehicles would come along actually go for you.

Yeah, we mainly - we quite often stayed at the evictions didn't we?

Yes, we helped out.

We sort of made a point that was - to bear witness to that, and whether they were violent, and all the rest of it. And my memory is we had one of the Peugeot cars - we all packed into it, or most of us packed into it to actually go, and then we had this brilliant thing of um, sleeping in it.

(Laughter).

Thinking that we'd be a bit warmer, but on that night it was -3, and I remember having a moment where I think...

Was it midnight?

Might have been, but I remember thinking, you know, here are these people who live their life and are tortured for a cause, and here am I whinging about sleeping in a car at -3. I mean, it was thought provoking in a lot of ways.

What did everyone take on the surround the base thing to hang on the fence?

Oh, yes, you're saying you hung things - is that the Embrace the Base?

Embrace the Base.

Was that '82 or 3? '82.

I'm thinking '82, because I think that was the year I moved - I think...

It was fairly early.

'83?

Yeah. Yeah. 'Cause I think we only moved here in '83.

And you all took things and put them on the fence?

Very creative, weren't they?

Weaving and tapestries, and...

A scarf from a friend of mine.

Yeah.

Weaving it in with wool.

There were some lovely, lovely spider's webs. There's a spider's web here.

Yeah. There was a lot of weaving going along.

Oh wow. Spiders webs come up a lot actually, keep seeing that in newsletters and things as well.

Well, I've got somewhere, somewhere, some lovely earrings, which are the spider's web with a little dove on it, do you remember?

Oh I remember those.

We all had those.

What was it symbolising then, do you think, the web? What did it...

Well it was...

Female power.

Sort of the strength.

Yeah, of something so delicate.

Yeah, I think it was the strength.

And to decorate this wire in a way that would really embarrass the soldiers coming.

There's a really big one.

Brilliant. Oh, wow. So you're transforming the fence into something...

Yes.

Taking reclaiming it.

Yeah.

Thinking back I knew some cool Michael Christen, who was head of arts for Channel 4 at the time. And he said that I think Tony Harrison, the poet and playwright, was thinking of doing a play about Greenham, but based on Lysistrata - the Greek drama where the women refused to

sleep with their husbands. And I said 'It won't work, because it's not about women in relation to their men. It's about women, it's nothing to do with men, and we're not asking male permission, and we're not going to withhold sexual favours. It's just women in their own right. And you can't make it into some kind of, you know, women sort of playing up to their partners, because our partners actually irrelevant in this.' Other than they provide child care....

Supportive...

And very supportive...

Yes, yes, but it was not about we're doing this in relation...

Or in order to persuade them to take the...

Yeah, it was just we are women and we do not want this base here. And we are going to make sure it goes. And it did!

(Laughs). Yeah, and you succeeded. Um, you were saying that the Yellow, the Main Gate and Yellow Gate - they're the same, aren't they? You were saying that was a bit challenging here, is that right?

Yeah, I did. Yeah, well, that was the one where there was often more aggression, I think from the police and from the squaddies.

It was the big one?

Yes, it was. It was the main gate at the entrance gate. So I think it was tougher for the women who were camping there as well.

I was wondering if you had any opinions about your relationship between - or memories of experiences with with either the MOD or the squaddies - which are quite different sometimes, weren't they? And also the Americans on the base of-course? I don't know if you had anything much to do with any of them?

I don't remember coming across any Americans.

Oh, really. So did you, did you have anything to do with the police or the British squaddies or anything?

Not an enormous...

They didn't close the gate in time. And we've got three quarters of the car through, and they just let on - yeah, yeah. That's the only interaction really any of us...

Was the one when we did the mirrors - that was at the same time as Embrace the Base? We did one section where, and they got really - the people on the inside got really shirty.

Could you explain that to us a bit? Because...what that was?

I'll have a go, I might have forgotten. I think it was another - I think Embrace the Base was one where we... And then there was another one the year after, or the year after that, where the idea was that we again surrounded the base, but we shone mirrors into the base to reflect back the...

Aggression.

And that really, that really got up their noses. They got very, very unpleasant about it. But on the whole we were the other side of the fence, and as people say, there wasn't an awful lot they can do. Only the women who were bold enough to go inside got into real trouble.

And you were saying that you lived at Blue Gate for a week. Was that all of you?

No, that was just me. I went down - I think I think it was sort of Easter time as far as I remember.

Why did you go? What took you there?

I don't know, just part of the same thing I suppose. Wanted a week out of London - what better place to go!

(Laughter).

Did you have friends at Blue Gate? Or did you...

No, there was another woman I knew there and I think she'd come - maybe we went down together - I can't remember now, to be honest. But the others it was just the regular people living there.

And if you didn't stay at - if you stayed at Blue Gate, and you all agreed you weren't that keen - or we didn't stay at the Main Gate, where did you stay when you did visit? Were there gates that stand out, that you remember positively?

Certainly one that I stayed at a number of times, and I honestly can't remember which one it was, I remember the woman who were there permanently, because Jane...

Was that where Sarah Hipperson was as well?

Yes, because - I think it was, and Jane and Hazel were there, but yeah I don't remember it as a colour.

A jewel - it may well be.

And then when we - we often went up for the day, so those of us with younger children, we'd go up for the day with rolls of plastic sheeting to make - I can't remember what they were called!

The benders!

We'd go and we'd take food.

And fuel as well, believe it or not know - we'd take fuel wouldn't we?

Yeah, yes.

I went once with my great aunt um, who was really a feminist, very intelligent woman, and she wanted to know all about it, and then she said 'I want to go down there.' So I was to collect her, and she went out to the garden shed and she got all her garden furniture, put it in the back of my car and she said 'This is going to make Neville furious.'

(Laughter).

She donated all of her garden chairs to the woman, women there. Went and sat, sat round to fire with the women and I said 'You know, Cecile, it's all going to go in the bulldozer tomorrow morning. They won't be able to keep them.' 'I don't care we'll make Neville very cross.'

(Laughter).

And I presume he was very cross!

So all those sort of - I was gonna pick up on those both, you mentioned evictions and you mentioned the bulldozers, was that to do with the bailiffs? Is that when they were clearing out the camps?

Yes, every morning.

It was pretty horrible regularity.

They did.

And did they call for extra women to come be part of that?

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

They put the call out, didn't they?

Was that the Main Gate?

I can't remember which...

Or did they do it to all gates?

They drove round.

Yeah, they did.

They definitely weren't there when I was there. But I met some really mean...

il think the bulldozing bailiffs, that was towards - that was not at the beginning of the time. With the evictions later - horrible..

5 or 6 years, wasn't it?

Well it gathered momentum. Because they banned the woman from - which was it Pizza Express or...

Oh, Little Chef.

Camilla and I got turned out.

Yes.

I think we all did.

We happened to be together - deeply offended!

Thrown out of a Little Chef!

(Laughter).

I mean if you've got boots and leg warmers on, you were a dangerous woman!

I mean, I think it's you know, opinion was turning against the woman, I think... hence there was this ban from Little Chef, I think. And then gradually, yeah, I think it did increase over the time we were going there.

Were the bailiffs local? Do you think they were actually part of sort of spreading that?

I don't know.

I don't know, I don't think - I don't know.

But I think you're right, at first there was a kind of sense in the press of being quite popular - women doing this nice peaceful thing...

And then it...

But there were quite a lot of local people who were very supportive. People came regularly.

Yes, I'm not saying all the locals, but I have a feeling that in general, that you know, like the restaurants, the other shops as well I think they were reluctant - became more reluctant.

Well sometimes we might go in to use the loo, or have a wash, and then that was not very popular because they were using the facilities without...

Being a customer.

Yeah, yeah.

I remember doing that and some of the pubs in Newbury. They were very hostile.

There were women from all over the world who came there, weren't there? Weren't just British women.

We had some time Chinese women came. I think, they're here, yes, because it's so funny because they came to stay with me, and they asked particularly please could they have bacon and cheese - cheese they wanted, because they were fed up having come here, everybody was giving them Chinese food, which was distinctly inferior to any Chinese food. So they wanted cheese!

(Laughter)

And that's a long way for them to come, what was...

Well it's part of a peace delegation of solidarity. There's more - people from South America, some people who came...

Solomon Islands?

People from all over, it was a very large network. And people made the journey, you know, specially. I don't know how they were funded, but presumably independently.

Amazing.

.....our group was....

Pause for a puppy break here - puppy in the room! It's a very cute puppy. I'm just getting bits of tail. Oh, my god, there's his face - hello!

(Male voice). There you go!

Oh my god, gorgeous!

Thank you very much. Anyway, back to you.

Our group, we were all in our what - Jen was the real baby, but the rest of us in our 30s and 40s. But there was another quite a substantial part of our group was we got the older ladies.

Wonderful.

They were an absolutely stunning group, they were four/five?

Yes.

And are they friends that you made there?

No they were friends from CND.

Margaretwas one of the first women at Oxford in the 1930s. And she'd fallen in love with Jack Cohen who became Secretary General of the Communist Party - he was on one of the freedom marches wasn't he?

I think so.

Czechoslovakia...

Marion!

And Marion was married to somebody who - who was shot, he was shot.

Executed in Russia.

She was in prison.

Yes.

They were a feisty bunch, they really were.

(Inaudible - everyone talks at once).

....central Moscow.

Wow!

Frida had been...

Makes sense.

Frida was South African, a big anti-apartheid campaigner.

They were brilliant.

When we went to Molesworth on one occasion, because we had (inaudible) at Molesworth, and and we got a minibus, at something like 3 o'clock in the morning, but it was -5 degrees and snow. So their bulldozers weren't going anywhere, and we got there they said 'Oh, we've got transport for the old women,' and they all said 'Rubbish, we'll walk all the way!' So we all had to walk all the way!

(Laughter).

So did they tell you about Greenham? Was it through them that you...

Oh no, we all went together.

But the older communists it was because of them, I think that I started at CND. Because there was an old communist who lived just down the road from us. Um, he was the treasurer of CND, so I'd met him there. And he introduced me to Peggy Seeger and Ewan MacColl

Bob Lawrence?

Bob Lawrence. And so that's how I - that's how my friendship with Peggy started. And he and Margaret, and Marion, and Frida, they, they were all of a time in the Communist Party, that if you meet someone, and they're good, they have to be introduced or - that's why I was introduced to Peggy, otherwise we wouldn't be here today.

No, that's true.

And they were extremely generous like that with recognising this is a good person who needs to know all these other good people to carry on the work.

They were fabulous organisers. They worked so hard.

And, Lesley.

Lesley!

Oh, she was our artist.

And did they - did you feel like their particular brand of politics was kind of welcome at Greenham? Or did you see them having debates with people and...

I think they were no longer in the Communist Party. They'd been in the Communist Party, you know, before all the kind of information about Stalin fully emerged. So they were then (inaudible) Labour Party that had, you know, had a history of social activism that went a long way back.

It's really interesting, isn't it, that I think that, like you say, how it links in with social activism, but the communists seems to have its own distinct, I think like the way that it embraced NVDA, and non-violent direct action was really specific. And you've talked about some of those actions. And did you, do you think, do you see that in the same way we've had the

legacy from NVDA being used before - do you see that anywhere now in activism?

Extinction Rebellion.

Yeah.

I was at a meeting last night where we were talking about bringing Extinction Rebellion into the localities. Because so far the big events have been down in central London. But now they're beginning to try and get them happening around the country. And I think she said 24 countries around the world are working under the Extinction Rebellion banner, and a lot of that is about NVDA.

Do you - I - in my experience, I see radical green campaigners using a lot of NVDA tactics, but they don't seem to know anything about - and I said 'Oh, that's what my mum did at Greenham', and they'll go 'What was Greenham?' Do you have a similar thing - like when you talk to people from Extinction Rebellion, that they've looked at those lessons from Greenham, and we could use that - or have they come to it without, without knowing that contribution?

I just sort of assumed everybody knew about Greenham.

No, they don't.

They really don't - it's very disappointing.

My children do.

Yeah.

But my granddaughter - I've got an older - who's just 21, and she's studying politics. And even she - and she's very interested in activism. She's on the left and feminism, and everything else, but I didn't - I get

the impression that she, we've talked about it, and she it's all a bit of the history that's on the syllabus.

It's a generation ago.

Yes.

It's women's history. So the miners' strike is not forgotten in the same way, but Greenham being a women's initiative.

Yeah.

I think that's very telling.

And actually we did - they kind of overlapped at the end, didn't they?

Yes.

Don't forget in South Africa, the younger generation don't know anything about the apartheid struggle.

Can believe that.

It's true. The Nelson Mandela exhibition at the South Bank last summer, and there was a film as well made it quite clear that the present generation know nothing about it.

They don't know how lucky they are.

Yes.

But there's now a move to teach it in school. So it's not surprising that Greenham is forgotten.

Well I mean we had Women's Studies and things at university, were there any such things as Women's Studies? I think they were just beginning.

And it was so short lived. I think that's the trouble as well, Women's Studies.... it's mostly anymore, you know, they don't run them anymore.

So I think Greenham women were kind of belittled, and kind of stereotyped as well.

Oh we were mocked, definitely.

Definitely. Definitely. And then dismissed.

One of the fun things, we had some wonderful little visiting cards printed with Greenham Women are Everywhere. And some of us, you know, had sort quite fun leaving...

In the loo at the Savoy!

(Laughter).

That's great! Don't let anyone get too comfortable.

Yeah.

That's really interesting. Yeah, I was I was thinking about how - 'cause I think that there was a definite thing of it not being kept in the syllabus, and, and women's history in general being - well we can sanitise the Suffragettes and let's just have those, because they're far enough away that we can sort of sanitise that and push it back out. And Greenham could totally be linked to studying, you know, some of the modern Suffragettes, absolutely. But I do think there's a role academia has in that. But there's also that you're saying the depiction in the media and things - I don't know when you saying that you were derided or mocked,

do you have an experiences, or were you aware of experiences in the media at the time?

Oh yes, and every time there was a demo, and you go back and you watch on the telly and the numbers that you'd seen, were removed and divided by 100, because that's how many they said were there.

All changed nowadays of-course!

(Laughter).

And it was so, so complex to get organisation off the ground with a telephone tree - it was so complex.

It worked!

But it bloody worked!

In those days...

(Everyone talks at once!)

Nobody's going to have to put in that effort, you just go (makes clicking noise).

Badge making.

Yeah. I'd love to know more about the day to day practicals of that, like how did the telephone tree work, and how did the badge making work? Because I can remember my mom talking about telephone trees, but obviously at 5 years old, not really knowing, but it being a big deal.

So everybody's got sort of five people to phone, and they've got five people to phone.

(Inaudible - everyone speaks at once.)

And your phone was tapped, and your phone was put out of action when cruise came out. If two people phoned each other and one was Woodcraft and one was a Greenham group, if they managed if they, we, I had some children who were staying and they were from a Woodcraft family, and I needed to tell the parents something, and then our phone went dead because we were a Greenham person and a Woodcraft person. And that just happens every time that cruise came out. Your phone would go dead for 24 hours.

There's a huge amount of actual kind of resources that the government ended up having to put into Greenham, wasn't there, really?

Yeah, we had to pay for Michael Heseltine's flak jacket!

'Cause there was there wasn't as much fence at the beginning either, was there? I've heard from women who were there quite early on that there wasn't really fences, and then the fences got bigger and fuller, as it sort of went along.

More razor wire.

And I think surround the base there were how many helicopters hovering? And the noise of the helicopters was really horrible. They would come down really low as an act of aggression. I remember my daughter being really freaked out, she was about nine at the time. And, you know, that idea they were just looking down on you and using aggression to try and push you away.

And how did, how would - if you're using non-violent direct action, and you're taking that on board yourselves, how - that sounds like it'd be very challenging in those sort of situations to remain non violent. Did you find that personally challenging?

I think so. I think sometimes you'd get very angry, but there wasn't an awful lot you could do most of the time.

There were training session, I went on training sessions at Jackson's Lane.

How to protect your kidneys.

Oh yes.

(Laughter).

And horses were pretty scary. I mean I like horses, but they used the horses...

Yeah.

And what what happened in the training sessions?

Well, you just learnt techniques, and um, they warned us that if the police pick you up by your nostrils, it's best to just get up and go.

Because it's not very nice.

Oh my goodness, was that a thing? Was that a tactic?

Oh yes.

How to curl up up to protect your kidneys.

Protect your organs.

Yes.

Yeah, police were quite good at doing that.

They sound like the tricks my mother taught me!

Yes.

(Laughter).

Gosh, who, who, who took the training sessions? Who was training you?

Don't know, can't remember.

Part of CND probably?

Yes.

It was very organised and very efficient in those days.

I think my mum was involved the local CND at Camberley, and I think they had a Greenham woman come in a couple of different Greenham women to do those sorts of trainings with them. I wonder if that might have happened as well, maybe?

I don't think it was all women.

No.

Because there were so many.

In-fact I think it's possibly before Greenham?

I think so, yes.

Oh really, so was the violence on the CND marches as well?

Oh, yes. Police could get quite unpleasant.

20 odd years before that.

Well the police were really encouraged at the time to use physical - I mean there was that occasion, I mean not connect with Greenham, but

the people who were going to Stonehenge were beaten up very, very badly - men, women and children crossing a field and the police had actually been told, you know, go for it on that occasion, and I'm sure they were with us as well. No, that was the official line. You don't have to hold back. And of course, nobody had a mobile phone with a camera to document it.

Nothing like that. All you had to do was call out if you saw policeman you - you waited to shout out the number.

And then they started hiding numbers.

Yes. Yeah.

Really?

Yes.

So many of you arrested for any of the actions that you took?

We were arrested in Whitehall - not at Greenham, Whitehall.

We were arrested, Marianne's husband was a solicitor. And after a while we were allowed out to phone a solicitor. And I remember phoning your husband, because my husband was with him having a wine tasting! A wine tasting! And the bastards refused to do anything. And they said 'Oh well, you know, you'll be out in the morning'.

Also, they had seen us on the television - they'd seen, they'd seen, Jane has always had a penchant for...

I had a coloured jacket on, and my mum saw me on the 6 o'clock news!

Being pushed into a van.

Actually, on that occasion the policeman said to me 'Look, I know I'm meant to drag you, but I've got an awfully bad a kind, would you mind standing up and walking?'

(Laughter).

So I did!

But being in a cell overnight is a very, very unpleasant experience.

Oh when that door clangs, even when there's a group of you, I know we were all worried about who'd taken out...

I was last.

We were waiting for you.

Pretty nasty.

And what went - what did they do when they took you away? Obviously questioned you individually, did they?

I don't remember the questions.

I think they just took photos.

I put my sweatshirt - my hood up!

(Laughter).

Did any of you end up in court at any point? N

No, no, no, no, no, no.

Cautioned? I can't remember.

Rochester Row, wasn't it?

There were too many of us for them to take it too seriously.

They took a lot of people that night didn't they?

But that wasn't Greenham.

That's why when Extinction Rebellion starts calling for all of us to get involved, we all have to be there, because the more of us there are, the less they can do.

Yes.

And I think to be honest most of us tried to avoid being picked up before that, because we had all got quite young children, but this sort of about '86/'87, so the kids were slightly bigger, so we were prepared to take slightly bigger risk.

Since we've kind of broadened the conversation a bit to other other actions, I was wondering how you felt Greenham had influenced the rest of your life, really? Do you need to go?

Yes.

Nice to meet you Chris, thank you very much.

And yes, does have a legacy in your own life?

Well, it gave me a lot of friends!

Yes!

(Laughter).

Being in CND was just wonderful. I'd just come back to England from living abroad, and that's - I'd tried the Labour Party first. I went to Labour Party meetings - bored out of my mind (laughter), so I thought I'll try CND, and everyone was welcomed, and they'd give you a job to do.

Yes.

And they didn't spend their time arguing with each other.

Oh, yes they did.

Not like the Labour Party!

It was interesting on the Women's March um...

2 years ago.

2 years, you know, after Trump's election that it was, it was the same atmosphere, the same...

Camaraderie.

The same creativity.

Art and sing seem to be a really big part of Greenham. Is that something that you remember as well?

Yeah, yeah.

The song book's there somewhere. I think we've both got the same. Is that the same?

Really lovely.

I don't know where mine's got to.

I don't remember many of the songs.

No.

Yo can't kill the spirit.

On and on and on...!

(Laughter).

Did you, did you use it partly to - was it partly to keep your spirits up or to grind the police down?

Powerful.

It's very boring sitting there. Nothing to do - just sit there in the cold and the damp.

And the smoke, and the smoke...

In the eyes and...

You stank.

Your eyes watered.

I mean, you would make a cup of tea and you would all sit around and you know, most of the time it was just very boring. There's nothing happening, and then there would be you know, some kind of action and, but you know...

Singing helped to pass the time!

And you asked me at the beginning if I was - someone asked me if I was a filmmaker - I said I wasn't - theatre maker probably, but obviously

there's been there have been plays about Greenham, and there's going to be a film about it, nothing to do with us again. But over the years, these things have happened and people have also written poetry and all sorts of different responses to it. And if you were going to see a piece of art about Greenham, what would you want it to be like? Would you want it to - what form of art would you like? And what would you want it to say?

Something that conjures up the atmosphere on a powerful day, when you know, when you weren't just sitting around in the mud. But the excitement when suddenly 30,000 women did turn up, when nobody thought anything would happen. I can imagine that.

I think I'd want that feeling. Also I would want something to represent the real fear of a nuclear war.

Yeah.

That's what it was all about. And I think this is why, thinking of our grandchildren, um, it's something they need, you know, they, it is not familiar to them. I know we've got Trump and Putin. But that idea of...

But we've global warming - they're all terrified about that.

Yes, yes, I'm not saying that but if we were thinking about...

Sort of catastrophes.

I would like something to reflect what these women were doing, what they were trying to do, and about the future and the children and the next generations...

Well we've seen all the images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we've seen people, you know, with 90% burns, and we've seen kind of vaporised skeletons, and you know, the idea that that was a short distance away, you know...

Pretty scary.

And indeed, as you say, it had already happened, actually.

Yeah.

To a huge amount of people in parts of the world.

I mean the idea that you would get under your school desk or in your kitchen table and you'd be safe.

Oh, yes.

Brown paper on the wall.

I was just looking through these newsletters. And there's something about the doomsday clock was 3 minutes to 12, I'm sorry, it's now 2 minutes to 12 - I heard on the radio last night.

Thinking I've got a wonderful - I think it's lithograph. It's huge - actually not up on the wall. Do you remember there was an artist called Anne something, and someone bought me two huge paintings, which I've got, of Greenham, and one of them is of when we - with the mirrors, I think it was with the mirrors. So at some point, you want to have a look at that you could.

Yeah that would be lovely.

You would have to have the fence in the images.

That's the image, it's got to be the fence.

That's the image, it's the fence - I used to have it up in the hall in the other house, but it's upstairs lurking.

I think it was probably the first time...

You took your bag off the back of the chair.

...was a symbolic action. I was saying earlier in Highgate...

Just a sec, guys, sorry, can you say that again Jane?

I think it was the first time that, that symbolic decorating of a fence had ever happened - that you would then decorate and kind of thereby appropriate, you know a hostile environment.

I think there's a lot about Greenham that is about taking back space from either patriarchy, or with the military. Or...

Exactly.

Yes, that's why they went in and danced on the bunkers.

Yeah.

Oh, that wonderful image where they're all up on the bunker.

The silos. Yeah. Lovely. And um, how did you feel about the camp when you'd left it? How do you feel about it now in retrospect?

It was very disconcerting. We went back I think there's a folder in there somewhere - 25 years on, or maybe it's in here. Do you remember we all went to the site? Yes, it was very strange. For the Peace Garden, I don't know if the Peace garden is still there. I assume...

I think it must still be there.

I think it must be.

The stones.

Yeah, it looked very permanent.

Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah.

We should go back. We should go back and see it.

I go near there quite often.

(Inaudible). I just wondered if it's there, and if it's maintained.

I believe there is there at this is - I think there's quite a bit going on at Greenham at the moment. So I think there's also a theatre company based down there. A theatre company doing site specific work and things, so a part of my mission, to find out a bit more about what's happening there as well. But as far as I'm aware, there are still monuments, and there's a museum at the base that doesn't really include the Greenham common peace camp, which is the only interesting - so that's ridiculous. And a long term aim of mine is to put in a rival museum! (Laughs). Give me time on that one. Is there anything else about a moment, or particular smell, or picture that symbolises Greenham?

The smell is the wood smoke.

Smoke!

And the mud.

Mud and smoke.

And the shit pits.

Oh I'd forgotten the shit pits!

Eeurgh, how could you forget the shit pits?!

Could you tell us a bit about the shit pits, please?

(Laughter).

They were shit pits.

Well, we had to go somewhere so you dug a pit.

Well, the pits were dug for us. I don't remember digging.

You were given a spade.

Well somebody did it.

And you would just tip the earth over the top.

And then standpipes, you had to get water from the standpipes. So you had the long things, on the standpipes, to tap the water, didn't we?

But my overriding memory is the cold and the mud!

Really?

The mud, oh god! Mud!

You're a townie.

It was like the Somme.

It was.

(Laughter).

Or Glastonbury!

Was it the same as Glastonbury festival?

(Everyone speaks at once).

A kind of feeling of solidarity and power, coupled with extreme vulnerability.

Vulnerability, yes.

Really? That's interesting.

Well, you know, you were vulnerable. I mean, particularly the women who are there...

Sometimes people - it happened once or twice, I know when people were actually asleep in their tent they got attacked - both by locals and because there was quite a lot of sort of vigilante stuff going on.

Yeah.

And violence by the bailiffs. But there were some nice times too more locally, when we used to either around my table or around Nancy's table particularly, we used to have badge making sessions and we were like a bloody factory.

All our kids.

We got them - child labour, you know.

(Laughter)

And we had a wonderful badge maker machine.

With the big handle where you crunch down?

And our resident artist who's not here today, she couldn't come, she designed all these badges.

Fabulous.

And she would design a badge, and then it would get photocopied onto A4, so there were like a dozen or 16 badges on each sheet and then somebody would be cutting them out. And somebody would have been doing this, and putting the back of the badge on, and oh - the colouring.

Colouring!

Yeah, that's what...

If the children were getting awkward, the children would be encouraged to colour, but they didn't colour very well sometimes.

We had a stand on Broadway, selling them.

Oh yes, we did!

Yeah, we went - we made a lot of badges.

We made a lot of money selling the badges.

But, my children in particular objected, because I remember borrowing my husband's big duffle coat once, and covering it in badges - like a bloody Pearly Queen.

(Laughter).

And going walking up and down the Broadway, using my pockets for the change, and my children were once seen darting across the road - a busy road - to get away from mum because they were too embarrassed to be anywhere near me!

This is the same child that got arrested at 10?

Yes.

Were these teenager years by this time? Quite different!

But we raised a lot of money - because around in Muswell Hill it was quite easy anyway. It's not exactly an impoverished area. And we were selling the badges that £1 a go.

Yeah, that's actually quite a lot.

That is quite a lot.

We raised a lot of money. We used to buy Gore-tex sleeping bags and Gore-tex tents and what have you, and did very well.

Yes, because anything waterproof...

Oh god!

Lu?

What's it that?

Oh yes! (Laughs).

What's on that bench?

Dog shit!

Dog shit! (Laughs).

And some wire cutters.

Lovely.

This one says 'Don't sit on the fence, bring it down.'

That's great.

And that other one - 'When I grow up I want to be alive.'

Yes, yes because I was a kid at Greenham, I had 'I want to grow up not blow up, t shirt and badge, and I had that badge as well.

Did you stay at Greenham, or did you just go down for days?

No, I went down for day trips, and I was at Embrace the Base. And I, but my mum did other peace camps so I would do weekends or weeks in other places. Where I'd watch her, you know, manage the local police basically and things like that and be very, very brilliant.

I was gonna say, did you say Camberley?

Yeah.

That was a very...

Yes. Very military quite...

Very. My husband's family were there.

Very awkward fit.

Very awkward fit, 'cause you had Sandhurst down the road, you had Wellington College down the other road.

Yeah, it was quite strange. We weren't - we didn't fit in brilliantly. We - because we were home schooled, me and my brother, we had tons of animals - you know rescue chickens and ducks, and so yeah, we absconded off to Cornwall after that and fitted in much better.

Yeah, I wouldn't have thought...

Did you have a dad?

Yes.

Was he involved with Sandhurst or anything?

No, he wasn't a military dad, he was just a normal - he was in PR and copywriting, but he did the totally, totally thought like, got on board with the whole Greenham thing and was like 'So I just do as I'm told? Fine, got it.' And would make the sandwiches for women, take the buses and run the crèches, and just do whatever my mum told him. Yeah.

Oh I think that's just hilarious - in Camberley!

I know! Yeah.

I mean, just everything - it's the antithesis.

Yeah.

I mean, you know, respect for doing that in Camberley.

Thank you.

So we had it easy in Muswell Hill.

Yes.

Camberley was - oh my god!

And we had it easy in that we could come home and have a hot bath. Sleep in a comfortable bed, I mean people did live there long term in the cold and the damp and the mud. No running water, no loos, you know.

Well that's what hit me in the car. You know what am I giving up for this cause? One night of being cold, and I had sort of skiing salopettes, I had long johns on, I had this - I was about this wide. And I'm whinging, you know, when exactly like you're say, next morning or couple of days we were back me home again. Home, central heating, all the rest of it.

Is there sort of a sense that there are some Greenham women that, that you, that were the ones that lived there, that were slightly different to the visitors? Is that something that you - do you sort of - it sounds like you have an extra level of kind of admiration for that commitment?

Yes, totally, totally.

Yeah, there was a tough core of women. I mean, some of them could be a pain in the arse, to be honest - at times, because you know, they resented us coming down from Muswell Hill. But there were some women there who really admirable, really tough.

I think 98/99% of them.

Oh, absolutely, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

And were you aware of the camp having been - sorry.

I was just going to say we tried to, we tried to do our best by those women by going down and doing night watches.

Yeah.

So that they could sleep all night while we sat up all night watching the cruise was going out on forays or whatever they called, remember, and somebody had to be watching the whole time.

To activate the telephone tree. And get everyone up.

And we all had a shift - we'd take a couple of hours between...

So we could try to do some shift work.

Tried to be useful.

But no deep, deeply admiration.

And some people went to prison again and again. My friend from Leamington, she went - I don't know 20 times.

Goodness.

They weren't getting very long sentences.

No.

Like the group of protesters now.

Yeah.

The asylum issue, you know. So human rights have taken a step backwards if anything now. Haven't they?

Like everything else.

Are you aware of - I mean, you might not because you didn't live there, but you may also have talked to people who do, were you aware of the camp being infiltrated or sabotaged by undercover police or undercover media, or anything like that?

There must have been some. But I wasn't aware of it.

I don't think there was an awful lot...

I don't think they got around to that kind of subterfuge.

No, I can't think what they could have done, particularly.

So obvious - the women were there, what could they tell them? The women, you know, they might plan to do something but they couldn't. And anything that the women planned to do, they have enough power within you know, the camp, within the fence. You know women cutting the fence or whatever, that they were totally ready to deal with it. Maybe they were, I don't know.

Could have been.

...particularly aware of.

No.

And what, if you could tell future generations, why is it important that Greenham should be remembered, do you think? What do you think future generations will get out of it? Why is it important?

To remember it had to start somewhere.

The power of protest.

Yes, and that in spite of all the difficulties of organising it, it happened because you feel strongly enough.

And even if there was no immediate success, I mean...

Potentially.

Well, it felt there wasn't. Seeds were sown, but it wasn't like do a protest, a few protests, and then they just took the cruise missiles. Because I think it's, especially now, with so many difficulties happening, the power of the state, etc. Um, I think it's very easy to get disheartened.

Yeah, it's very easy to sit and do nothing and in a way, it was a simpler time, in that there was this geographical space that we could all go and protest at. And now, there are so many issues, there are so many places that you would want to be, there are so many causes, that you know, you can feel very scattered or not know where to focus your efforts, but Greenham in a way was very....

Focused on that.

The focus was very empowering.

And it was a particularly strong thing that it was primarily women as well, I think.

Yeah, yeah.

What do you think that gave it? What was was it - why did it give it strength, do you think?

The organisation was I felt very different from male organisation. It was very much more more - (inaudible) democratic.

It was, it was nobody would do - because often they - when people came to the gates, they'd say 'Who's in charge?' And we'd all just sit there. Nobody was in charge. It was a very different approach. It wasn't 'I'm the boss.'

Yeah.

And that made it also a very safe space.

Yeah.

Sometimes made it very difficult to get things done because nobody would take the decision, but I think it was quite an interesting new venture that tried to run something in a truly democratic way.

How did they do that - how did they achieve that? Did they do it through discussion or...

Hours of discussion!

Was it as bad as the mud?

Really frustrating. Going round and round in circles!

Followed by the dirge!

Compare it to the Suffragette struggle, which went on for many years. I think what you said about having a focus - that everybody had one place to go to, whereas the Suffragettes did their protest here in their own space. And it must have been - and they'd have loved somewhere like - let's just have one place.

A coach or a mini bus, and you get together and off you would go, and there it was. It wasn't that far away - a couple of hours drive, and there you were.

It was a long way for some people. They did come...

Yes!

But for us..

For us it was easy peasy. Yeah.

Yes, there's something about that having that focal point as a focus, that is hard to imagine in a digital age. But I'm sure possible if we, if we share this stuff, this sort of stuff, basically, if we strategise. Um, I'd kind of like

to know if there's anything you'd have liked me to ask that I haven't? (Laughs). You know, is there anything you want to talk about that hasn't come up?

Don't think so. No.

Well done on what you're doing - you go to all these meetings and things.

Well, there's a lot going on.

What sort of - you mentioned the campaigns you're in - I see a Suffragette sort of style badge on you, the colours.

Yes, I was in the Green Party 'til recently. And I er, resigned in October, November some time around there, and rejoined after 20 years or something not quite - 10? I lose track...

Long time!

(Laughter).

Long time. Rejoined the Labour Party, which - my claim to fame and my badge of honour is that Tony Blair's New Labour expelled me. So, I like to think that proves that I was doing something right.

Absolutely!

And when I resigned from the Green Party, I decided to rejoin the Labour Party because I am so desperate. I'm passionate about getting rid of this fucking government, bastard government that we've got. And the only way at the moment that I can see of doing that, that is through the Labour Party. And I happen to be a supporter of Jeremy Corbyn - not wholly at the moment, over Brexit. But generally he's a decent, honourable man. And um. But I decided that, I mean, I actually still genuinely think that the policies of the Green Party are much better,

more progressive, more radical than the Labour Party. And so I didn't want to leave all that behind. So I'm now active in Make Votes Matter, Population Matters and in the local Justice for Palestinians group, and so I'm doing that as well as being active in the local Stay Political group - that was meeting I was at last night. And through them I'm active in the thermal imaging group, where we go around photographing people's houses inside with a thermal camera to show where they're losing energy, losing heat, and so on. And so I'm very active in all sorts of things like I belong to Compass, and the Labour Party, and I'm...

She still gets up late in the morning!

(Laughter).

You're my hero!

So, you know, I just feel there's so much to do, and I intend to do some of them.

And there's a morally corrupt, flaccid politician. I mean, Theresa May is just the pits. You know, if we think there's been any improvements since Tatcher, I mean, she's much worse than Thatcher.

But not malicious.

Well I think she is. I think austerity is malicious...

... the environment, that was her.

As someone who is coming from the north, we have to say Thatcher was worse though, do you agree? Purely for the Northern. But no, it's not inspiring time is it?

I think the worst one actually, was Tony Blair.

Yes.

He raised everybody's hopes when the Labour government was let in, and the reason, I think to a very great extent we're in the shit situation that we are now, is because people were so disappointed after 9 years, 11 years, how many years was it? 13 years of Labour government...

And that huge demonstration as well.

The gap between the haves and the have nots has grown under a Labour government. How dare he?

The percentage of super rich.

Yeah, yes. It's disgusting.

Tories do what Tories do, you know, we know what to expect from them, but for a Labour government to do what they did.

And it was such an opportunity.

Such an opportunity. He could have said 'The world is flat.' And everybody would have said 'Yeah,' and got on with it.

Yeah.

But what did he do?

Yeah.

And all the older women that we talked of, they were sort of dying, you know, when Blair was in power, and there was that feeling of open optimism that having been through, been through, god knows what suffering, but they were kind of dying with a sense of hope and optimism for the future. I mean, now...

Thank god they're not here now to witness it.

I think that enormous demonstration against going to war with Iraq - that was completely ignored, disenfranchised, and, you know, disillusioned, a whole generation of people. Seriously, getting them back into politics is on an ongoing mission.

Yeah.

But it's another reason why I think that talking about successful campaigns like Greenham - that people toughed it out under enormous odds, with the support of the nation in its various different forms, is so important, and no accident that it's not being talked about. You know, I think. Shall we just have a quick look at the things that are on the table? Just kind of unofficial bit now, just so I can see what's in the books and ask you about them, is that alright? Does anyone - is this okay, I'm thinking we're going to wrap up.

Yeah.

If anyone's like, no, you wrap up now.

It was quite interesting because obviously when you started asking us things, we didn't remember a lot, because we haven't thought about it in the last 10 years probably. So it's interesting that we're coming up with things that are sort of lurking in the back of our brains. So it was quite interesting.

I'm really glad because it sounds like it was all completely there - it didn't feel like I was talking to people who hadn't thought about it...

We did say 'I don't remember' quite a few times!

But we still remember the feelings.

Oh, yeah.

Yeah, and the events. The stories.

And a lot of it was extremely agreeable, and if the weather was good, it could be real fun. Beautiful place.

Was it beautiful?

(Everyone talks at once.)

It had the most wonderful silver birches.

Wonderful trees, and it was very, very lovely.

My memories are only about...

Well it was desecrated by that, but around that the woodlands are lovely.

Back of the fence, is alright.

(Laughs). Looking out. I spoke to some women who had been at the Green Gate, and they talked about doing mirrors at the other base, and then mirrors that reflected out as well and showed them the possibility, showed them the woods.

Yeah. Yeah.

Which might be exactly same one that you were on. It sounded really powerful.

I'll see if I can rustle up that big picture that I've got. Maybe take a shot and send it to Christine.

That would be wonderful. Yes, please. I will, I'll send you her email.

(Everyone talks at once).

Widen the web...This goes back to that web imagery again, doesn't it? How lovely. I interviewed a woman who lived there for many years, and her - I read her diaries in the archive, and of-course at the beginning the interview it caused me to say to her 'Well, it's a strange thing to say to someone on a first meeting and usually wouldn't be admitted, but I've read your diaries.'

(Laughs).

But it was really, and is that the Chinese?

Yes.

Who was it who died just recently?

Sarah Hipperson.

Did she? I missed that.

4 weeks ago.

Very recently.

Her obituary was in The Guardian.

Do you remember lovely Rose, big splendid lady.

Yes.

She had wonderful hair. But she died quite a long time ago, and there's another one called Anne who was on - can't even remember, I used to go see her. She had a fabulous flat down in Pimlico. She...

Well, said, granddaughter is applying next year to do Women's Studies at Leeds.

Oh, right.

Excellent, so we can give her this stuff, can't we?

Well, I'd be very interested to see...

If it comes up?

Yes.

Well it's interesting that I think...

(Everyone talks at once)

...went to Bristol to do Women's Studies it was taught by white middle class man.

Oh yes I read that recently.

Because at one point when I just finished doing my art history degree, they kind of semin-ised it - oh god, I mean I escaped it but people went into after that said it, you know, really twisted it - before it was one way, then the other it was the other way. So now...

I'd be interested to see...

Did all the gates do their own - I've just found something here, but from Green Gate, specifically like a message from Green Gate - did they all make their own you know, newsletters and things.

I think they probably did actually. Yeah. Because there were quite a lot of people at each gate.

Yeah.

I wouldn't hazard a guess but...

And if no one's in charge you'd sort of do your own thing.

(Everyone talks at once).

I mean, inevitably there were some characters who emerged as leaders, because that would happen.

Yes.

But it wasn't the policy, the policy was quite the other way. So if you give me your - I might see if I can get a copy of this big painting. Stick it on there for me.

(Laughs). There's another really nice one here, which is all over the decorated gate, cartoons.

Oh, yes.

There's a Greenham woman in all her woollens, sat on an MOD policeman's knee, and underneath he's saying rather sadly 'We won't be able to keep meeting like this if they give up cruise!'

(Laughter).

That's lovely.

Really great.

Was that in my one?

Yes. I'm just taking a few bits out to get Christine to photograph them, is that alright?

Yeah.

Just great.

And there's one about - there's a whole group of women in hijabs. Did you see that?

No I didn't.

And they're all covered up like that. And someone said 'I believe we keep meeting at Greenham'.

I shall have a look for it. I love these winding the web. There's quite a few winding the web things.

Did you - you must have had those earrings as well?

I think I did.

I'm sure we all did.

CND catalogue.

Yes, I remember lots of people having those, and I really remember Grannies against the Bomb. And Cat lovers against the Bomb.

Babies against the Bomb.

Oh I loved that.

Doctors against the Bomb.

(Laughter).

One of the Babies Against the Bomb meetings that we had, I'd organised a speaker for our group. And she brought a child with her and I had- there were quite a few children around. I don't know whose house we were meeting in. The end of the meeting, I was going to give

the speaker a lift, so took her to the station. And then I - and she got out at Highgate station and I said 'Yes, but your child', and she said 'She's not my child'!

(Laughter).

It's from the house - this child had just got into the car, tried to escape!

(Laughter).

Do you ever let on about that?

15/20 minutes before anybody noticed that the child was missing!

That's wonderful!

(Everyone talks at once).

Any stress

Really quite stressful.

Rebecca?

Oh yes.

There's this article that says Michael Heseltine, Defence Secretary warned the women would be shot if they trespassed on the base, so that's how explicit the aggression was.

Yeah, I I did read when I was researching the project to put the Heritage Lottery bid together, that the time had passed, and they had to release some papers, that Margaret Thatcher signed off on that quite happily. So it was quite a top level thing. But absolutely no-one did it, of-course, which is quite interesting, isn't it? I guess that was a step too far for soldiers in peacetime. Shooting women who weren't doing anything -

who looked like their mums and their sisters - yeah, just too much for me.

(Everyone talks at once).

Got Barbara's name on the back.

Yes, people have signed it.

Yes, who else?

Barbara's on there.

We loved Barbara. Jeanie. Sue. Lucy.

Yeah.

And Diana.

Yeah. Was this not when we went down to the bomb thing at Farringdon?

Yes, exactly. That was that...

(Everyone talks at once).

That's what I wrote after it, after that exhibition.

I was wondering...

Oh, I've got a photo of - there was a baby. Do you remember?

Somebody had a baby.

Did Jeanie have one of her grandchildren?

Yes, it was Jeanie. And oh yes, it was, and I've got a picture that I've sent you, and we've the one baby. Peggy was there.

Where did this come from?

I wrote it.

Yours?

I wrote it after, just after that meeting - the Farringdon one.

So quite a while ago.

Because obviously people listening can't see this, would you be happy for Sheila to read it?

Yeah!

Read it out, that would be lovely, thank you.

Many hands make wool work. Twelve fine women and a babe in arms remember Greenham and uncommon times. Mud in our minds, placards and song and a line of us 30,000 strong, each with a pledge to fasten with wool to the fragile, hostile fence. 25 years of friendship and a babe in arms. We carried Greenham home and kept its message in our hearts. Now we stand again, and sing going out from the exhibition to the autumn air to sit outside a pub in Clerkenwell, telling where our lives have woven us, since our hands threaded wool through the fragile, hostile fence. As we break up to leave, one of us takes out yards and yards of soft woollen cloth her daughter had given her. She wraps it uncertainly around her body. Solicitous hands offer help weaving the material to take the limbs of the tiny cherished girl. This is new to us, but we have faith in our ability to work the magic with laughter and many hands, as we did back then. One observes the rest and wonders what the collective noun for Grannies might be? (Laughter). A gaggle, we offer, a wisdom, a quilting, a pride. Oh, certainly a pride. But as we

stand in the sunshine conferring the woodsmoke of 25 years in our hair, she finds the word, we are a confusion of grandmothers. Then 30,000 women came together from nowhere to ring the missile base for the sake of future generations. Now 12 fine women with a babe in arms, grandchild and Greenham women are safely and snugly slung between us with wool and many hands. The magic is worked.

That is lovely.

Really nice hearing it out loud.

And you wrote that at the time?

Yes.

You didn't pass it on to us.

You didn't!

I was sure it was in my book.

It's superb.

It's in this book.

I've got the book, but I haven't read all of it!

(Laughter).

Shamed, shamed.

It sits in my downstairs loo for all to read!

(Laughter).

Whose baby was it?

I think it was Jeanie's grandchild.

Which one?

In the picture I've got you're holding the baby.

Really?

But you're not smiling.

Peggy was there.

Yes, I remember the whole...

Well it must have been Kusha....

I think it was Kusha.

Jeanie is holding a baby.

Her first granddaughter?

Kusha.

It must have been a long time ago because I mean is there a date?

Kusha is about 13

Yeah, that'll be about right. Yeah.

Yeah, 'cause Florence is 2 or 3 years....

Yeah. So that would be right.

That's lovely.

(Everyone talks at once).

Scan the pages that have got something about Greenham...

(Everyone talks at once).

The pictures in here are absolutely lovely,

It's fun, isn't it?

Yeah. And it captures the moments you were saying were fun. Where you've got moments of larking around, basically.

Light relief!

Yeah, exactly. So interesting You were talking about that sense of vulnerability because there's nothing to protect you either elementally or from these enormous forces of the state, and yet you did it.

You know you're right.

And each other. Amazing.

....the album, you were going to.

I don't know how many pages it might be.

You could either post them, or you could send them on a We-Transfer. If you're comfortable with that? Or not, snail mail is fine!

(Everyone talks at once).

I remember those night shifts.

I'd forgotten all about them.

I don't do lack of sleep. I don't do it. I think I got a bit longer sleep because I was the driver.

You probably did, you probably opted out.

Because you didn't want to be all killed.

I actually learned to drive a motorbike because of Greenham. Because I'd always been terrified of driving on motorbikes, I just had to get on with it and do it.

I remember that. Oh, that night in that car.

Didn't we break down on the motorway?

We did and Nancy did an absolutely brilliant thing - I thought it was a joke, she said 'Give me your stocking' - somebody had actually got stockings, and she mended it.

She's an amazing woman, mad as a box of frogs, but amazing.

The the most practical women I know are Betty, Rachel and Nancy - all artists - everyone has this idea that artists are all airy fair, but often they're practical people.

Married to a mechanic for many years.

Yes, but she is an immensely practical person.

I'm letting the side down, I can't even change a plug! Or lightbulb! It is disgraceful!

(Everyone talks at once).

Um, she go out with someone who used to work for my husband. know, gosh 25 years ago. No idea she was a Greenham woman.

That's really nice isn't it.

I've forgotten so many things, inevitably. 30 years since we were at Greenham.

Thank you.

Thank you all so much. So, so grateful.

Pleasure.