

Jacqui Best

So, Jacqui Best, thank you so much for joining us today. It's lovely to meet you. Could you start by telling us how you came to be part of Greenham Common women's peace camp?

Well, I don't actually remember how I knew about it, you know, like, I mean, maybe it was something on the news or, though probably wouldn't have been on the news, actually, it would have been a newsletter of some kind. Because, of course, you know, in the early 80s, we didn't have the internet. We didn't even have mobile phones. So, you know, we were in this situation whereby everything we did within activism, or anything we were involved in, came through newsletters, or telephone calls. So our network pretty much then wasn't even really fax, it was pretty much newsletters and phone calls. And most of that information would have come from going to a Women's Centre or having been to an event or, you know, some other events, which which would have been perhaps would have been, for those days, very alternative.

Yeah.

Because it was sort of quite unusual, I guess, you know, not certainly not mainstream. So, I would have probably have known about it through I lived in a very, very rural village in Somerset, and probably would have known about it through having gone to Bristol, because Bristol would have been the hub or, or Totnes, but that was probably a bit later. So you know, so sort of found out that way really.

What made you decide to go?

Well, I suppose. Yeah, indignation that, that, you know,

yeah.

You know, like what, seriously, you you're just gonna put these like, nuclear warheads, and, you know, weapons in our countryside? And, you know, just like, no, this is not okay. I think I can't remember if Menwith Hill camp was already set up then or not, I don't remember if it was, but I think I knew about it. I was educating my son who was about probably 4 at the time. So I took him out of mainstream school, he just went and I didn't sort of intended to, but he went in for a short period. And then I took him out and went and travelled a little bit and met other people who were educating their child otherwise, as is the legal term for educating your child at home. And I think perhaps also through that we had newsletters. And I went to Italy, and stayed on a hill farm community where they were educating their children. Otherwise, they'd invited people to come to share, really to share socialising and educating the child with their children. So I went with my son, travelled over. And actually it was there that I met. I think it was a Finnish woman I can't remember. And I met a couple of other people. And one woman from

London, who, interestingly, we went to Italy, and we met this woman from London 1984, who was very much part of CND. And, and I think I knew about CND, but not fully, but I think I sort of joined it around that time, and began to read about and know about things like CND and Amnesty International, and you know, those kinds of groups. It was like, oh, wow, okay. This is this is, you know, new to me. And so really, that was my probably sort of intro, into, you know, so my sort of interaction with CND. And green came about because of, because of that, really.

Can you remember the first time you went? Can you remember your first visit?

Yeah, yeah, I remember it really, really clearly. The very first time I went, I went up on the bus. So, I did have a car, but probably wouldn't have gotten me to Greenham. And I later used to use the women's aid car that I was working in the women's aid project with. But I remember going up on the bus, which was I think it was arranged by some people around around in Yeovil and round surrounding areas of the Somerset area. And it picked us up on route. And we went up and we got dropped off and we had to walk because there was a very, very big police presence at that time. Not all the time, but often there was and I think they must have known we were coming, not just us, but there were lots of people all over the country. People were coming because some women had walked. In the, I think in the initial group, or some of the initial groups, they'd walked all the way from West Wales and the bottom of Cornwall up. And I had been to a meeting somewhere in Yeovil or outside of Yeovil, where we went and met these people. They were walking, lots of them were walking. And we went and met and took, you know, food and met, you know, met these women who were walking up to Greenham Common, making a statement.

Was this the original march in 1981?

Yes, yeah. Yeah. And then I think that there was, I might be wrong, but I've got a feeling what wasn't there kind of like a pilgrimage, a yearly thing where people carried on walking.

There was Star marches. Yeah.

Yeah. So it was one of those. It wasn't the 81 one, it was the 82 or 83, that I first sort of went, oh, wow, this is serious. And, you know, and, and to begin to learn, because at that time, I was only, I suppose I was 20? Well, 81, I would have been 20. So I was 22, 21, or 22.

Yeah.

So, and I had a young son. And so you know, it was really important to me, you know, just learning and understanding, you know, when you're sort of introduced to something that has not been your mainstream and thinking, wow, you know, this is very, very different. And I didn't really understand at that stage, how other people would view this. You know, as they saw it, you

know, aberrant behaviour that we were all, you know, dashing around the countryside, as they saw it, you know, not looking after our homes and our children. And we were running around the countryside, shouting and, you know, folk sticking our noses in where we shouldn't be. Because the military and the police knew what they were doing, and they would keep us safe.

Yeah, leave it to the men! Why are you getting involved?

Yeah absolutely. Why aren't you staying at home? You know.

Do you remember what gate you arrived at?

The first gate that I think was Yellow Gate. Mostly, I used to go up to Yellow and Green Gate to bring food because it was sort of a Yellow Gate was quite easy to get to as well. It was an easy access point. And I'm pretty sure the first time we went to Yellow Gate and on the coach, I'm trying to remember the name of, Taylor's coaches was, I don't know if I said that in my,

Yeah, you did.

Okay, Taylor's coaches, I think there was somebody who worked there, or one of the family who were very, you know, supportive of, you know, CND and Greenham. And so I think they provided our coach for free, or we just paid a pound or something like that. It was quite cheap, I remember. And when we arrived, we had to get off because they wouldn't let the coach or the bus, as we call it, the bus go that close. The police presence was quite strong. So I don't remember if the very first time was Yellow Gate, but certainly we went to a meeting point. I think it probably was Yellow Gate. And I just remember, you say my first sort of reactions were just got there and thinking, oh, well, because you couldn't really see into the base because of the fences. But there were the big high gates there, obviously. But on the first occasion, which was must have been one of the, you know, Star marches and a lot of people all over the country arriving. I remember reading about that in the newsletter and thinking I have to go and went there and had my son with me as well. So he would have been four, no, three, three and a half four something. There were quite a lot of people with children as well there. And it was quite a carnival atmosphere. But also, it was also a bit scary as well, because there was military on the inside, you know, who were patrolling up and down. They were obviously prepared, you know, later, I think they've got a bit blasé about it, which is how how people got over the fence and got in, you know, and also some of them made friendships with people on this side of the fence, you know. But the police were more intimidating on the on the outside because they bussed them in from, from the North. They bussed in loads of police from the Met. And it was sort of quite interesting. They were I think they were probably you know, very, very reactive because they hadn't really, you know, we hadn't we hadn't quite had the miners strike at that time. So there hadn't really been anything in the preceding You know, 10, 15 years, I don't think that had that had caused police to have to attend an event where

lots of people and especially being lots of women were there on mass where they felt we shouldn't be, you know.

What were your experiences with the police then?

Well, I was taken in a couple of times, mostly okay. But probably because the times when I was there, and police were there, it was, like, on mass when we went lots of us was, if I had my son with me, I was much more cautious.

Yeah.

So I would stay right back. Because obviously, I didn't want to, you know, put him at any risk or be separated from him. You know, I was a single single mother. And so obviously, I was very careful about that. And I think that the times when I had gone up, and obviously left him at home, there was a couple of events where some women got over the wire once. Well, they did several times. But there was one specific time when I think they'd actually got over the wire and were on the bunkers. And some of us got arrested then. There was another time when the gates opened, I can't remember what year that was, but it would have been the early 80s, 80 4,5,6. The gates opened, and no one did anything, but then the women rushed the gate, like we just waited. You know, everyone just waited. The gates would open it. Somehow it was like, was it a test? Were they tricking us, you know? And then I think everybody just sort of like, you know, right, get ready, get ready, get ready, you know, and then just everybody ran in.

Yeah. Was that the incident with the fire extinguisher?

Yeah, that's, yeah, yeah, that's it.

What happened there?

I don't remember all of that. But somebody got a fire extinguisher or let off a fire extinguisher. They were so reactive. It was as if their, their sort of behaviour, their behaviour and their reaction was, as if we had the bombs. You know, anything that anything that women did, like, so if we had bolt cutters, and the wire was cut was cut, because some, so there was a period when there was a lot of wire cutting as well. And generally, I wasn't there all the time so I was there mostly weekend times. But because I used to go up weekends, but when I did stay, there was a few times where there was, you know, wires being cut. And I think what they did really how their reaction, their reaction then was pretty much like we had like, were causing world war 3, you know. So they were just so sometimes very, very angry, some, some weren't. Some of them also, you know, some of the military people felt, you know, the military men felt that they wish they weren't there, because they didn't believe in either, you know. And I think that was sort of tough. So sometimes I would try to talk to people and just say, like, why, you know, why are you working here? What have you got kids, you know, where do you

come from? What, what does this mean to you? What does it mean to you if you know, if something, you know, sort of slips and you know, if there's some sort of seepage or you know, somethings we didn't really know what the real damage would possibly be, you know, we hadn't quite had Chernobyl then that was next year in 1984 in April. And actually, it was that it was Chernobyl, which really compounded. I think it compounded not just for me, but for hundreds and hundreds of people over the country. You know, women and some men and men, you know, would come because seeing Chernobyl happen, I think really, really frightened people.

Yeah, it made it much more real didn't it.

Yeah, it was so scary. And it was so, so real. And I think that next decade, made a massive difference, you know, up until like 91, 92 made a massive difference. Because Chernobyl very quickly when when it wasn't initially because don't forget, also we didn't have the same media. So we didn't get access to the same pictures and the same stories. I think it probably took five or six years before real photos and real sort of histories and you know, actual stories of people on the ground. Were coming out and then seeing how people were affected, you know, like, like the firefighters and some of the scientists who had then defected in effect from from Belarus and you know, the the area of Belarus and next door. What's it called? Where Chernobyl was, the Ukraine. Ukraine and yeah, and but some of them had had actually got out of the country. And were telling their story. And some of them had colleagues in Germany and under UK too. But you know, when we when I think people really, really realised that actually, we had damage here, you know, we had sheep dead in the Lake District and Scotland.

Really?

And Devon, yeah. Yeah, there were. I mean, that there were big cover ups from that initially, but there was definitely a fallout. We had a fallout here.

I wasn't aware of that.

Yeah, yeah. I'm pretty certain check check anyway, Google it, check. And, but definitely there was the fallout and there was radiation, which was measured in in Cumbria in the Lake District. And I'm pretty sure Scotland too. And I think in Devon, I might be wrong about Devon, but but I'm pretty certain that there was, I've read that in some papers somewhere in in the 90s. I went to Belarus myself in 2004. I think it was. So yeah, just to have to see some Chernobyl children and, and to see some people then sort of see the situation. And it's pretty, pretty stark, and, you know, scary still. And I think what we began to understand when scientists and people started to talk much more, you know, beyond the scare mongering, of the kind of The Sun and those newspapers that were put out, initially, you know, Apocalypse and all this dark and black and white pages on all the newspapers, we're all gonna die tomorrow and that kind of thing, too, versus the other people saying, no,

no, no, it's just, it's just a thing that's just blown up, and it can happen anywhere. People got really scared. So, you know, we then had whole thing, you know, we had like, Faslane, and we have the Cumbrian, the in Morcambe Bay, you know, the nuclear and Heysham Head.

Yeah.

And Menwith Hill and people then really, that's when things really started to change. And I think that changed a lot of the nature of what was happening at Greenham. So the proceeding I think, this is just my opinion, the preceding three years or so, I think lots of people were very, very down on what they saw these women doing, you know, running away from their homes and leaving their husbands and, you know, people at home and not doing their duty and running and having a party down at Greenham Common. I think people then gradually, that it changed, you know, the nature of it changed a little bit. Because I really, really think that whole thing about Greenham was then the Advent for things like the Miners Strike, like the poll tax, you know, and then the Nelson Mandela, you know, I think, I think that really informed the way people then stood up against our government.

Absolutely.

You know, I think that was

Do you think that impact has lasted?

I think it's, I think it's quite different now. I think it's, I think it's very different in nature. And I'm not really sure if that's because of media, the way that we the way that we use media, because we have social media now, you know, sort of it probably took until the 2000s until people started to actually speak about all this is happening, or that's happening, even though you know, the Internet was around like 97 a bit more, you know, available to people. Beginning to be able to afford to have broadband into your house, even though it took three years to upload an email, you know. Ringing up hours and hours on the phone to the technician. Yes, I've done that. Yes, I've done I've taken out. Yeah, I've put in dddddd that stuff. But yeah, I do. I think that I think there is elements of sort of what's the word? Not social attack, you know, I think that people get I think it's much faster to rise. And then it dissipates very quickly, I think.

Yeah.

And I and I think there's kind of less substance. So So for example, last year with the Black Lives Matter happened like in Bristol when they pulled the statue down at Colston Hall, you know, on the wherever it was the Bristol you know, the statue there. Yeah. I think that things like the Black Lives Matter, for example, is an example of something very, very important in our society. But I wonder if it's because it's about people, and a genre of people that it sort of

rises quickly. Something happens from the people who are elemental to the subject, then it just dissipates really fast. You know, which is a bit like the internet a bit like you see something on, you know, Facebook or a message somewhere. And I'm not really sure that, you know, perhaps people are inundated with so much information that it can't stay and it can't maintain. And, you know, we don't all run off and do something about it.

Yeah. Yeah. I think you're, you're right. Like, it's people, a lot of people will do their bit by commenting on social media.

Yeah.

But yeah, you're right, then the next cause you scroll and there's another thing that infuriates you and yeah. I suppose it's, it's harder for people to pick a cause, or, and certainly easier to feel like, oh, well, I've done something because I've said, on Facebook.

Or I signed a petition, you know, those people do that. And I think, because it's all it is all so fast. And, and it's rushing past people's minds, you know, their eyes, and they're, they're sort of looking, and there's so much now, which is dependent on social media for your access for what's happening, the news. I think more people get their news from there, or what they perceive to be their news from, from the internet, you know, and I, I'm not really sure that younger people, you know, I'm talking about people under the 40s consider causes and groups a necessity for them to join. They just think oh we'll stand up and argue about this. You know, I don't I don't know if we would have something like the poll tax you know, response now. I don't know if that would happen, or, you know, if we would have, because because, you know, we still have nuclear issues in this country. But I'm not really sure about, you know, who's doing that. Certainly, if you go to any places it certainly not so many young people.

No and I don't know how aware people are now of the threat of nuclear like, yeah, people are aware of Chernobyl.

Yeah.

But only I feel more in a more popular culture context. You know, they're aware of the word. And that something bad happened there. And then there was there was like a horror film based since then. Yeah. But I don't feel like people today really understand what the threat is and exactly what happened.

No, no. No.

Do you think something on the scale of the peace camp at Greenham could happen again?

I think it would depend what it was. I think it would depend very much what it was. You know, thinking about what do we have currently that was that is not mainstream? We have the HS2 is it HS2? Yeah, the train thing. We've got people currently in tunnels under Paddington, and people trying to save trees. But even the tree they couldn't save. And then it was cut down. And that was just posted on Facebook. And then it's gone. And I don't know how many people know about HS2, I don't know. I really have never seen I haven't seen at all on any pages that I'm on. And I'm on quite a lot of page. I'm quite sort of a prolific looker and looking around and reading things I'm quite interested in seeing how people perceive what they see. Or if it gets onto the news, if you like. And I haven't seen that at all, only because I haven't connected with some pages that it will come up. It's not in the ordinary news. I think it was on there because somebody is an actor or a singer. Children. I think we're in there and they managed to get them out. So they're coming out. They're like they're tying themselves up on to post them things. And then what they're doing, is that rotating, they're giving themselves up sometimes in order to get food for the others. Yeah, but it's a very tiny protest.

It really is. It really is. I think, again, people think it's all goes back to the media again, how the media portraying it and why they are there and it's seen, I feel in the media is this minority of people who are hippies and whatever. Yeah. And that's it really doesn't really need you doesn't seem to delve into the reason reasons they are there and why they don't want HS2.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So, and then people just, you know, the arguments that you see, for example, on Facebook on forums is, is about. They look at it from a work ethic point of view people coming there. We've got the other trains we've got so they discuss what trains we've got, they're not actually discussing the countryside and ecological impact, you know. And the same thing, I think, with Extinction Rebellion, rebellion, you know, those are the two main things which are happening currently in today. You know, we're what, march 2021. And there's very, very little, I think, sort of antagonism about anything, you know, people are just, you know, maybe that's also because of the lockdown, but even pre lockdown.

Yeah, partly at the moment, people are just trying to get through aren't they.

But, but but the year before, in 19, we have the extinction, extinction rebellion, which became quite prolific in their, you know, movements. But even what's interesting about that, is that I have heard people who were very pro Greenham and you know, CND, and quite, and quite supportive and quite strong and feminist and, you know, all from in the past, actually, berating what extinct extinction, rebellion, rebellion are doing. You know, the, you know, I've seen comments of people saying, Oh, it's just a load of middle class, hippies, or it's a load of middle class twats who, who think that they can stop stop the I think the real issue was, did they stop a train? Was it train or tube or buses? I can't remember. But they just got angry because people got stopped from going to work. And then everybody said, no, no, they did it

wrong. They shouldn't have done that they should have just, you know, gone to the bridge after everybody's gone to work and stop Westminster Bridge, or they should have done that, you know.

But that doesn't have an impact does it?

Yes the impact is not it's not impactful anymore.

There's no point having a protest or, you know, carrying out an action if no one's going to be bothered about it.

Exactly, no. And that's the whole point, isn't it? You know, it's like, there was the guy at outside, was it the Houses of Parliament who used to be on the road there? Yeah. Camp, you know, people don't even know if you say to people say, Oh, see, what was he doing there? I never saw I never heard of that before.

No, completely. Not.

People have no idea, you know, you're doing they're much more interested in, you know, Barnard castle and people breaking locked down and getting, you know, frustrated and angry about about something like that. than they are something like, you know, black lives matter or on our nuclear position or ecological position in society. Yeah. Yeah.

So going back to green him. What? Yeah, because we were talking about people saying that. XR is just a lot of middle class, you know, white people. And that was similar reporting with Greenham, you know, yeah, middle class white women? Who can afford to do this sorts of it? Yeah. What do you think of that coverage? Do you think it was allowed to middle class white women?

And there were a lot of middle class white women. Yes, that's true to say. And maybe that's also that those women could present themselves to be, you know, call to arms, if you like, could get up and go to Greenham. And that made it possible for them. But it wasn't the whole case. I would say there was many, many more working class women. And there were definitely a lot of women from the black, you know, ethnic minority groups, and from London and, you know, the wages for housework women and the black lesbians of Southall. They all came in groups regularly. And I think there was pretty much a reasonable mix. I wouldn't have said, you know, today actually, I mean, I live in a village in South Somerset, and there was, you know, one black family in this village. You know, there are a few more people of different, you know, and ethnic origins in a town. But it's, it's a very rural area. Yeah. And so it's not so inviting, very different than, you know, 45 miles down the road at Bristol, of course, yeah. But if you go further west, the same as this, it's the same situation, pretty much as it was back in the past, really, you know. It's quite hard for, for people of, you know, black and ethnic minority groups to live in, in rural areas, I think. And I think during that time yes, it's true that there were

more middle class women, but they were there and they were campaigning, and they actually weren't living in their middle class lifestyle by being at Greenham. And many of them stayed many, many years. You know, and part of my actioning, if you like, was that I carried on working, you know, and went up weekly. And those women were there, you know, week in week, out, winter, summer, you know, all the time they were there.

Yeah.

And with great hardship, and greater hardship, because sometimes their families disowned them. Sometimes if they had been in marriages in heterosexual marriages, which were the only ones possible at that time. They, they were often ousted out of their families, you know. And, you know, some some women weren't, they were still supported from home. I have a friend who lives in Wales, who had two or three children, and she just left and she left them for a very, very long time, you know. And because this was really important, she went to do this for her children. Yeah, of course. Yeah. You know, no.

No one bats an eyelid at a man going to work to support his children or whatever.

Yeah, yeah. Or he has, you know, well, we're gonna have to go abroad and get a job, you know, or go up to Manchester and get a job and come back every six months. Yeah, it's okay. Yeah.

Women are treated so much worse, aren't they if they, you know, leave in inverted commas, their children.

Yeah.

I you're not with them all of the time women are seen as being these terrible mothers but men that seems more natural, apparently.

Yeah. Yeah. Natural to leave your child and go. Yeah. Totally bizarre. Yeah. Yeah. So I think, you know, I think that I think really, you know, women did see it as, as a piece of work, you know, lots of women saw it as. And it was, you know, I mean, for me, it was to, you know, I was living at home and working as well, I was running some projects, but I was also all the time collecting food and collecting things and taking them up, because they'd have things taken away, you know, if there was a raid, you know, sometimes they would just come and you know. One time there was there was a fire, I think, as well, I can't remember when that was but there was a fire. And, you know, a lot of women lost a lot of things. But, you know, we had, we had sort of a lot of people strongly supporting it, as I say, after 84 I think, yeah. After, after the Chernobyl, you know, because I think people began to think, oh, actually, now it's really scary.

Yeah, definitely. Does your son have memories of Greenham?

He doesn't really know I talked to him. I mean, he's quite conservative with a small c, maybe with a big C as well. I don't know. But you know, often this is like different but he remembers. My niece remembers coming.

Because she lived with you part time?

Yeah, so she she remembers coming with me I remember she making a joke on our one of our family WhatsApp saying like, Oh, well, don't go down to Auntie Jacqui's because she'll take you to some. Because now they've all got kids. You know, don't leave your kids with Auntie Jacqui, because she'll be like, making them make a house or making them go on a on some march somewhere. Yeah, I mean, I took them to everything. You know, if I had kids living with me, then they they came to it, because I felt it's important that they saw it and understood. So, yeah. And my son, I think he does remember. But I think god, because we did so many things it's all sort of.

Blurred a little bit?

Merged into one. He doesn't remember if that was an event there. I mean, he remembers more. Because he was quite young. He remembers much more, I think, than Nelson Mandela you know, meets in London and free Nelson Mandela and the poll tax. Because once I nearly got arrested, and he got I got separated. And the police then tried to take me away. And these two guys actually got hold of me and lifted me up over like, bollards and things because my child was in in his pushchair just the other side. And people were very, very, you know, people stayed together. They were very strong, you know, together kept together. Yeah. But at Greenham, I think probably he didn't come a lot of the time he came on I stayed a couple of times. Stayed in a tent and that and there were kids around and there was quite a lot of children there actually.

Was that at a particular gate or were there at most gates?

I think that, I can't remember if it was at Purple Gate or Yellow Gate mostly. And Green Gate there were there was a time I'm sure there was a time when there was quite a lot of children at Green Gate. There was a lot of people from Totnes I think at Green Gate. I don't know if you've you've probably found that.

Some Yeah,

Some Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, we just used I just used to take, you know, food up and sleeping bags and tents.

Say if there were when there were lots of children there if there was a big action.

Yeah.

What was the plan? What would happen with the childcare and things?

Mostly what would happen is that designated women would take the children or keep them, you know, to one side. And I think people, mostly what happened was that women made sure that they went away from them, you know, being if they were actually doing something, then they that would happen away from children. You know, very, very clearly so. Because I think also, if you had children that the to be fair, both the military and the police were, did stand off a bit.

Yeah.

And they were, I'd say, a little bit more respectful of, of that setting. And, you know, and I think people were quite careful about not shouting so much and not creating, you know, much of a roar really, although it did happen. But I think it was a bit more certainly more respectful than it was like at the poll tax. Which was, you know, quite a lot more violent. You know.

And you were part of Nightwatch, as well is that right?

In at Greenham?

Yeah.

Erm some, well, sometimes I did go, but not no, not that often. I mostly went weekends, and would stay over. And I sometimes would go like for a few days up to a week. Erm but I mostly just took things up and then joined and joined whoever was at the gate, you know, and once I joined a group that walked around the perimeter. And so so there was a there was, I can't remember how it came about. I think it was some women from some churches. I wasn't ever involved in any church thing. But it was some women from some churches in London. I think it was Suffolk cathedral. Is there a Cathedral in Suffolk? So anyway, that sort of springs to mind in my head, that they were this, like a mother's union group, or something. And they had got together and they had money. And because often people would come, you know, with money, or they'd say, we've got this, what should we buy? Or should we bring money? And I remember, I joined this group. And I don't even know how I got to it. Because sometimes it would be meeting you'd get sent to Yellow Gate, there'd be a meeting in progress. I'm trying to find the photograph, because I've got a photograph of that with and the Mothers Due Wages with their banner. Actually, over there in my room, I've got photos everywhere where I've been hunting for them. And I can't find them at the moment. But I have found them recently. And I hope to find them again. I could send them to you.

That would be amazing. Thank you.

Yeah, but I remember once, this was one time there was a big meeting. And there was a big yellow mini bus, I remember it was an LGV mini bus. And it had written on the side Wages Due Housework. So that was the Wages Due Housework women. And then there was the Southhall Black Sisters. And there were a few other groups, and we must have been there for a particular, you know, sometimes it would, it would just Greenham would just be like, quiet if you like and it would just be camping or you know, being there. And being being it was like being on a rota, you know, and just being on on. Can't think of the word to say, you know, just like women's ordinary work, they would just be there being a presence. Not just you know, they were being a presence. And then other times there would be, you know, we need to up the ante. So then there would be some bigger event. And just to get things get it back into the news to get things going. And it may be sometimes that was when some women had perhaps been arrested, or some women had gone over the wire, or there'd been some cutting of the wire. So then I can't remember the when this was I think it might have been 86 or 87. That this this occasion where the yellow minibus was there and the women ran having a meet and they would have a bit like, it'd be like a big committee meeting. Anyone from every gate could come and they would talk about we've been given this, what should we do with it? We've been given some money, or somebody has got this there's a van going to come somebody is going to bring us these things. Where do we want it to go? That kind of thing. And it was there I think that I met these women who'd come from, I'm sure it was Suffolk cathedral that's in my head. And they were something like the Mother's Union or something like that Mother's Union kind of group. I think it would have been something like that in those days. And they had come with money. And they had these pads, they wanted to go round and see everybody and write down what was needed. What could they do?

Yeah.

And I remember walking the perimeter with them. And the reason I remember it so strongly was, that was their clothing. Because I don't want to be stereotypical. But typical, what you'd imagine to be Mother's Union from a church meeting. But they were absolutely fantastic. They were really lovely, you know, and they all have these sort of like longer skirts and cardigans with, you know, some had a pearl necklace on. And, and they were sort of very smart, you know, and a Macintosh coat and perhaps an umbrella. And their handbags, and it just looks so incongruous, you know, with the variety of mostly women that were there, you know, and so I remember setting off and thinking, Oh, crickey how's this gonna go with some women? Because some women were extremely radical in their stance. And there were pockets of of women who would be quite cross if you approach them, you know? Because they didn't they wanted to be I can't remember what gates would have been purple? Anyway other other pockets around, you know, the perimeter. And I just thought, o, well, we'll just go. And, and, you know, see what happens. And I think I was probably quite good at communicating and sort of saying, look, it's okay, let's just, you know, and we just went around.

And they did, they were very nice. They, they spoke to as many people as we were able to, and they wrote down copious notes, and asked for things. And I'm pretty sure, I don't remember, but I'm pretty sure that they came back, you know, a couple of weeks or three weeks later with things that had been asked for, yeah. And they'd raised money in their sort of church meetings and things. So there was a lot of that going on as well. You know, and I think that made it a bit more acceptable, if you like those kind of talkings. And I think that again, was because of it was post Chernobyl.

Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

I don't know what other women would say that was there in the sort of proceeding years 81, 82, 83. But I would wonder if you were to find people or talk to women about that aspect, whether things and the support levels changed considerably.

Interesting. Yeah.

Afterwards, that's what I always felt that, you know, I thought, and I did feel in 84, especially 84 to 87. Well, up to 90 that, that there was a lot lot more support.

You know, do you think the authorities were really worried about the Greenham women because you've mentioned that you're pretty certain you had your phone tapped?

Yeah,

So the extent that the authorities went to to find out what the protesters were doing. Well, first of all, you know, I'd like to know about the phone tapping and then also what you know, yeah. What what do you think they were aiming to do by doing that?

Well, the the phone tapping, I think I said on my previous thing that they I don't know if you want to mention the, the police officer in our village, do you want me to say his name again?

Yeah.

So So Danny he was really nice, because he was kind of my peer, if you like in terms of age and village status. So he always knew he always knew that I'd been to Greenham. And we didn't have in those days APNR for your vehicle recognition.

Yeah.

And and even if we did, we wouldn't have had it from Yeovil in Somerset, to Greenham, you know, not on the day A303 there would be nowhere to do that.

So unless there were people who were following or taking notes of all vehicles going past, which would be quite difficult at speed to do that. There was there must have been other ways of them finding out where we'd been, you know, there might have been collating things of all vehicles around the base perhaps who parked or were nearby. But I think it was a lot more difficult then to find out whose vehicles were who, you know, and especially as the vehicle wasn't registered to my name anyway.

Right. Oh of course it was to the women's aid.

It was the women's aid car. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I was on the insurance. And I think we had a base insurance that anyone could drive it. But I basically used it, mostly because I was probably one of the only drivers in those days, you know, and also we'd go and collect women from places so. But with the phone, it was, it wasn't quite in, in that period of time. The phones weren't quite, they weren't digitalised, either digitiser. And wherever you call it, and then anyway, so it was the old lines, the exchanges, there were many more exchanges in villages and towns. So when I the village I lived in was pretty much on the old system. And if you think about it, that's not so far away from post Second World War. When, you know, telecoms, and telephones, were still you had to ring up, I think even probably in the 60s, where you would ring up, you'd lift up the receiver. And there were telecommunication, mostly women there at the end. And you would say, can you put me through to West Coker 369 please, you know. My number when I was in that house, was just three digits.

Oh wow!

It was yeah, it was West Coker 541. Then in the later 80s, it got added two numbers, which was 89541. And now it's got another number, then you had to dial if you were out of your area out of your village, you then had to dial the standard code to get into the next village or town and then dial back out again. So for example, if I was 541, I could call a neighbour by dialling three figures. But if I wanted to call the next village, I'd have to dial their code, which was eight, six to get into East Coker, for example, and then their number. And then that whole, that became a six, five figure number. The whole thing really was that, I think the tapping was very easy for them to do still on an actual practical level. Because at those times, sometimes I would pick up the receiver and I could hear a neighbour talking. You know, so, and, and, and also, we hadn't been long when we've not had party lines. So some villages in some areas. And the reason that I think is quite important was because I think that still gave government and people that, you know, so called authority, access to people's numbers and listening. So I think they could do it quite easy. You know, now, they do it by using satellites, and listen to our mobile phones, they pretty much everything we say. You know, you've got one of these mobile phones, and everything that you say is recorded somewhere, you know, we've got the whole of America up in the north is recording everything that we're all doing now, you know. So, so I don't think it

was so difficult to do. Erm, but we did know, I mean, that I was I was in various groups at the time. And we also used to know that we would say somebody had said, and I don't know if this is true or not, but at one time, there was something about using a code word people would use code words. And I'm talking about people who are perhaps a bit more extreme in their extreme, you know, they were a bit more

Physical?

Bit more radical in their, in what they were doing, and, and having the time and, you know, ability to, you know, be party to, you know, to be part of a much more radical groups and into politics and, and more underground about it a bit like their, you know, HS2 people now, and the passing of information. And so, I know that people were very careful about what words they used. So for example, if they were going to do something at Greenham, or in some other setting, they would use different words and not say they were going to do that. So people believed very strongly, and they knew because the evidence was, unless somebody has, you've got an infiltrator and somebody has said, you're going to do that, you know, and if you think about it, you know, as I say, we weren't that far away from, you know, Second World War where people were still very much using phones and tell, you know, telegrams and information to pass information along. So I remember somebody saying to me, oh, you should use the word cabbages a few times in your thing and see if you happen, and I did a couple of times. It's interesting. And there were definite clicks on the line. Other you know, so, so whether that's true or not, but there was definitely. You know, I can't prove it and wouldn't be able to prove it. But very, very much so sometimes if I was calling a number somewhere or calling somebody to arrange something, there would definitely be clicks on the line. You could hear then, you know, that somebody has was, was listening in, you know, it was quite quite clear. And then sometimes as I say, I would see Danny want when I'd been up to, especially when it been a bigger one needs to Oh, you up at Greenham at the weekend, then were you? I said, Yeah, you following me? Then? You know, we have like, chat, you know? And, you know, it's it. I, you know, I think the government wants to keep an eye on us all the time anyway. You know, I, I think that anyone who does anything that seemed to be subversive, alternative, or outside of the box of what, what the government wants us to follow? Then, you know, then I think those people are monitored. Yeah. And I think that the ways the government does that, it monitors, you know, who we are, what we're doing what we're saying, in order to test, you know, the mode of the people, you know, I think the government's in a much stronger position now, all governments are in our country, wherever they are, because they have so much more access to everything we're doing, they don't really have to follow us or do anything, because we have got so much CCTV, we've got so much information digitised on on the internet, through our phones, through our broadband, you know, our vehicles, you know, a picked up APNR are everywhere, we're going you know. You can't find your stolen vehicle from outside your house, or get the police to find it. But, you know, you've

certainly will be notified that you were somewhere you shouldn't have been, if you

Yeah absolutely.

You know.

Oh, could you tell us a bit about the, you mentioned transportation lists at some of the Gates? I was quite interested by that.

Oh, what did I say?

Erm you said something about how women could put their names down for travel and things.

Yeah, yeah. Well, bit like, actually, I was thinking that was funny the other day I was looking at, there's one group that I'm in, that's a shared, shared list for people going to peace camp. And there's very few people on it. And it's sort of quite interesting that, you know, I wonder if they're a bit afraid to put their information online and how they, you know, share lists to get all over the country. And we used to have big lists of where people were. And so I often used to take people back to so if I was up at Greenham. Because I was so regular, some women that I knew would, if they wanted to get a lift back, or say for example, the West Country like Totnes and there or Bristol they'd come to Yeovil and then they could get the bus to Bristol quite easy, or sometimes I would go that way and drop them and then come home. So we would we would offer lifts because sometimes women, you know, had to go home to their families or their children or whatever. And we did have lists, excuse me, we had lists to, you know, offer offer lifts to people and Cardiff as well I remember taking some women to Cardiff. There was quite strong, you know, groups, so you could get women to Bristol or Cardiff or Totnes. Because it was quite difficult to get up from the west country. And don't forget, even now, comparatively, the prices were much higher to get transport anywhere.

Right. Yeah.

You know, so you couldn't really go on the train from the from the West Country. One, you couldn't really afford to do that. Except sometimes we used to have what now it's all called a network card. But we had a network gold card and a network green card I think it was. There wasn't really, just Network Rail card. And so we often used to like share those. So that if you went with four people, it made it a lot cheaper. So we just used to give our car to somebody else, and then they could get the train say if they could get the train from Totnes to Exeter, and they could get the train up to here or Salisbury. And I would pick women up in Salisbury sometimes. And I used to take women back to Cardiff and Bristol and Totnes and sometimes I'd have women camp in my garden. And again somehow so somebody was telling

somebody something because sometimes like local police officer, he'd mentioned that to me as well that I had, you know, people staying. Because I always pick up hitchhikers or you know bring, if I bought women back from Greenham you know, sometimes like two or three of them then several people would camp in my garden. And then you know, take them home the next day or something or or they'd get a lift from somewhere else wherever they were going, or they'd go off and hitch that kind of thing. But somehow that was always known, known about, you know, could have been that I just lived in a very, it was a nosey rural area, and people always questioning what I was doing, you know? So.

Was it important to you that it that Greenham was women only? And if so why? Or if not, why not?

Yeah, I think I think I felt it was a very important, a very important statement, that, that, you know, the larger aspects of the element of Greenham were women only. And I think that was really important, because it was a real statement saying, you know, we can do this, you know, we this really, really matters. And, and you mostly men, as it was, it was, it was all, you know, who were behind it, the military and the government and the police. They were, I think, I don't think I ever saw any female uniformed people, you know, or even even people making statements, you know, women making statements. Whether they were reporters, or journalists, or government figures, you know, on the news or in papers, it was actually very, very, a very clear divide, you know. And I think that was really important. And it became important, and I think it changed initially, there were quite a few men there at the beginning, there were at the camps. But I did feel it was really, really important, you know, and I felt that if men wanted to do it, they could do that. But they should go over there and do that for themselves, you know. And also, the standoffs were very different when it was women only, versus a mixed group.

How did it make a difference?

I think it made a difference, because of the tone, if they were male protesters, the tone of male protesters would would be often much more antagonistic. And also, the response from the police would be equally as antagonistic and definitely from the military. Because I think the military somehow saw what women were doing as somehow not as important and not as big. But actually, if men were doing it, it was much more threatening. So I think there was this kind of sliding fence underneath that people didn't really see the women as, so as important as they really were as what, what what we're really trying to say. They didn't see it, or perceive it that way. And kind of like the long game was played, if you like, by the Greenham women standing out their course, and stating their life's work to protect children and communities and their families of every genre, you know. And I think that, that, that, that made that very important. And I think the difference very, very much was that the way each side if you like, regarded each other. So you know, so the military, seeing men would feel threatened, and they would feel they needed to beat

them down. And also, you know, maybe an element, they weren't proper men, because they should be at home, or they should be working as well. But you know, and they were here and, and they need to be taught a lesson. You know, I mean, the men, the police were quite rough, too, when they took women in. I remember going in a in a minivan, you know, police minivan, and they also just had other minivans because they didn't, they had too many women to try to arrest. But they would do things like take us in but not read us our rights. So if we got to the station you hadn't had your rights read, they would then just so you can go, but it was just another method to cause you to cause disruption. So then how could you get back to the camp? You know, so it meant then women would have to walk because we didn't have mobile phones to call somebody. Sometimes there would be women who were like out watchers who would be in small cars or whatever nearby and they would follow, police, the van or the minibus to Reading a member of getting arrested and going to Reading police station. And there was just like loads and loads of us well, there's no way they didn't have enough cells to put us in. And they had nothing really you know, it was it was much easier then. So they would just take you in as they wanted to. Now they'd have to have an absolute reason of the breach of the peace or whatever that they would charge you with. But of course they weren't doing that they were getting us into the vehicle. We would go there. And then of course, they haven't read us our rights and then there was too many people at the sergeant's desk to be able to say, right put them there, put them there. If you hadn't had your rights read, then they would just turf you out the station. Yeah. So then, of course, all they were just doing was causing disruption hoping that we would go away.

Yeah.

That's what they hoped for. And I think, I think that was also important with it being women was that, you know, women are not going to go away. You know, we're not gonna just go because they say, you know, you've been naughty go now. You know, go back home. And, you know.

Did you ever go to court at all, after you were arrested or not never got to that?

No, no, I went, I think three times. Got got taken one time, I did have my rights read to me and everything, you know, written, and I think I might have had a letter to my home. But nothing, nothing ever came of it. It was the same with the poll tax, they didn't ever want to arrest us, really. They didn't, you know, we used to try to be arrested because we wanted to make a statement, because the more of us that were actually in the courts, then that would have to be reported upon. And then we could make a statement if we were reported upon and had to appear in court, which would cost more money. And more importantly, it'd be reported on and it would be another group of women, but that rarely happened. It rarely happened. I mean, occasionally, I mean, there's probably more evidence than than I recall or know about that, that women were arrested. But I think mostly it was probably when there was a specific assault, or if people were caught, specifically cutting to get in or going over

over the wall. So they could be arrested and, you know, taken away. But yeah, pretty, like they didn't want you know, that's part of it, as well, as you know, I don't you know, saying what did the government, you know, want to do with us? Why did why were they listening and everything? They wanted to find out I think who who the people were, who were women were, where they came from, and you know. And I think perhaps they just believed we would go away. And perhaps they believed an element of it was that somebody was funding this somehow.

Yeah, they couldn't seem to get their heads around that there wasn't one big leader!

Yeah. Absolutely. Who told you to do that? I remember being asked that. Who told you to come here? You, are you here all the time? And I just say no, I just come every week. So I was quite open with them. You know, that's, that's a vehicle that's that they're on the road. I've come in that vehicle. And I bring, you know, it was full of food. And, you know, I'm going back in it and they would they just couldn't understand. Who's who's your leader? Who told you what to do? Have you been told when are you coming again? Why do you want to know, you better ring me up and ask me or go on my phone, and you'll find out when I'm coming again. You know, the asked ridiculous questions. Really ridiculous.

Funny isn't that they couldn't just be like, oh, what you can make your own decisions? Yeah, I'm just doing this to support other women protestor. Not for any other gain or

No, why you coming here every week? You know, it's not going to do you any good. And, you know, in your case, they'd say things like that, you know, people won't think good if you and your community . Well they don't anyway, you know. Anyway, I think I'm a heathen, because I've taken my son out of school.

Yeah, you spoke about kind of prejudice that you had, you know, in your village where you were living, what was that, like, and how did it manifest itself?

Well, it probably was compounded by things like going to Greenham. But, you know, because I was a young young mother, single mother, and, and a lesbian too. I mean, I experienced quite bad homophobia, really from from villagers. And I had dead rabbits chucked in my door and a bag of poo once and I don't know if it was a human or dogs. But yeah, my front porch door would just open most people's did, you know, mostly had you, you didn't lock your doors, really those in then, you know, in that time. And I'd get phone calls from people, you know, saying things and men actually would cut men who are married men who were from the village would come past and, you know, try to engage with me and want to have a sexual relationship. So yeah, they found they found it really, really difficult. And then I took my son out of school, and that made it even worse. Then sometimes I'd have women staying or, you know, people staying that were travelling up and down and

whatever. And then I went off to Italy and travelled a bit and then would come back. People just couldn't understand, you know, I wasn't correct. I wasn't proper. I wasn't, you know, I know first of all, I didn't have a proper lifestyle, because I didn't have a husband. And, you know, then what was I doing with this child? You know, so I was reported to social services. And when I took him out of school, I mean, the the, the education officer was was lovely, actually was really nice guy he was just near retirement. And he came to see us a few times. And he said, I'm just coming because I've actually had another report, but he really liked you know, me and my son, and my son Martin would like, make things and show him stuff. And he was, you know, as advanced as any child that was curious and was being educated in the world, you know. And, you know, interestingly, he went on to my son went back and did a placement at his primary school, because he went there for the last six months of his primary school, just I wanted to reengage him. And interesting, he went back and did that. And I got an apology from the head. Which was interesting, because some some of the response, some of the experiences were from other parents. You know, it's that thing it's that thing about fear, isn't it? You know, same as with with Greenham, that, that if somebody does something a bit different, then, you know, they, they're, they're a hippie, or they're a vegan, or they're this, you know, these people have to put a label on you somehow. So perhaps it must be that, you know, because I was a lesbian or something, or, you know, and then taking my child out of school, that was really, because it questions what other people are doing. People don't just say, Oh, they're doing that. They say, oh, is it being questioned about what I'm doing?

Yeah, that's it. Are you doing that because you think wrong of us? And you're thinking well I don't care what you do.

I just, yeah, I just want to do what I'm doing. And it's perfectly legal. And I'm doing this, you know?

Did you ever report any of these things to the police?

No, no. I mean, I think I, I talked to the local police officer who lived in the village about it a bit. But it's kind of, you know, living in that setting it's, it's all very insidious, if you know, in during that time, so that was like, the very early 80s. If, if one had actually done to me, I mean, I also then went on in the next few years, I was training some police officers around rape crisis and domestic violence.

Yeah.

And so some in the area would come to sessions, and this is sort off off kilter a little bit from what you're asking, but this will be part of the reason as well, is that so some of these were Sergeant level and above. And they would sit in this stance, you know, legs wide open. And they're only at this meeting, because they have to do some domestic violence training. So it's like 1988,

then. And honestly, everyone nearly was saying, oh, well, why don't women leave than if it's so bad? And you know, these sort of like, cliched things, and oh don't you think, because they would, they would know who I was, they weren't stupid. And they'd say, don't you think, Oh, the women just love it up there. Because they get they get all the women together, and they could just sit around and play music and, you know, and they, you know, and then they go out with the bloke, they just want to go out with another bloke. You know, and you just think oh, you know, how do you deal with that? And mostly, why don't they leave? And they're probably just turned into lesbians if they go in the women's aid house, and, you know, so so all these views and what women were wearing, you know, this whole very old, stereotypical things were happening, you know, big time. And, and I know that if I had, you know, I'm pretty certain if I had tried to, you know, report any of these incidences with no real evidence, you know, whatsoever, just a dead rabbit in my house, or, you know, it's, you know, it wouldn't have gone anywhere. And also, I never really wanted to bring that I wanted to not have that hidden if you like from my son as well. Because if you start doing that in a very rural small community, then people pick it up and other children will pick that up from their parents.

It's about what's best for him isn't.

Yeah, absolutely. So, yeah, so I never did. This one time two insurance guys came. And I had been having a relationship with them with a woman who lived with us for a short period. And I think that she had and filled in something or seen them in some event in town or something was interested in this possible insurance thing. And they came out and I was there she wasn't and they immediately said, when I said no, I'm not interested. And I said to her, you know that we don't, you know, we don't want this. We don't want to have this sort of thing. She was a little bit naive about the whole thing. And given the address and that kind of thing. So, and they were really, really funny. And they absolutely said, Oh, I know what this is. And they were, you know, the intonation was, oh, yeah, your, you know, you're a pair of lezzers, aren't you. And, uh, and I wasn't prepared at that time. And I felt very vulnerable and unsafe. But I was really, really angry. And they anyway, they went off, they left, they were pretty rude. They went off, and I actually later saw them, like, the next day or two days later, in a cafe in the town. And I just suddenly felt incensed. And I went in and said to them, you know, I'm actually reporting you. And I, because I, they had I think I found their card or something afterwards. And I said that I was reporting them to the police for harassment, but I didn't. But, you know, but I wanted to let them know that, you know, because it's, it's you're left with that thing. Will they come back again? It's a real vulnerable.

Yeah.

Erm setting you know, to be in.

Definitely and you want to let people know that their behaviour, with some people like that, they just need to be told that that behaviour is not okay.

Not okay. Yeah. Yeah.

It it's not challenged they'll keep doing it. With some of them, that's all it takes isn't it?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So, but no, I didn't really. I didn't really do much about it. But there, but there were definitely definitely, you know, women would send me things, you know, letters, you shouldn't do that. But some, some women were just come up to me and say what you're doing is wrong, you know. Yeah. How dare you do that your child, you're, you know, you're starving him of social interaction. And I thought was quite interesting that he went on to be head boy at his senior school. And, yeah, and, you know, then had his own business and has still sort of continued. And they know that, you know, I think Oh, okay. Yeah, right.

Yeah. Yeah. He's fine.

Yeah. He's all right. So, yeah.

Do you think Greenham was successful in what it set out to achieve?

Yes, definitely. Yeah. Yeah, definitely. I think it was. Well, I think it was very successful, especially considering, well, the outcome that, you know, it got closed down. And there is now a park there. With wildflowers, which is nice. I think. And I think it could be recognised more and I think it should be in our history books, you know, and it should be taught as the very present day issue. And I think it was, I think it was very, very successful. And certainly not recognised for being, you know, what it was, it was, you know, and that kind of, like, slow considered, but consistent, you know, and never, ever letting up and giving up.

Yeah.

And I think it was, I think it was so important. It was such an important time for for women, but also really for for protest. As I said at the beginning, you know, I think it was, I think it was the marker for kind of modern day, I say modern day, post war. Because I think after the war, those war years 45 to 65, you know, I was born in the 60s, but 45 to 65 I think people were recovering and regrouping with themselves and regrowing their lives because the country had been pretty decimated by the Second World War, and jobs. And, you know, and everything was so difficult, and I think really, sort of post the 60s and 70s it was the first really real, you know, charge against our government for saying, we the people do not want nuclear arms in our, in our country and in our city, you know, just down the road from, you know, nuclear warheads, and we haven't got rid of all of them. But it was just such a big

statement to say, you know, we don't want this. Erm, you know, we really don't want this and I think it was I think it achieved that. You know, very much so and I think the agenda even though it was a quieter agenda than the poll tax riots, for example. You know, because because lots of people, everybody felt affected by the poll tax. So I think in a way on mass, everybody got involved and you know differently than the miners strike which affected miners strike miner communities. The difference with Greenham that was was that they were saying that this is our whole world. This is our whole country who could be decimated by having these, you know, nuclear warheads here.

Why do you think it's not you know, in the public knowledge as much as, you know, some of these say suffragettes, big, other big movements?

Well, I wonder if that's something about time, and it will come again. Because time, like, we know, perhaps, about the suffragettes we know, I mean, I'm not really sure how much we hear about it and know about it. But we know about votes for women, for example.

We know it's taught in schools,

It's taught in schools. Exactly. And we know, much more now, this decade perhaps than the previous three decades that women have more rights, you know, so, you know, not so long ago was it the 50s, that a man could still by law, beat his wife, as long as the stick was no wider than this thumb. You know, we know things like that. And maybe, maybe it's about time, maybe that's to do with our, you know, the British way of presenting news and histories? I don't know if that's the case. Is it because it's women? Is it because a load of women sat around and had a camp?

Yeah, to know more about if it was men?

Yeah. Yeah. I wonder if that's the case? You know. I don't know. Because if you look back, everything is quite difficult to find if you just Google Greenham and Greenham that doesn't always come up. Greenham women doesn't come up first.

No, it's the RAF base. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So exactly. So again, it's mens position is jumping first, or you know, you know, male dominated. And so that's quite interesting in itself. You know, if you write if you write women votes then the suffragettes comes up. If you wrote women votes, it comes up about the age of when, or when women could vote in this country, in the various countries, what dates they could vote voting, you know. So, you know, maybe it's also about time, maybe it's about, you know, exposure. And, and, you know, and that's really perhaps why, you know, for the 40th we need to have a big a big bang, you know.

We're on it.

Yeah, because, because it needs it really needs recognising. I mean, I've got some families they're not they're not really they're married related that way, who live near Greenham. And I, I saw that I don't know them that well, but I'd seen that they said oh we're going to Greenham. And so I thought, oh, because when I said Greenham, I just think Greenham Camp and you know. But other people that say Greenham they just mean they're going to Greenham to walk around on the grass.

Walk.

Yeah. Yeah. So I said, Oh, wow. Are you going to cycle? Or are they were going because they wanted to celebrate Greenham Common. And they and she wrote back and said question mark, question mark. No, just taking the kids for a walk up there. I said, oh, and then my other niece came in and said, oh, that's when she said, oh, don't go to Auntie Jacqui's because she'll drag you to Greenham. You see and tell you and tell you all the history. And but they had no idea. And this woman's 48.

Oh, wow.

I think she's in her mid to late 40s, mid 40s. Anyway, she's just over 40. And she's got two, three grown up children two nearly grown up children. It's like, oh, and they don't even know. So they don't know where they're walking or what was there.

They don't know the history of the place and everything that's happened there.

No, no, absolutely.

Why do you think it's important then finally, for future generations to be aware of Greenham and what the women did? How they did it?

Yeah, I think it's as important as understanding what the fallout from Chernobyl was. Because I think it's a it's a direct, you know, parallel to what could have happened in this country. And I think it's incredibly important because I think in terms of women's, you know, herstory and our, you know, the history of our country. That's something as important as the suffragettes did. You know, and again, I'm just gonna jump back and say, you know, think about when people talk about the suffragettes often they'll jump on I've heard mostly men say, oh, yeah, isn't that the one who that silly one who went and killed yourself under a horse? And, and it's really interesting that that's that's the bit that's taken.

Yeah, that's, that's been their take home message.

That's their take home message. And that's the message of import, you know, that they've they've been delivered that in terms of understanding in history what what suffragettes did, and where the women, you know that the law changes women owning homes and getting mortgages and renting their own places and owning their own money, which was theirs in the first place. So all that stuff, which comes from there. And with Greenham, I think that lots of people will say things like, oh, was that just a load of hippies or loader lezzers down there. There were a load of mad women sitting around campfires that sort of take, you know, and I think it has to be really radically promoted as something incredibly serious. You know, really, really serious, and a really serious piece of political activism and action that took place in our history, you know. And it really did take place, and people don't know, it took place. And it took place with people from very tiny, rural, you know, communities all over the country, saying to themselves, bloody hell, this can't happen. You know, and, and we're talking about, you know, forget the whole thing of being accused of that being mostly white, you know, middle class women, which it wasn't. But that being the accusation, we're talking about women who, who, from whatever levels of education, you know, and whatever genre of lifestyle, they lived in, saying, no, no, we this isn't okay. And that's why it's really important is because those women said, no, it's not okay. And we won't tolerate this. And that's why those women went there. And why many hundreds and 1000s more didn't, but they supported it, too. It wasn't just those women, if you count numbers, it wasn't just those women, you know, hundreds of 1000s I mean, every single week for years, I was taking boxes and boxes and boxes of money and food and items to continually support women at Greenham. Yeah, because those women didn't go they went for us. You know, we say that about our military, you know, people, people say, you know, it's more of Americanism, we say thank you for your service to people. And we believe that and mean that because we think people are protecting our lifestyle, our countryside, our island. And actually, that's what those women did. What those women did was a military action, if you like, because they stood up against the government. You know, and they stood, they stood in parallel with what the military was doing, and the police on the other side, and they were in a war, they were in a trench, you know. In effect, they are in a real trench, like a World War One trench, you know, it stank. It was disgusting. It was exhausting. It was tiring, it was cold, it was wet. You know, people didn't have enough clothes, they didn't have enough food, and they still stood there. And those were women who stood there in the trench with the military on one side who were going to battle them. And the male police officers on the other side, being directed by the government of this country, saying, you silly women must go home. Well, those silly women didn't go home. They stayed there. And they stood in their trench and they prevailed. And that's why in this country today, we don't have Greenham Common with nuclear warheads, there weapons there. You know, so so for me, that is kind of the epitome of what those women did. Those women did it for all women and all of our country, you know, and they, they, yeah, I think that's what they did.

Absolutely. Thank you so much. Amazing, Jacqui.

Oh, I feel really passionate.

It was great. You need you need to do a TED Talk. That was very very good!