

**Carolyn Barnes**

So I'd like to start by asking you, how did you become involved with with Greenham?

**Well, I came down to Southampton from Bolton where I grew up to, to the university. And I came, I started a maths degree, which I then dropped out of after a year, because I didn't really know why I was doing it. And, but I still, I lived in a shared house with students. And so I, I think I actually probably spent more time up at the university when I wasn't actually studying there. Because I joined various groups like CND and Third World First, as it was called then. And so I just, I guess there must have been a women's group or there was certainly, you know, a really strong women's movement at the time. And there were some local, there was a local group called Families Against the Bomb, which I don't - I don't know if you know Di? She had a campervan. And so she used to take a whole group of us up to Greenham. For demonstrations, or I think I mean, I probably only ever stayed just overnight a couple of times before, before, there were demos, but I didn't actually live there. But that was really how I got involved, with CND at the university and the women's group and, and Di, I guess.**

So which gate did you stay at?

**You know, I can't really remember. I mean, I, I remember going to the main gate. I mean, I would have been 19 around sort of 19, 20, 21 at that time. And my memories are a bit vague. So I can't really remember what all the gates were, I think, I think we went to Blue Gate was that on the other side? We did. We actually stayed overnight, just kind of bivvied, really outside the gate. Because then they were, they were bringing cruise missiles in the following day. And there were, there were police on horses that were trying to clear us away. I don't think they actually hurt anybody, but it was quite - I think some people were quite scared. I think I was quite naive. I didn't really feel particularly scared from what I remember. Because I just didn't you know, I was, I was quite naive about what could happen I suppose. But yeah, so, so we stayed that, that night and I think it was Blue Gate. That was the very first time that I went there actually was with a a small - just with probably three or four other people. And it was a mixed group and there weren't other people there. It was just like in Woodland and we just camped in Woodland there. And I think that was from the CND group. But we just stayed overnight in a tent, and then went back, you know, came back to Southampton. It wasn't a demo or anything. From what I remember, it was just I think we were just doing a bit of the kind of pilgrimage we'd heard about Greenham happening and just went to have a look. But we had a couple of men in the group so, so we didn't stay where there were other people. Yes.**

And so when you first arrived what were your first impressions? Was it like you had expected it to be?

**I don't think I had any expectations. I, I don't think you know, I was I was fairly new to politics, I suppose. And, and I hadn't really studied history particularly. And so I didn't really, I didn't really know what to expect, I suppose. I mean, it was, it was, it was exciting because because it was so unusual and because it was all women, and it was, it was, you know, there were there was a different kind of ethos, I suppose. I mean, it is a bit like Extinction Rebellion does kind of**

remind me of that, in that, you know, they, they try to be, you know, involve everybody and it's, it's all a bit wacky with the hands signals and everything, you know, it's a different, different ways of doing things, I suppose. And not just having a few men sort of dominating, which often, even now, I think, happens in groups. Yeah, so it was quite exciting. And, I mean, I've never seen anything like it. I mean, I, you know - as a child, we'd been to caravan caravans on holiday, but we'd never been camping. So it was all quite, sort of I don't know, earthy and and kind of real and natural and yeah, sort of primal or something.

Thank you. And you met, you had some friends, and you're still in contact with those friends. I understand. Is that right?

I, I am. I've got, I've got one friend, particularly who, who actually I didn't know particularly well at Greenham, although I do have a photograph of her at Greenham. If I can - I don't know if you'd, if you'd be able to see it. But this, this photo of me talking to, you probably can't see it, I can see it. Yeah, me talking to a policeman. And then there's a a woman here in a white polo neck jumper that's, that's my friend Ingrid. And, and I'm still good friends with her although as I say I wasn't particularly friends with her at the time. And it's just that she, she was involved, she she lived in Southampton too, so yes, I'm in touch with her. I'm not I'm not really in touch with a lot of people and I'm kind of sad about that. I mean some of them I've tried to look up on Facebook but not managed to find - I mean, there was this, there was a woman, I mean, this this woman here who's with Di's, two of Di's triplets here. Everybody called her Blue and and we were really quite close. Because I think, because I had a bit more time, because I wasn't I wasn't doing anything I'd dropped out of university. And she was very driven she her she'd grown up on kind of army bases or RAF bases because her dad was in I think in the RAF or the army I'm not sure which. And, and she was really she really kind of rebelled and so the two of us would often you know sort of get involved with things and, and one of my photos there is we, we did a fast I think I think it must have been - I don't know if there was a kind of nationally organised one. But we because all our leaflets, we did our own leaflets about this fast for life, which was Hiroshima day to Nagasaki day. And this was, this, this was the leaflet I don't know if you can see the fast for life. And and we camped well camped, we we just slept by the Bargate in Southampton which is just like this monument in the middle of Southampton. We just, we just slept on the pavement outside. And a few other people came and joined us and we we just drank water for three days. And I think we did it perhaps three times, three years. Yeah, it was - it was quite an experience.

And how did you feel after the three days of fasting?

Well, again, I don't really remember. But I do, I do remember being a bit sick. At one point, you know, it's kind of vomiting bile. Cos, you know, I mean, it wasn't something I'd ever done before. Yeah, but I mean, it was it was okay. I guess, I mean, it was quite hard. It was quite hard to do. And we were right outside a Burger King or someplace like that. In fact, we used to go into Burger King to use the toilets to have a wash and a wee in the morning.

And how were you received by Burger King?

And I think they didn't mind I think they let us do it. Because so I mean, there were only a handful of us. So it wasn't like it was lots of people traipsing in and I guess it was a quiet time of day for them. So I don't remember them objecting. Yeah.

What was the relationship like with the local residents around the camp or with the police or the military at Greenham?

I think I, I mean, I, I guess it was quite mixed. Because you'd get, you'd get people driving driving past and honking their horns and being supportive. And then you'd also get people driving past and shouting and I mean, I, I can't remember any particular kind of abuse that they'd throw at the camp, but I mean, certainly there was a feeling that it was quite mixed. The, the police, I guess were I mean, some of, some of them were probably quite supportive. I don't know. Some of them less so. I mean, they did used to drag us around but I don't, I mean, I was, I was never hurt. And the, the I do have a memory of one one time. I mean, just just going back to the residents, I don't, I don't really remember residents particularly because it all seemed like it was very much in the country. There didn't seem to be very many people living around there. I mean the women actually living on the camp may have had more experience of that. But just going for the day, we didn't really get a feeling of that at all. I mean, I think we probably felt a bit you know, like people thought we were odd. But there were an awful lot of us you know to be odd, really. But I still feel rather odd you know that people, people you know, people - I don't know people don't expect women to stick up for each other or. Erm, hmm. Anyway, perhaps we'll go back to that. Yeah. So I was, I was remembering one time when we were arrested - I'm trying to think actually, I think it was probably, I can't remember if it was Greenham or Upper Heyford - I've a feeling it might have been Upper Heyford. Because there were two, or two or three times I was arrested. And we were in - there were a few of us in a cell. And I remember I, I wrote something on the wall of the cell. And, and the when the, there was a woman police officer who came in and, and she, you know - there were other things written on the wall, I don't know how she particularly noticed. But she said, 'Who wrote that?' And, and nobody kind of, none of us said anything. And then eventually, I think I caved in and said it was me or something. And then when, when they came to they, when they - yeah, when they came to charge us and release us she made a bit of a thing of this being criminal damage. And, you know, I'm looking back I can, you know, she must have, she must have thought, oh, yeah, you know, this is some kind of naive, middle class girl who's you know.

Do you remember what you wrote on the wall that made her notice it?

Yeah. Well, you know, I can't remember what it was. I mean, you know, I don't know, some kind of poem or something. I don't know. But yeah, she obviously quite enjoyed kind of scaring me, I think. Which was, you know, interesting, I suppose. Being, and being a woman as well.

And so how long did you spend in the cell?

Well, so that I mean, we I can't remember there I mean, a few hours maybe. I was thinking, actually, that can't have been Upper Heyford because at Upper Heyford they kept us in a gym in some leisure centre, because there were so many of us. And so we were there for a good few hours. Unless they then transferred us. Actually they might have been just transferred us in little groups to the police station. But it's all a bit blurry. You know, I mean, it's a long time ago.

Do you remember how many times you were arrested?

Well, I think it was possibly three and I think maybe one time I wasn't charged. At Upper Hayford which I think was probably the first time we paid, we paid the fine. We went, we had to go to court. And I think it was the local CND group paid the fine. And then at Greenham, when, when we were arrested at Greenham, there were, I was in, I was in court with eight, there were eight of us all together in court, and it was my 21st birthday. And I I spent the weekend with my family at my brother's house, my brother and his wife's house. And my Mum had been very upset about the thought of me going to court and being arrested and had hugged me and and kind of made me promise that I would pay the fine. And yeah, so it was probably our second time in court because I think initially we yeah, I, we were probably bailed for a week or something I can't remember. Anyway, so so then - because it was a civil offence, but then because we didn't pay the fine it became a criminal offence. And, and then I remember getting back to Southampton and I rang my Mum and just said, well, actually, you know, I don't want to pay the fine and, and after that I don't think she ever talked to me about it again. And I never brought it up. She never, I can't remember her ever asking me what it was like or because then from, from the court there they, they sent us down to the the cells at Newbury. And we were in the cells there, we each had an individual cell. And the thing I remember about that is that we had to sleep with the light on, the light was on all night. And then during the day, we, we all went into a big cell together a kind of communal cell, which was, which was okay, because there were eight of us together. I didn't, I didn't know the other women but, but obviously, you know, we were comrades I suppose.

What was the mood like because you were all gathered together?

I mean, it was quite it was quite upbeat, you know, when I think the, the police who were looking after us were, were quite upbeat about it. I mean, they weren't, they weren't horrible to us, or I remember them going to get somebody some - it's funny what you remember, isn't it? I mean, I may have misremembered, but going to get some beans on toast for somebody who was vegan. They seemed, you know, quite kind of human really. And then, after we spent two nights there and then they took us to Holloway for two nights. And split us up there. So the first night, I was there, I was in a cell again with I think, seven other women but, but I didn't know them at all, they weren't Greenham women. So they, they were in prison for all sorts of different things. And we were in bunk beds in this, this room. And and I received loads of cards, loads of supportive cards, that I've still got somewhere actually. And yeah, I think they were quite interested in, in what was going on. And, but I felt quite kind of guilty because I was in there and wasn't going to be in there for for very long. And I'd got all this support from people outside. And all these other women were in

there for what seemed like really kind of minor offences. And when, you know, were not necessarily gonna get out of that situation, you know, even if they were released, they they weren't, they were still released to a kind of shitty kind of life, where it might happen again, so yeah. So that was the first night and then the second night, I was just in a cell with two other women. And one of them was a kind of middle aged woman, who was - her Mum was also in Holloway on another wing, because they'd been accused of fraud, credit card fraud. And, but she she had been going out with a policeman or something and, and she said he'd framed them or it wasn't true. Well, anyway, I obviously don't know the truth of it. But it sounded, you know, like a pretty kind of sad situation. And, and there was a young woman who had a young baby that her Dad was looking after, and she I mean, she was really kind of young and vulnerable really. And, and she, she had an asthma attack while we were in there and I knocked, I sort of shouted for help pressed the bell or whatever, shouted for help. And one of the women officers came to the door, but she wouldn't come in because she thought it was you know, we were going to attack her or something so she wouldn't actually give us the the inhaler. I think eventually she did, but you know, got some backup or something and opened the door. But that really shocked me because I'd never come across that before you know. I mean, I was that middle class naive 21 year old, having had an easy life really.

How were you treated whilst you're in Holloway for those two days?

Um, I mean, I think we, we weren't particularly kind of singled out. I mean, we were just treated like everybody else. I mean, I think it - what I felt I saw and learned from being in there was different ways that, that the women reacted to the power imbalance, you know. Because some women became very kind of submissive and trying to kind of get what they wanted, or whatever, just by being quite submissive. And then there were, there were others who were really kind of feisty, and tried trying to sort of be be more kind of aggressive and get what they wanted. So it was, it was quite, I mean, it's a real kind of, I suppose it's a real parent child kind of relationship, isn't it? You know, where you're, you're in there and you don't have any power. But I mean, for me, I was only in there for two nights. And then I was out and people came and picked me up. And you know, I had lots of support. Whereas most of the people in there wouldn't. So it did teach me a lot. There were cockroaches and, there was a, in the sort of communal cell there was a toilet just in a kind of a little cubicle without a door in the corner. And there were cockroaches that came up at night. And yeah, it wasn't very nice. But I don't I mean, I don't remember it being particularly uncomfortable or you know - mind you I'd slept on the, I'd slept at the Bargate on the pavement. You put up with things at 21 don't you that you don't as you get older.

And so what effect did all of this have on your friends? And you know, you've spoken about your Mother didn't ever say anything else to you about it, but what effect did it have on your personal life?

Hmm. I mean, obviously, you know, most of my friends were were pretty left wing anyway or involved in some kind of non-violent direct action or, or in the Labour Party or, you know, the, so, so most of my friends would have been

generally supportive. It would be I mean, I, you know, as I was saying, I, I haven't really kept in contact with a lot of people from a lot of women from that time. And, and it would be interesting to, to discuss what it was like, what the experience was like. But I think I think we all had different experiences of it, really. Listening to some of the other things that that other women have said, you know, there were women from so many different kinds of backgrounds and situations that none of us had the same experience of it really.

So how do you think the media represented Greenham?

I don't think I paid a lot of attention. I was too too busy to kind of watch the news or anything particularly. So, so I don't know. But I have got this, I had this cutting from the local daily echo in Southampton that says, 'Peace Woman Refuses to Pay Fine, Birthday in Custody. Southampton peace woman, Carolyn Barnes spent her 21st birthday in police custody at the start of a seven day prison sentence for refusing to pay fines imposed after she took part in a blockade at Greenham Common.' And it goes on and it you know, it's quite a quite a nice little article doesn't say, you know, shameful woman or anything like that. And it was I think it was on the front page or it was certainly, you know, it was quite, quite prominent anyway. So maybe not the front page, but yeah, so. So I don't know, I suppose I mean, like now, you know, there's such a mixture of views isn't there? Everywhere.

So why do you think it was that the suffrage movement seems to have had more publicity than Greenham? Why do you think that was?

I mean, I think it's possibly, I mean, I know, it's 40 years ago, but it's possibly kind of too recent, you know, I mean, it's easy to be supportive of women, you know, fighting for equality 100 years ago or something, but I mean, like I said, I still feel like we, you know, we were odd in a way.

In what way odd?

Well, I suppose, I mean, to some extent, we, you know, part of the point of it was to be opposed to the way things are to the, the, the power in society. So, we were kind of the outlaws, you know, the, the people who were you know, the witches, the mad women or the, you know, people that, that weren't going along with the status quo, and the way things are. I mean, like others, you know, have been kind of put down, I suppose, or minimised, or, you know, to minimise the threat of it, I suppose. You know, a lot, a lot of us at that time, I mean, you know. Like, for me, I was involved in all that. And then, once I once I met somebody and had children, then I didn't have time to think about anything like that anymore. I didn't have time to keep in touch with people, or you know, just having, having children and trying to, trying to at that stage start a career. That was kind of enough. That was it was quite, quite hard. But I mean, I didn't you know, not everybody would have been in my situation, I suppose. But maybe, maybe quite, I mean, if the, I guess there were probably quite a lot of students involved, or young women. But, I mean, there were all sorts of women that were there that you know, from different, like I say, from different backgrounds and different situations, so I don't, I don't know. I guess they also went off and, you know, lived, have lived their lives and have not really had the

chance to come back together again. I mean, it was really powerful. And I guess there I mean, there is footage isn't there, there's film footage, but there isn't loads of it, you know, like now, everybody everybody's got a phone and a camera and takes photos all the time. And I guess what we had was a lot more limited. But yeah, I don't know. I don't know why - I mean, maybe these things always come in waves. And you make some kind of little inroad but you know, like cruise missiles are taken away, but then we still got Trident and you know, it's not really completely gone away. It's just abated a bit.

So what do you think today's generation of activists might be able to learn from the experiences of the Greenham women?

Well, you know, I mean, I don't know how all those events were really organised, because I just went along. But, but just how that, how things were organised must be something to learn from because, because it was quite amazing to have so many, so many women there. I mean, to, to actually encircle the base holding hands was quite amazing.

Did you take part in that?

Yeah. Yeah.

Just describe it, what it felt like and how long you were there doing that for?

Well, I mean, I think, I think like a lot of demos where there's a lot of people, it's a little bit a little bit scary, I suppose. In that you don't know exactly what's going to happen. But I was there with other people that I knew. And, and so we, we just, we had somewhere to go. And we yeah, I mean, it was just amazing how we all I mean, I think there was a bit of kind of tramping around trying to find a space. But then actually all holding hands around the base was just amazing. And, and then we did another another thing as well, where we pulled the fence down. Where we were cutting, you know, we we all went with bolt cutters and and cut the fence and actually and pulled it down.

How did you smuggle bolt cutters into the camp?

Well, it wasn't into the camp. I mean, we we kind of I mean, I think because it was so sort of in the middle of nowhere and, you know, there were places where you could go and, uh, not not really be - I mean, we'd I can't I think we just we went up there early in the morning. And, and they must have known that, I mean, there were there were squaddies, you know, on the inside of the fence, just kind of spread out. But I mean, it was a huge fence. So, you know, they, they needed loads of, loads of them. So that I mean, they couldn't really do anything about it, except watch us. And, and we just so we just had, we sort of waited until a particular time in the morning, and then we just, we just went up to the fence and started cutting it with bolt cutters and, and got on each other's shoulders and, and cut it and pulled it and and just pulled it down. So I mean, and sang. It was just really yeah, kind of benign really. It wasn't. We didn't hate them or anything. And I think they were quite kind of bemused. I mean, we, you know, women's groups made amazing banners. And yeah, we did lots of singing. I mean, so my friend Ingrid has, has been involved with Ex-

inction Rebellion to some extent. And so I guess, you know, she's probably shared what she knows with the local group. But I guess it was some kind of web. And I mean, now we actually have an electronic web, don't we? So it must be easier. I just don't know how they, how they got the word out. And I suppose a lot of what we did wasn't wasn't necessarily illegal. You know, holding hands around the base. I mean, there's nothing illegal about that. It's just very kind of powerful and and symbolic, isn't it? Yeah.

Powerful and non-violent.

Yes. Yeah.

So how well do you believe the legacy of Greenham has been passed down through the generations?

Well, I don't know that it has very well. Because, I mean, maybe some women have managed to but but personally, I feel because because we all dispersed really - you know, I mean, my children know, you know. I've got this little collage thing, you know, that they could read if they were interested, but I mean, they don't, you know, like children as children, we don't really have a much of a sense of our parents lives before we existed do we. So I kind of feel like they probably don't have a great sort of sense of what happened.

Do you think it would make any difference if they did know?

I think it would be really good for, for their generation to know what happened. It did surprise me. I mean, you know, I probably hadn't really thought about it before. But it surprised me when, when my my daughter and her friends and my niece didn't know about Greenham. They didn't know what Greenham was. They, they they've never heard of it. I remember I had, I had a video of it, there was a kind of there was a programme where they used to have sort of news of a particular year, and the music of the time and I don't know if you remember it. And there was, there was one, there was one, I think it must have been 1984 and I've not been able to find it, I can't find it in my videos, because I've videoed it off the off the telly because I was in it. It was like my, you know, my moment of fame where I was crying and then I was being dragged by a policeman and and then I lost it and I've I think it's the one the one year that you can't find on YouTube or something. So so you know, I just can't be famous after all.

So why, why do you think it is important that Greenham is remembered? And if so, what should it be remembered for?

I I think I can't, I can't remember any of the situation where where women have come together in such numbers and yet, you know, peacefully but but powerfully and I I think it's it was quite unusual and it's I mean, I think we've got we've still got, we've still got changes to make - haven't we? There's still there's still a lot of abuse and you know, people having power who shouldn't or you know, who aren't using it well or, and selfishness and greed and inequality and you know, a lot of those things still exist. And so, we still haven't made that different world. I mean, sometimes it looks like we have you know, there you see it in some places. You see people working together and and be kind and, and, you



**know, people feel, a lot of the time, feel more civilised. But certainly that isn't always the case. And we haven't created the kind of world that that encourages that and discourages the the bad things. Unhelpful things.**

So do you have any thoughts on, why did it just fade away? There seemed to be no ending people just drifted away from the camp. Any thoughts on why that was?

**Well, I guess the I mean, the cruise missiles were taken away, weren't they. And the common reverted back to being a common so I suppose it it felt like that had that - I don't know if - is it like a wound in the immune system? See I work and I work in the NHS now. So everything, everything becomes a kind of relate in relation to the body or something. But it's almost like that was a kind of inflammatory wounds, and all these all these women came to kind of heal it, and then it was healed. And then, you know, what - what else was there to do? Except then, I mean, those you know, or all of us women have gone out and probably had some influence in our own lives, to heal and to make things better. So it's probably it's just that there hasn't been that kind of focus for such a such a long time. Until, you know, I mean, obviously, like, you know, Greta Thunberg, and the Extinction Rebellion and, and those things have - so it's just a slightly different focus now, isn't it? I mean, those they all seem - it feels like they're all part of the same thing, really the same kind of drive that we need to resist and change and heal. Hmm. So I guess that was I mean, you know, for me, obviously, you know, I was in my 20s. And then I I don't know, I got a job or something. People's lives changed - didn't they? Yeah.**

So is there any other question you would like me to ask that I haven't thought of? Is there anything else as we've come almost to the end now?

**No, I think you've asked some really good questions. Yeah. And you've certainly got me thinking and and talking and waffling on.**

It was really, really interesting. Thank you very much.

**It's a pleasure.**

Thank you.