

Hannah Schafer

Hello, Hannah, thank you so much for talking to us. It's great. So what took you to Greenham in the first place? What was your, what was your journey there?

Okay, so I come from, I come from a family of Quakers. So me mum's family are Quakers so they - pacifism was a big thing. So both my parents were involved in the Aldermaston marches in the 50s, and things like that. So I sort of grew up erm with the peace movement as part of my life. And then erm I'd never been to Greenham I knew about the march to Greenham and that. And erm, I sort of left school and travelled round a bit and did a bit of work here and there. And I ended up back in Liverpool in erm just before when the when the erm, when the cruise missiles were actually due to arrive at Greenham so, so towards the end of 1983, I think it was. And there was a, there was a, there was a trip with Liverpool CND who I was actively involved with. We were doing a - I'd been on big CND marches in London and stuff like that. And erm Liverpool CND organised a minibus to go and do, I think it was probably an Encircle the Base.

Oh yeah yeah.

In erm the autumn in 1983. And erm I went on that. And then the next week I moved there. I just thought it was great.

So what was it about it that created that for you?

Well partly, it was like, you know, it was the mood at the time erm.

Were you very fright - a lot of people have said they were very frightened - that there was a visceral fear of the bomb.

I don't know about - it's funny when I was erm - yeah, I'm just remembering. Erm, when I was erm, when I was 18, I was in Youth CND in Bristol, and me and my younger brother, and another girl from Youth CND in Bristol did a sponsored live in a fallout shelter in this community centre that I lived and worked at, and erm, like we did a week in there and er - and then we were supposed to be doing two weeks, but we were all getting on each other's nerves so much after a week, we erm we decided early on we could manage a week and then like we could, we could, like, knowing we were getting out, we could survive. But that was to sort of highlight the ridiculousness of the, you know, the, you know, it's possible to have a nuclear war sort of thing. Erm so, so, erm yeah - and cruise missiles just seemed like an escalation, d'you know what I mean. And like, it was just ridiculous. So, so I don't know if I really believed that, that it was, nuclear war was coming. And I always had a feeling it wasn't the only thing that that we needed to worry about if you know what I mean, because I can remember now looking at erm the state of the environment and climate change and all that. You know, that yeah, just sort of military industrial capitalist system is destructive enough without needing to

use nuclear weapons. Yeah, it was, it was a good focus d'you know what I mean. And it was, you know, it was it was great, because I felt I could actually do something, you know. So when I got to Greenham - and like I had a job in Liverpool, and it wasn't, you know, it wasn't you know like, a job that I wanted to do for the rest of me life, d'you know what I mean? So it was great. I was quite surprised. I came back from em, I came back from the trip to Greenham. And I said to me mum and dad, I was, I was going to move back down there. And she was really supportive. And I was surprised because I thought you she'd go oh god, do you know what I mean, you can't throw up everything that you've got, and all that. And then the people at work were really supportive and they had a whip round and bought me a nice sleeping bag. Yeah, no, it was great. So I like I give a week's notice at work and off I went to Greenham.

That's brilliant.

Yeah on the bus.

Yeah. Did you find that sort of support changed over time? Because some women have told, told us that they got a lot of support at the beginning and then and then the public sort of changed their, changed their mind almost.

Yes, well, so I was only there for six months. And I think when I was there erm, we had so much support, it was - because it was just when the missiles were arriving it was, you know - there was massive support, you know, we had got given so much stuff, and so much encouragement.

And was that by locals as well?

But it seemed to be well, it wasn't by everybody. You know what I mean, because, you know, because there was the vigilantes who used to come around and do nasty things, like erm,

What would they?

So, so one of the things I remember erm, because I've been, yeah knowing the interview was coming up I've been - because my memory is not the best erm, I remember erm, like my overriding memories of Greenham are great d'you know we had a great time was really sociable. We have loads of fun. Fun is my, you know if I had to pick one word to describe my life at Greenham it would have been fun with a capital F. Erm, but erm, but you know, there were moments so so I remember waking up one night there was a bunch of us sleeping and there was like a big erm like a bell tent. We used to call it the tipi. And you could sleep about 10 or 11 women. And so when I first got down there, I was sleeping in there. And I remember waking up one night and erm somebody was ramming a pole from inside the base was ramming a pole through through the fence. And it was like, you know, like about two inches from me head. Another time somebody actually burnt that tent down when it

was full of women. The vigilantes burnt it down. Well, not when I was sleeping in it, like but but you know - luckily nobody was hurt. Luckily, everyone got out and nobody was hurt. But you know, we also

That's a big statement isn't?

Oh, no no no, it was, it was, it was, you know, it was quite lucky that they actually, didn't actually kill anyone. There was one night that we were erm, we were, we were - I can't even remember how it started. But erm, I think a bunch of us had been to the loo or something and we were coming back through the woods. Back to the camp and then we erm we got chased by a bunch of blokes.

Really?

Yeah. And that was really scary, and they were they were beating. They were beating the woods, you know, like they'd beat you know, like they'd beat for game? They were beating the woods to to find us.

That's horrible.

That was, that was really scary. I remember being really, really, really scared at that time. But luckily, they didn't find us so we was all right. I think it was two or three of us hiding in the woods. Yeah, d'you know what I mean.

That sounds like it's, certainly from the first story, about the pole that the vigilantes were coming from inside the base.

Oh, no, so, so, so I think that was the squaddies with the pole obviously was whoever whatever squaddies were on duty that day. But but the vigilantes no, they were like local huntsman, I think.

Really?

Yeah, Yeah.

Gosh.

Yeah. And, you know, those sorts of those sort of, come from that sort of, but I think I would have said, yeah, they were from the local hunt I think the vigilantes, yeah.

And so what and what gate were you at? Were you

I was at Blue Gate.

Okay.

Yeah. Which was the one that was nearest town.

Oh really.

So that's yeah, it was obviously, like I got there on the bus so it was the first one I came to but erm so it wasn't the main gate.

Did it have quite a northern feeling? Because the buses come in to certain sides didn't they of the base?

Yeah. Well, I got the coach, I got the coach down. So I got off at Newbury and then I just walked up the hill. So it was like half an hour's walk from town, maybe a little bit more. It was also, erm has a pub that was like, on the way into town. So it was the nearest one - well Main Gate had a pub as well that wasn't too far away.

Oh really.

And they both served Greenham Women. Not the whole time I think at some point while I was living there, at least one if not both of them had completely stopped from pressure from the locals I think.

Oh what a shame.

Because they must have been making loads of money out of us like d'you know what I mean because we were in the pub most nights.

(Laughs).

But erm, but then I think that stopped. From what I remember I think that stopped. Yeah, at some points and they barred us. Yeah. And I think that was local pressure. And the the local Little Chef had barred us because there was a woman erm, there was a woman at my camp who used to keep a bag of clothes. She used to keep a bag of clothes sealed in a plastic bag, so it didn't smell of wood smoke, so she could disguise herself as not not a Greenham woman so she could go down the Little Chef for a bacon butty.

(Laughs). Did that work?

Yeah, it did. Yeah. No, she used to go down there all the time.

(Laughs).

Yeah, it was funny.

So what was the, what was the nature of, cos everyone's got a very strong, all the women I have spoken to, have with a very strong identity to their, the colours of

their gates or an idea of what the colour meant. What was the sort of vibe of Blue Gate?

So Blue Gate was erm it was quite a young gate. It was a bit of a party gate. It was like the townie gate. It was the vegan fascist gate.

As in very vegan?

As in like, there was all these bloody vegans there.

(Laughs).

Because I remember on Christmas morning somebody bought us a cooked turkey and I was lying in bed and I heard them sending the turkey to the local old people's home. And I was trying to shout while I was trying to put me clothes on to go, 'No! Bring it back!' Yeah, so so there was a lot of vegans at the gate. They actually set their own gate up at Turquoise which was sort of in between Blue and Green.

That is that's really interesting because I'd been wondering about Turquoise Gate it comes up now and then.

Okay yeah so Turquoise Gate was only a few 100 yards along. It wasn't on the road and it was like a splinter from Blue Gate.

So they could be even more vegan!

A Blue Gate splinter yeah. Yes, I think. Yeah.

So they positioned themselves between Blue and Green presumably.

And they were sort of a bit between Blue and Green so they weren't as cosmic as Green, weren't as cosmic as the Green women, but they obviously thought they were a bit more cosmic than the Blue women.

(Laughs).

Which is quite funny because I'm very cosmic now. But erm at the time I was just like it was a party gate, Blue Gate was the party gate. And Main Gate was quite good at partying as well but erm, but they're also quite hardcore politico's at the Main Gate. And all the erm, all the erm, all the women you know, the women who like to talk to the press and all that like were all round at Main Gate mostly.

Oh, really?

So yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Did you, well, we know, I'm really interested in the - I want to talk more about the fun in a minute, but I'm also really interested in the way that because the the the base was this nine mile

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

You know all the way round - how, how you decided where to have the lateral sort of meetings where you decided things like calling the gates different colours, for example, the things you had to decide on. How did that sort of work?

Yeah. Well, as far as I remember, and, you know, like, a) - I wasn't necessarily all that interested in the politic, politics - you know, in the organisation-y thing, because I tend to get a bit frustrated. I come, I was brought up by Stalinists so I'm a bit like allergic to all that organisation stuff.

Right that makes sense. Stalinists are very organised.

So I've always erm, I've always, you know, yeah, been more into anarchy than anything organised. But erm, so, so they used to always have a weekly meeting, and it always used to be at Main Gate.

Okay.

But while I was there, I think it was while I was there, we decided to rotate it round the gates.

Great.

Yeah. Yeah. I think that's, I think that's what happened. Yeah. So the weekly meeting, they used to dole out the money, you know, so they used to dole out money. Erm it was all that sort of politics stuff was part of the reason that I just got fed up of it all, d'you know what I mean? All the organisational side. I've never been - I've always been better at doing things than talking about doing things if you know what I mean.

Yeah.

So erm but the great thing about Greenham was that was fine.

Yeah, yeah.

You know what I mean, there was plenty to do so.

What did you do?

So, ah we just used to do all kinds of stuff.

Was this the fun?

We just had loads of fun. We'd do things like erm like we go to the pub, and have a few drinks. And then we get back to the gate. And then somebody - a car would be going in. Because Blue Gate and Main Gate, so Blue Gate was used quite a lot. And it was it was nearest town. So a car would be waiting to go in. So when they open the gates, we'd all run through and see who could get the furthest. And then they'd lock us all in the porter cabin, which was their gatehouse, and we'd set all the fire extinguishers off so d'you know what I mean, and so we just used to annoy them.

(Laughs).

Or we'd go to the pub, we'd come back and we'd you know, we'd try and cut holes in the fence, we'd go sneak through the woods and cut holes in the fence or do you know what I mean? Just just be silly, really, just to sort of - we had these two and there were these two Scottish twins. And they, I don't think they were, they, they - were they identical twins? I'm not even sure if they were identical twins, but they looked very alike. And they'd been, broken into the base separately a few times. So there was a woman called I think her name was Maggie, who was CID in the base. And so she must have been military police maybe so, so when they'd both broken in like over the course of a week or two, they'd both broken in, in separately, but they'd given the same name. So the base hadn't sussed out there was two of them. So this one night there was two groups of us. And we all broke in together at different points in the base. And we had a twin each. Oh, it was so fucking funny. And we insisted there was only one of them but there was two of them d'you know what I mean. But we both we all insisted there was only one. And then the poor woman was like, she was demented she was. It was funny, it was funny. And then and then they all held us and tried to make us tell them which one was which, because they couldn't like - it made it complicated because they hadn't realised it was two of them. So then all the charges they'd done they couldn't prove which one of them it was they were charging, d'you know what I mean. It was just like it was just and yeah just wasting their time really and doing their heads in. Yeah, it was great. Yeah. So much fun.

Are you in contact with any of those people now?

I am actually Facebook friends with one or two people but I haven't really - we did erm, one of the women who was there when I first arrived at Blue Gate, who lives in Nottingham now she, she arranged a reunion at Blue Gate, but I couldn't get there. It was too far from Wales like, you know what I mean. But I think a few people went like, because it's it's, it's like a common now, isn't it? So, I should go actually and have a look, because it's probably quite nice being able to. Yeah, yeah yeah, cos it was lovely woods.

Yeah. And part of the campaign I think I spoke to some women who had stayed on after cruise, who said that they were there partly to get - because they wanted it

back for common land - not just about missiles but about ending patriarchy and about common land.

Oh, yeah. No, absolutely. Yeah. It was, it was, it was really interesting, because, because when I first got down there, there was so many women there. They had police around the perimeter on the outside, and they had the army on the perimeter around the inside when the missiles arrived, to keep them safe. And they needed to because even, even with that we were still breaking do you know what I mean, so so. So the police they had round the outside, they had from several different forces. So the guys who come up from Devon made themselves little benders, and they'd sit in their little benders whittling and we were quite friendly with them, you know, and then the MET, just chopped down everything that you know, like, and tried to burn wet wood and didn't have a clue d'you know what I mean. And they were just brutal. You know, and it was, but it was interesting, because some of the guys, some of the guys who come up from some of the country forces obviously really liked it d'you know what I mean? And we're really happy there like, and so it was a doddle, because they were getting paid as well.

Did you find some of them were quite friendly with you?

Yeah. I mean, and the squaddies d'you know what I mean, because erm because there was a girl on my camp who I'm Facebook friends with now as well. She was, there was only a few of us from Liverpool. So she was from Liverpool as well. And erm and she was the youngest of five kids. So she had four older brothers and they were all in the paratroopers d'you know what I mean? So they were all, I'm not going to tell, say what her name is, but she's probably told her mum by now because, because she ended up getting sent to prison at the same time as me and she was mortified in case her mum found out like. Erm so so yeah, we used to go round the base asking for Scouse McHugh because two of the brothers were on duty in the base d'you know what I mean.

Really?

Yeah, so we used to go round asking for them to see if they were there.

How did they feel about that?

I don't know!

Did we ever find any of them?

No, because they were all called Scouse McHugh because that's how fucking like how erm you know imaginative the squaddies are. Like all the Welsh people are called Taff and all the Scottish people are called Jock and all the Scousers were called Scouse. Yeah, but it was quite funny.

Yeah.

I think they got moved because of Trina being on the base.

I heard they had to rota the squaddies in general every six weeks because they were, they would start to become, some of them would start to become friends with women.

They would be yeah you know, because people were chatting, you know, we did used to chat to them. Yeah. Because then because like they were bored as well d'you know I mean they're only people aren't they. Like, yeah, so. So when there was big actions and people were being brutal it was difficult. It was difficult. I like I'd done, em, it was quite - I found it quite interesting the the effect of doing the protests of seeing the way, you know, like on the big protests, so when we did er like er big there was a big protest about bringing the fence down and we did got a big section of fence down. And erm and people would just, dragging women off across the razor wire like deliberately dragging them across the razor wire and picking them up by their scarves like guys on horses picking women up by their scarves and erm and then I thought - so I had been brought up a pacifist, and I believed in non-violence and I'd done like erm I'd done a study camp once on the situation in South Africa. And erm like the non-violence, you know, the Ghandi movements and the ANC being non-violent. And I really thought having witnessed that, that that actually, you know, there was a place for people to to protect other people in, in, not, not, not allowing that to happen to people. D'you know what I mean, but I also like now, I would say that that's part of the power of non-violence is is that you know, it doesn't matter how violent somebody gets - but it was difficult to watch. It was difficult to watch and not want to sort of react.

What were the sort of things you ended up in prison for and, and also what was prison like?

Okay, so so I did two short stints in prison.

Okay.

So the first thing was cutting the fence I think.

They sent you to prison for cutting the fence? That seems like such a...

Criminal damage, for cutting a hole in the fence.

And were they more kind of trigger happy at the beginning?

They, they fined us and then we didn't pay the fines. And it was a policy, you know, it was it was a big action, loads of women got arrested and then loads of us didn't pay the fines. And I think my friend, my friend, the other scouser

who got sent down the same time as me, so she must have been, like, in our, our little group when we were cutting the fence. Because they did it in, you know, obviously, in batches of people.

Yeah.

And erm, and they just sent her to prison because so many women had refused to pay the fine. And they just sent her and she would have paid the fine because she didn't want to go to prison because she didn't want her mum to find out like (laughs) d'you know what I mean. They just sent her anyway, bless her. So erm, so there was me and her and this Welsh woman who was quite a lot older than us - Myra I think her name was all on the same wing. So we were on the same landing. So we were in Cookham Woods. I lied about my age by a year because I didn't want to go to youth custody because I, you know, you used to go get sent to Holloway, if you were under 21 you got sent to Holloway to the youth custody wing, which was us, which was a lot worse than being in Cookham Wood. Cookham wood was like a country prison. It was like, it was, it was most of the women in Cookham Wood - there was two, two sorts of groups of women at Cookham Wood. There was African women who had been caught smuggling drugs, who were doing a sentence before they got deported. And there was women who'd been done for shoplifting and ridiculous things like that who were just like, you know, so had a long, had a long criminal record so they were shoved in in like you know, they'd get short sentences. So, so it was, it was like a country prison, d'you know what I mean.

Yeah.

It wasn't like - Myra Hindley was in there. But, erm.

Really?

And there was a few other you know, maybe there was one other woman who was a lifer, who was really nice. I think she'd probably killed her husband cos he was a bastard. D'you know what I mean? She was really nice. And so there was a few other women in there. But generally it was - I found the women in prison were quite supportive. They had us because there was loads of us going in at that time, it was really overcrowded. So they, like, we were just in our cells all the time.

Oh really?

None of us had any work. Because you're supposed to get work. But they didn't - did they? I think the first time I was there, maybe we did get a bit of work. Maybe we got to clean the landing. So that just meant like we got out in the morning for a couple of hours to clean the floors. And then we were locked up. And what they did was they let you go in with somebody else in the afternoon. Because they didn't used to do your hours. You never got an

hour's daylight or an hour's exercise. I never got that. No. I mean, we got fed in our cells.

That's terrible!

No, it was it was outrageous. We got fed in our cells. But what they, what they did was they said that we could we could go we could go in with somebody else. So it was all right, because there was three of us, we'd just take it in turns going in with Myra d'you know what I mean. So, so generally, you'd only have every third day you'd be on your own. So I got a month it was quite funny because I got 30 days. And they give, they give Trina 30 days bless her and erm and she didn't even want to be there. And then but the best bit was so we had to do 21 well, 20 days. So yeah, you did two thirds of you sentence in those days. So so we had three weeks to do. D'you know what I mean it wasn't a big deal. So what I learned that first time was was actually being in prison is not a big deal and like it wouldn't put me off if I really wanted to do something the threat of prison would not like, put me off doing it.

That's probably not what they want you to feel - is it?

But the best bit though was after two weeks, somebody fucking paid me fine. And I got out and I was like

No, really?

I was like, 'No, I don't want to go. I'm staying here!' Yeah, I think it was my Grandma. I swear to this day, it was me, it was me Grandma who must have done it because I can't think why anybody else would do it because everybody else knew. You know, yeah, part of our thing was like clogging up the system. And then poor old, so poor old Trina had to stay in who didn't want to be there in the first place and I was like, 'No, let her go instead!' and they were like, 'No you've got to go!' So that was quite funny. So the first time I was in it was it was really, you know, it was easy. It was quite entertaining, d'you know what I mean, it was it was whatever, whatever. The second time I was in was more hard work it was a shorter time and erm,

Same prison or?

Same prison, yeah. But there was nobody I knew on my landing and erm and I'd sort of I'd been partying quite a lot so I was sort of I was a bit coming down and I didn't have any ciggies and I didn't get paid and and they weren't letting us out for any reason at all then. And so it was, you know, you couldn't even like you know - there was a couple of women who gave me the odd rollie so you'd be trying to make one rollie last two days, d'you know what I mean? So it was it was a lot more difficult, but it was still it was all right you know what i mean.

Did you ever have anyone come from the camp who you'd met in prison?

Come to the camp from?

Did anyone who came out of prison come to the camp?

Oh and came to the camp. Yeah, I did hear about women but I don't know. I didn't really, I didn't really know anyone personally. There was a woman called Metal Carol who lived at the camp and probably had mental health problems, you would probably say nowadays d'you know what I mean. She was funny and she went to prison a few times. And, and erm, and, you know, I think it was good for her I think it got her some help. I think I think we accommodated her I think we held her quite well. But I don't, you know, it was like, wow, what is she going to do? Because she would have had to take all the metal off in prison.

What was all her metal?

So she had loads of piercings and she used to wear metal on everything. And it was like a protection for her - d'you know what I mean, it was like a protection.

Okay. Which of course they wouldn't let her do in prison.

No, no. But she survived it like, you know, and she came back to camp.

Oh really!

Metal free. So yeah. So so you know, erm. Yeah, that was interesting.

Did the media ever give - because the conditions that you were in, in prison, sound basically like, they'd go against all like, they sound contraband to what you're supposed to be treated like and against human rights and so on. Did the media ever cover any of that on your behalf?

No, no, no. But to be fair, I don't think I complained about it either. You know, and maybe, maybe we should have done more. You know, with hindsight, maybe that could have been something that we could have insisted on more in terms of - so so I know, the second time I was in, there was industrial action going on.

Right.

And so they said they were always, it was always they were too short staffed to let us out on the on the wing d'you know what I mean. So they couldn't let us out. That's why they kept us locked up 24 hours a day, not 23 hours a day, but 24 hours a day. We were in our cells 24 hours a day, you know, and if you were lucky, you get out to go to the library or something like that, you know, maybe, you know. Or they bring a trolley of books round - because that's how

I survived the second time it was just by reading. So I think they probably were still letting people go in with each other. You know, so that's how the general population stayed sane.

But you didn't have anybody you knew that time?

But because I didn't know anyone then erm, then I was just like, in solitary really for the week. Yeah, yeah, 10 days of solitary. So that was quite hard. But you know, it was character building as as, as they say, yeah. So so yeah, I didn't enjoy that as much. And when I came back from there, actually, they'd started evicting everyone. So it was, it was like a turning point for me, that, that second prison sentence, because they'd started evicting the camps as well.

Tell us a bit about the evictions.

So, so it was great when we were when, before the evictions, we had so much support people just bought us stuff all the time. They asked us what we wanted. You know, sometimes at camp meetings, we'd talk about it. But we'd say if we thought we could get away with it with people, 'Oh bring us drugs and alcohol, we got loads of... Bring us wood for the fire like and drugs and alcohol cos we got loads of everything else.' We had like this big frame tent that we called the donation tent. And it was just full of bags of like woolly jumpers. There was this woman called Pat at Blue Gate who was an older woman who lived in a caravan in Wales. And erm and she was like the mum of the camp. And so she'd organised with a couple of the like more organised women and whatever into doing stuff kind of women. And they got the donation tent organised it like you know, had a bin bag with woolly hats and a bin bag of jumpers and you know, sleeping bags and blankets and you know what I mean? So yeah, whole frame tent full of them.

Wow.

And then one day there was this big wind, and I was sitting there having a cup of tea at the fire, and the frame tent flew over the fence. It was hysterical. It was it was like a great big bird and it did actually go over the fence and into the base.

Did they give it back?

No.

Oh!

I don't think it would have been in a fit state.

It had already flown off.

Yeah, yeah.

Did people ever bring drugs and alcohol?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. No, it's great. Yeah. Yeah and money, you know, we had loads of donations and money. I mean, that was partly, you know, it was a good thing and a bad thing in a way because because you know some women, I think, took the piss a bit, you know, and that caused a bit of bad feeling because you know because people knew people were taking the piss d'you know what I mean.

So between the people bringing it or the women at the gates?

No, no, no, between how it was doled out really, yeah, so there was like I remember, for example, somebody, somebody claiming that they'd had their camera robbed or broken or whatever. And I knew that they were just wanting to buy drugs with the money. And they had a different excuse every week why they needed the money. And yeah, you know what I mean? So, but you know, that's like, you know, and I think some of the women, I think everybody fucking knew what was going on. But some of the women were upset about it. And other women just thought ah, you know, whatever.

Yeah.

And I think that sort of those sorts of things is why I didn't like the camp meetings. Because then you get into all that, like, personal politics and all that like, you know, and group dynamics. And you wonder how much as well, there's a little bit of wind up in there. You know. And now, knowing what I know about infiltration and stuff it wouldn't surprise me if the people who were allegedly spending the money on drugs where there were deliberately cranking it up. You know because that is a good tactic, like.

Yeah. Tell me a bit more about - do you think there were infiltrations of the camp?

Oh, absolutely.

Oh really?

Well, apart from anything else, there was The Sun reporter. The Sun reporter who drove her car into a into a ditch. I don't know if she did it on purpose or not. But it wouldn't surprise me if she hadn't of done it on purpose. So she drove her car into the ditch, and then was all upset about it so so women were being supportive.

Yeah.

And giving her a hug and pulled her car out the ditch and then the headline news was like, you know, 'Sun Reporter Assaulted by Lesbians.' Do you know

what I mean? And stuff like that happened a lot, I think with reporters, there was a few, a few instances where tabloid, tabloid journalists sensationalised stuff.

Yeah. And does that include living at the camp and things?

I think there might have been, there might have been one or two often who'd come for the weekend, and stayed for the weekend, or whatever and just and there were, you know, there was a lot of people came down. You know, from very sort of straight lives erm, and erm had a great time, or, you know, whatever. Yeah.

And did you feel there was political infiltration from interested parties on the left or the right, like, you know, just other people trying to reflect their agendas?

I actually, I actually don't you know, apart from like at some of the camp meetings, things got a bit distracted around stuff. Some of which I think is normal. But it wouldn't surprise me if erm, if some of it hadn't been erm, like a bit of a wind up and a distraction. But mostly, I think, I think it would have been difficult. I'm sure it must have been tried. But I think it would have been difficult because of the way the camp was organised. I don't think it really would have made any difference to be honest.

Tell me, tell me what you mean by that, that's really interesting.

Because it was erm, because it was very open. And because it was very I would like to say democratic, but I don't actually like democracy. I don't like the - it was run by consensus really. So, so - and it was, it was very anarchic. So, so like, you know, if you wanna go and do that, then go and do it. And if you wanna go and do that, then go and and there wasn't any, any there wasn't any people in charge.

Yeah.

You know, so.

So you can go mess up things at one gate and it wouldn't affect the other gates?

So it wouldn't matter how much got messed up really. Because, because, because you couldn't really mess it up. D'you know what I mean, like, what was there to mess up?

Yeah.

And there was no, you know, you couldn't take out the leaders because there weren't any leaders. Well, there were obviously there was people who, who were seen as leaders by the media and things but you know, there was lots of

us there who were into, we were all in there for a reason. Erm, and so all the actions were all just spontaneous. You know, there wasn't like a policy or

So it couldn't be leaked to the...

You know, there wasn't like a policy or a you know, a strategy. So how could you, you couldn't manipulate it. You couldn't, you know.

You couldn't find out about it and then tell the police what's gonna happen on Monday or whatever could you.

Obviously, then when there were big actions, you know, like circle the base or whatever, but they were - they were like, you know, if you're going to organise a demonstration in London d'you know what I mean and so so they were big.

They work differently anyway don't they.

Yes. So there wasn't really, I mean, the real coup was when the women got into the silos and danced on the silos. So I think that was just before I got there, maybe. But that was amazing that that was erm

So tell us a bit about that.

Well I don't know, I know one of the women at Blue Gate was involved with it.

What did she tell you?

So she, oh just just how easy it was really, really how easy. How they couldn't really believe that they'd managed to do it.

(Laughs). So what did they do? What did it mean? What were the silos?

Because the silos were where the missiles were kept.

Oh, okay.

So, so it was, obviously it was a big airbase, and there was a lot of people living on there. So it was American Air Base, wasn't it? I think so. So there's a lot of people living on there. And there was a lot of toing and froing and er, they'd been building the silos to house to house the missiles and the missile convoys.

And there wasn't even really fences at first was there - someone said there wasn't?

I don't know yeah. So definitely, it was the whole thing was fenced when I was there. And, and in fact, when I moved there, the fence was in, was in, you know, there was squaddies all the way around the inside the fence and there was police all around the outside.

Oh gosh, okay.

But obviously, they couldn't keep that up indefinitely. So the police from outside the fence left, and then the squaddies on the inside of the fence thinned out a bit, like so then - it was all lit, the whole the whole thing was lit. But then there was a high higher security area around by where the silos were. So that was round, sort of between Blue Gate and Main Gate. So around past Green Gate was the main security bit where the silos were, I think, and that was then, you know, double fenced and razor wired and dog patrols.

How did they get in then? How did they do it?

Well, you know, where there's a will there's a way, you know. I think they might have gone in, you know, not through the most direct routes, but they might have gone in somewhere else, and then made their way across the airfield, possibly. And then got in from the other side, if you know what I mean, where they weren't necessarily being looked for.

Yeah. And then what they they had a dance on top of them?

They had a little circle dance on the top, and there was some amazing photos.

Yeah.

Yeah, that I've seen. Yeah. Yeah. So, so like I got in, near there when we went in with the twins with the Scottish twins. That was in we were in near there, because they were from Main Gate so we went over to Main Gate for that action. But erm. Yeah, it was, it was quite, you know, we did have a lot of fun, like, running in through the gate was one of my favourite things. But you know, quite often we'd come home from the pub and we'd just cut a little hole in the fence and see how far we could get before we got found out like. Yeah. And we do things like, like, a few women would. So we'd blockade we'd blockade the gate regularly, you know, so a car would come and it would have to stop because they had to keep the gates shut because otherwise obviously we would run in so they had to keep the gate shut. So when vehicles came to get in, they had to obviously stop so then we'd lie in front of them. So then they'd be like ... then they'd have to phone Newbury police station to get the police to come up to drag us off. So so sometimes we just do it and we'd spray paint the back of the car or whatever. Yeah.

Just a colour or sentence?

Oh, you know, like, women's peace symbol or whatever, you know, sometimes or whatever 'Greenham Women are Everywhere.' Yeah, whatever you know, but um, but um I don't think we did it to private cars. But I remember me friend from Liverpool coming down and she got, she got arrested because she'd let somebody's tyres down. We were blockading and

she let the tyres down. So, and then her name was Smith so they didn't believe that she'd given the right name so, so, but eventually they let her go. But, er, it was quite funny.

We didn't actually talk about the evictions.

In fact I think it was the police cars tyres that she let down. It was, the police had come to pick somebody up. Yeah. And then and then she let the police tyres down and they weren't very happy about that.

No I bet.

No, they weren't very happy about that. And then when she, when she gave her name Smith, they definitely weren't very happy so.

We didn't talk about the evictions. We got as far, as, up to the evictions.

We got distracted. So, so, so yeah, so we had like loads of stuff. Like I built meself a bender when I got down there. So I lived in the, in the communal tent in the tipi for a while. And then - so we used to build, we called them benders, but really they were just like, structures of sticks. You'd wrap loads of blankets around, and then cover it with polythene. And I had a couple of pallets in there. And then loads of bedding d'you know what I mean. And I mean, it was really comfy, d'you know what I mean I had little photos up on the wall.

What time of year was this?

So I got there in November.

Well, what so this is through the winter?

All through the winter yeah. And it was, there was a lot of snow and frost and that.

And it was comfy?

Yeah, no, it was lovely. It was toasty.

Really?

Yeah, no, it's brilliant. It's was great. It was a great, like an illustration that you don't need all, like anything really other than, like, polythene and blankets like.

Amazing.

So it was great. So d'you know what I mean that was fine. And we used to cook on the fire every night. And we had loads of food, we had loads of kitchen equipment d'you know what I mean. We just saw everything we needed really. But then in the - must have been the spring or maybe in the summer sometime during the summer they started evicting. They start they got erm,

This is the bailiffs?

Yeah, bailiffs came in, and they you know, they got an injunction. And it wasn't, we weren't able to challenge it anymore. And they just used to come every morning with a big, you know, big bin wagon with them, the munchie, we used to call it the munchie wagon. And they'd just chuck everything, anything you couldn't pick up and carry away they'd just chuck it all in. So I think the first time they did

So all the donations?

So everything went. The first time they did it, they must have had a fleet of bloody wagons because we had so much stuff there. Do you know what I mean? So I think somebody gave us a camper van. So so for a while we used to be able to just chuck everything we, you know, so, so then we started living in small tents and bivy bags and but it obviously not half as comfortable as being able to have like, you know, a bender with all your own gear. And so erm I was in prison the first time it happened so somebody said they packed all my stuff up. They packed all the stuff up because they knew it was going to happen.

Right.

They packed everyone's personal stuff up and took it down to Green Gate. So Green Gate was just full because Green Gate was privately owned land where people had permission to be.

Oh really I didn't know that.

Yeah, somebody bought a chunk of woodlands at Green Gate.

One of the Greenham Women?

Or a sympathiser, d'you know what I mean. Or somebody sympathetic to the camp owned a chunk of woods at Green Gate. And so they had permission to be there. So that was okay so they couldn't evict Green Gate. So they called it the sanctuary. It was called the sanctuary. And erm and that's where all people's personal stuff, and I did go and have a look but there was like, hundreds of bin bags with stuff in. And I had a little root through a few of them I just thought I'll just - do you know what I mean. I wasn't attached to, I wasn't that attached to me stuff like you know what I mean. Yeah, so some

poor bastard who would have ended up in a munchie wagon anyway. Yes. So then obviously, it was more like hard work, you know, because then you could only have enough food for the day. And d'you know, I mean, all of that, like, so.

That must have been really expensive for the government as well and the tax payer. Because that went on for a long time didn't it - weeks or months?

Well I don't know. Yeah. A long time. A long time. They did keep it up. Yeah. And, and that sort of, I think that did for I mean, I don't know because I'd sort of, I'd sort of moved away anyway. The erm, the miners strike was going on, and I my sort of attention erm, erm, went then to do a lot of work with that and I moved back up to Liverpool and but, I used to go down as a visitor still to Greenham sometimes.

Did you take lessons from Greenham or anything, was anything useful from Greenham that you took to other campaigns or?

Well I thought one of the, one of the big things I thought for Greenham was that it politicised a lot of women. So a lot of women came down there because they were worried about, they were worried the nuclear the threat of nuclear war. And erm, and then they went away erm, you know, more politicised about lots of things about the miners say for example, about erm you know, women's issues.

Yeah. Women's rights movement presumably hugely. Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. Violence against women. Yeah, lots of lots of and also, you know, like I said about the press, you know, because the press sensationalised the place so much, that anybody who'd been there to visit would know, would know how, how sensationalised that was.

Yeah, yeah.

And then they can you know, then you can make the, make the sidestep. Like, well, if they're lying about that then how many other things are they lying about d'you know what I mean?

That's really interesting isn't it.

So erm, yeah, so - like it really taught me, it taught me like a lot about about what we need, you know what we need to be happy.

Which is not stuff?

Which is food isn't it basically food and shelter, food and shelter. So so we had a big fire we had a big fire that we used to sit around overnight. And we used to cook on the fire when I got down there somebody would you cook

every night d'you know what I mean, big pot of whatever and everybody would sit around and eat. And erm and then it started getting light in the evenings. And you could see all the bits of fire in the food and we all stopped doing it d'you know what I mean everybody just heat up a tin of soup for themselves or whatever. But erm but you know, it was great. It was great. Like I remember making a big a big after they sent the chicken - the cooked turkey away I made a big veggie curry for Christmas dinner. So so yeah, and there was an American woman I remember her making a really nice satay sauce one time.

Wow.

So yeah, no.

It sounds like it was partly the connections with the people that made it?

Yeah. So we were living in community and obviously, you know, there were, there were,

People who made that more difficult?

Who didn't get it, but that that was the nice thing about having all the different gates was like everyone could find the gate where they slotted into.

And you could move on if you wanted to for a while sort of thing.

Yeah, d'you know what I mean, yeah, I think yeah, yeah. And so we had a house up in London as well we had the Greenham house up in London up in Camden. And yeah, it was great, because we used to, we used to erm, cos I was signing on like, we used to get our gyros and we go up to London for the weekend and like, spend our gyros and we'd go round, we'd go round like erm, like benefits and things and be celebrities do you know what I mean. And then we'd go back to camp and we'd run out of money. And er, it was great. And live off the donations. That's what I mean, it was fun, like, it was a great, we has a great time. And you felt like you were doing something useful at the same time. So.

Do you think it could happen now? Is it possible?

Well, I'm interested, like, I'm interested like erm, like, you know, in the anti-fracking movement, and, you know, other movements, like there was a short for a short time the Occupy movement was it was doing some some big squats and stuff like that. Because I think that sort of thing is, you know, is is not just the way to protest, but the way it feels to live now, in this, in this world. Yeah. So.

But they don't organise the same way do they, they're not women, women only, for example.

Well,

And also not being, it being harder to be on benefits. I wonder if that was those two things that were a big part of it?

I think, I think, I think, I think the lessons, one of the lessons that the system, if you like took from from that is that, you know, they, they made it into a full time job - signing on was made into a full time job.

Yeah.

But to be fair, we probably could've lived there on donations. I think, I think taking, taking that the easy access to benefits out of the equation probably made a big difference, actually, to whether it could happen now. But you know, people still do manage to erm to live on protest camps.

Yes, absolutely they do.

Erm I haven't, I haven't been round any of them so I don't know erm, I don't know what sort of how people on those camps would make a living or would manage to you know, whether they'd be relying on donations or, or what. But you know, we ate we, you know, like, yeah we got our our gyros, but we didn't have any expenses so, so we didn't really need them d'you know what I mean. So,

And what do you, what about the the nature,

I think, I think they've tried to like I think the Blairite government did a lot in terms of trying to erm, trying to erm, trying to create a stakeholder society, and some of us managed to stay vegetarians and then a lot of people started eating meat. You know, if you know what I mean, in terms of investing like, you know, getting mortgages and yeah, and then you get trapped into whatever, whatever.

Yep.

So, so I, I erm, yeah, I'm, I'm, like, I, I live my life now, I've got less and less stuff in it again. And it's quite freeing. And it's also it also makes it quite hard in terms of like - I live in one place in the summer where I have work and I live another place in the winter, where I have some work there. Which in some ways is nice, because I don't think I've ever been very good at staying in one place anyway. I think that's just me. But it's also a bit insecure, in terms of like being in a state of flux all the time. Yeah, it is quite hard work sometimes.

It takes quite a lot of extra thought - doesn't it? Sometimes.

But erm, yeah. But it also means that you're not trapped. Trapped in you know, it does, it does mean that I do feel like I have a lot of choices in me life, even though maybe people would think that that's a difficult thing. It also, you know, it does open up, open up a lot of choice.

Yeah.

And a lot of knowing that erm yeah, I haven't got to do this. So I've not got the fear of losing stuff that I think keeps people tied in to the capitalist system.

Yeah, yeah, I can see that.

And I don't see, you know, I think it's really coming clear now in the last, in, just in the last year or two. And it's going to become more and more clear that the capitalist system, you know, is so unsustainable. Erm, you know, and is, is, is, is destroying the environment so quickly that erm you know, the planet won't be able to sustain human life.

Yeah.

For for how many more generations? None, looking at it like erm, so, so we need to change radically and quickly, so erm. So I think there's a lot of lessons to be learned from Greenham there you know it's, in terms of people being able to live collectively.

Yeah.

I don't know. I don't know about the man thing the man and woman thing.

I was going to say, do you think patriarchy is a part of that? I've always thought capitalism and patriarchy are symbiotic.

Absolutely. Yeah.

So it but,

But I also believe that men don't have to buy into all that shit.

Yeah, I totally agree.

But I have, you know, I have spent maybe - I spent about three years living with a bunch of hippies in in West Wales. And erm I found, I found it unsustainable on the basis that, that the gender stereotyping was just so ridiculously patriarchal still.

Really? In what way? What ...

Like that men do men's things, women do women's things. And you just think oh for fuck sake boys. You know.

Yeah.

And they're also still into their machinery and not all of them, but you know, most of them are just so still into the machinery. And you know, and you just look at that sort of, you know, The Centre for Alternative Technology, well technology is not going to save us sorry, but it's not, you know, and erm. Yeah, I find it quite interesting really. And sad. At the same time.

So what was it like to be in an all women environment?

Oh it was great.

Because actually, very few women experience that, I think, and I can only think of specific, I can remember specific times that I've been in a all female company and

What, like girls school? (Laughs).

I was thinking more about because I'm in a feminist theatre company, sometimes we do shows where the whole crew and company and you work them for like two months and its all women.

Oh that must be lush.

It's wonderful! But it is - you realise there is a dip, and then okay, and then when you go back into a show where there's men in it and you think this is a whole different vibe in the room. Even the way the women and the men behave with each other. It just changes it again. And I just wondered if, yeah.

Although to be fair, like I've worked in a, I worked in the women's college, there was a guy who, funnily enough was my boss, who, who worked there, but it was mostly women. Yeah. And the students were all women. And it was nice d'you know what I mean. But, it still had shit going on.

Exactly, yes. Its not like its a doddle.

And like I've worked in a room full of blokes, with only blokes and and that was alright as well.

Yeah, yeah.

But in a different kind of way. You know what I mean, so, so,

It's not necessarily a rule of thumb is it or a strict rule.

Yeah, but I think given a choice I would choose to work with women or to live with women or whatever. Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. So how do you think that changed Greenham, or changed women when they got to Greenham?

I think it was really nice. I think it was very empowering for a lot of women at Greenham. And because, because then all the practical stuff - because I can imagine, having my experience of hippies then, if there'd been blokes there, they would have done all the making fire, they would have done all the building, they would have hogged all the fucking interesting jobs. And women would have done the cooking and the tidying up and the fetching water and getting food together. And then, you know, the blokes would have taken all the drugs, drank all the alcohol, and the women would have been left minding the kids, d'you now what I mean. Instead of which, you know, the women all minded the kids, and they took all the drugs and alcohol, and they did all the, built all the fires and did all the building, d'you know I mean, it was - and I think erm, you know, I think there was a bit of bitchiness over, you know, people who liked to do press interviews and you know, people who saw themselves as leaders and stuff like that. Yeah, but I think that would have been erm, I think that would have been more if there'd had been blokes there d'you know what I mean.

Yeah.

I think erm, I think it was very empowering probably for a lot of women who came down there who hadn't grown up in a, like a liberated sort of environment, just to see the things that women can do, do you know what I mean, and that women don't need blokes d'you know what I mean to make fires and make structures or, yeah.

That's quite a big deal - isn't it? Actually.

See, I don't think it is. Because it's sort of been my experience. Like I was, I was talking to my friend who is one of the hippies that I have issues with. Erm because I thought I had a chip on me shoulder and then had this conversation with my friend and I thought, no, it's fucking real.

(Laughs).

It's actually real and I feel better now. Because it is actually real. Because in my family, like in my family, like I grew up with two brothers. But erm, and they're both straight, d'you know what I mean. But I am the butch one of the family because neither of them can change a fucking plug.

(Laughs).

So like I did all the bloody maintenance - I must be a mug, I think I must be a mug. Because I did all the maintenance on me mum's house. D'you know what I mean? I'm just thinking I've got two brothers, why am I doing - you know, why have I ended up doing everything? And now I'm looking after her as well.

So you're doing the traditionally male and female jobs there?

But, but like my older brother, when erm, when him and his wife had their first kids, she had a better job. So he stayed at home and, and it's really lovely because now he's he's one day a week - he works four days a week, and one day a week, he looks after his grandson for me niece. And it's really nice do you know what I mean? And then I had this conversation with my friend and she was like, you know, looking after children is women's work and, and the men do the hard work because women have the babies, and they can't do the hard work. And I just thought ah - d'you know what I mean, if the women have had the babies, they need the man to be able to cook fucking dinner. Do you know what I mean? So they don't have to do all that, you know, and they need the bloke to be able to look after the kids. So when you've had your baby the bloody bloke can do a bit of work. It's crazy. So anyway, so I think there's quite a lot of that probably erm going on erm. Like Greenham was great in that way in that, like, everybody just did everything. And I also think in terms of aggression, and it being a non-violent place I think that was probably easier to keep that together with women, not that - like, like, I can be quite aggressive sometimes or whatever, d'you know what I mean? But I just think that that was, that was erm easier and more clear. And also, that it was harder then for the, for the police and the army, to provoke violence or to, or to be seen to be able to justify their own violence. Yeah, I think, really, to be able to justify their own violence against women and kids d'you know what I mean? Was just - how can they justify that like? So I think it was a bit of an eye opener for them really and their tactics and stuff.

It's really interesting. Yeah, I can totally see that.

But I'd like to think, I'd like to think that, you know, that really for us as a planet to move on, that men need to be able to embrace that, you know, and that we, as women need to be able to, like let men into, into our erm into our, into our work. To be able to, to ...

Well it was sounding like to me that you would know yourself very well after you'd lived at Greenham because you'd know if you were the kind of person who liked building stuff, or didn't really need things or did like a bit of luxury, all sorts of things about yourself, that you wouldn't necessarily get to find out. And men also don't get to find out if you're the kind of guy who quite likes looking after children, or you know, would quite like to do some embroidery or whatever. Yeah, we're all being kept away from our, from knowing ourselves. And therefore knowing each other, I suppose. Which is quite a powerful thing about Greenham feels like to me looking, I mean I might be romanticising it a bit, but ...

No, no, no, I think I think it's true, you know. And I think like living erm, living simply like that - and living in such a communal way is is really empowering and erm, and enlightening, if you like.

Do you feel like you got to know people in a very, in a different way? Or it allows you to know people better in a way?

It's difficult - isn't it? Because, because erm, because erm, you know, it was a long time ago. And I've you know, there's been a lot of water under the bridge since, but I certainly think it was a big step on the way, you know, to be able to erm - yeah to just, to, to look at how we live, how we live, and erm why we do what we do, a little bit. And where different people come from. It was, it was a, it was erm, you know, because women did come down there from, from many different walks of life and like most women were white middle class, d'you know what I mean?

Yeah.

But erm, but not by all means not, not all.

Yeah.

All - and like because the miners strike came up we had quite a lot of miners wives groups came down. And you know, then we went and worked with them, and that was like, an eye opener. For all of us. Like, yeah, so erm, I remember erm, I remember erm, me dad's auntie came down with Cheltenham Ladies for Peace and like blew my cover because I was like this, proper Scouser. And then there was this voice, (speaking in a comic posh voice) "Has anyone Hannah Schafer?" And it was me dad's auntie. "Cheltenham Ladies for Peace in the mini bus!"

(Laughs). Did she lose you some cred?

She lost me a lot of cred.

(Laughs).

Luckily not everybody saw her. But it was great. I mean, it was great. And then another auntie of mine, me mum's sister came down from erm from Glasgow with er, with erm, I think a bunch of them came down and then me auntie and er another young woman came down who was proper, like Glaswegian.

So did that get your credit back up a bit?

Yeah. So then my cred went back up a bit. So er, so er - but it was nice d'you know what I mean. It was nice that it was like a big, a big, diverse sort of, sort

of bunch, and everybody was welcomed. And everybody, you know, there wasn't like, I didn't feel any way there was like, you've gotta be this way or that way d'you know what I mean? And like most of us at Blue Gate were quite young, but there were some older women there as well. And erm, and I think we were quite accepting of people and like Metal Carol, for example. And she wasn't the only person there with mental health problems who the community just looked after you know.

That's really nice.

Yeah. Yeah. You know, and like I remember there was a woman from London, who came down it was erm, there was a couple of sisters and this older woman who was a friend of theirs and they lived in like in West London and one of them was in like a long term licensed squat. And then the sisters had a flat in Chelsea, which we used to go to stay at sometimes and it was really nice. But erm, yeah, but erm so the woman from the licensed squat, she had some issues with some of the drug taking d'you know what I mean. But it was good. Because she used to say, you know, and actually, like, now I can see where if I was there, I'd have had the same issues. But it was nice, because she could say it. Like, you know, in a sort of supportive sort of, whatever d'you know what I mean, and if things looked like they were getting a bit out of hand, you know, there were people there to try and hold space. D'you know what I mean. So, so, so it was anarchy and anarchy is okay because it has, it has everybody is part of it. And it's coming from a place of, of caring and whatever, rather than a place of survival of the fittest.

Yes, absolutely. Taking - my understanding is that it has always been that it's sort of, taking personal responsibility for your actions and how they'll impact. Which actually is a very caring thing to do - isn't it?

Yeah, no, absolutely. And yeah, so yeah, and looking after people. D'you know what I mean, if that's - so you look after yourself first, obviously. But yeah and then looking after others as well. Yeah, yeah.

So what made you leave in the end then?

I got a bit fed up with the arguments and camp meetings. And I think, you know, if I'm being completely honest, it wasn't so much fun when we were getting evicted every morning. So, so that tactic worked. So I did go back regularly. But then, you know, there was other stuff going on and my life just sort of progressed elsewhere really, so erm, yeah.

So if you were - this is a bit of a, this is a bit of a segue. But if you were going to see the camp artistically represented,

Yeah.

You know, we talked about the film before we started recording this - how, what would you actually want to see? What would the things be that you'd want it to show?

Ah, I think a weaving, a weaving, yeah.

Why? Tell me more about that, that's lovely that.

Because that's what like, yeah, that's what it was really.

Like a tapestry? Or something looser than that?

Something looser than that I think, you know.

Like a web?

Yeah, like a web. Yeah. I think a web definitely. And because we used to weave stuff into the fence, you know, and it was like, all our lives were woven together. And yeah - so it's funny I worked with a woman quite a few years later, who was quite a bit younger than me, who'd also lived at Greenham, but obviously at a completely different time to me. So when she lived there it was later and there was only the Main Gate camp left again. So but it was quite nice d'you know what I mean, because erm, because where we were working as well, sort of, was a sort of Greenham ethos type place as well. Erm, so, erm.

And was there anyone that you'd, that you both, was anyone there still there that you both knew, or any overlap?

I'm trying to think I mean, like, I know, people who she knew who were also there, but no, I don't I don't quite know, no.

But you're right. That is a real interlacing - isn't it?

But also, it was nice, because erm, because we were sort of comfortable, because we sort of you could know you were coming from a similar, similar place if you like.

Yeah.

Yeah. And I think erm - I think that's when I was a bit shocked when I got to West Wales and I started hanging out with all those hippies because it's just not, you know, because you think it is the same because they're all into like, you know, living with the fire and yeah, whatever and then you realise no, actually, it's completely like different like, yeah.

They challenge the same things?

Yeah. Yeah.

It's quite interesting. Yeah. And they're all still living with male violence. You know, with violent partners. And you just think ah for fuck sake, d'you know what I mean?

Yeah. That's a real shame. Is there is this sort of a moment or an evocative sort of something that sums up Greenham for you like a really,

Well, I think fire yeah, yeah. Erm, living outdoors, I think. Yeah. Even though I've done living outdoors, differently now d'you know what I mean, but erm, but yeah, I think fire and cooking on fire and, and sitting sitting around the fire in women's company.

Yeah.

I think in women's company, I think is yeah.

Did it make a big? I mean, I know a lot - I've spoken to some women who are like, who it was a big part of their coming out and, and realising they were either realising they were lesbian, or realising that there were lesbians you could go to and hang out with - which they definitely didn't have in their life before.

So, so the way my sexuality panned out was was I'd sort of, I'd sort of just realised I was a lesbian, not long before I discovered Greenham so in fact it was like 'Wahey!'

(Laughs).

D'you know what I mean, so it was great for me, because erm, you know, because where I lived was quite homophobic. And I had met some lesbians there and it's quite funny because everybody like through throughout my, my erm, my erm straight phase - because I did try to be straight for a while because that's what you did.

Yeah.

Loads of people, like, just assumed that I was a lesbian, d'you know what I mean. Like loads of people. And like, like, I even had one guy who accused me of having an affair with his girlfriend, d'you know what I mean. I had a big row with him. And erm, d'you know what I mean. And it nearly came like, he nearly kicked my head in d'you know what I mean. You know, and that I was just like, so, so like, it took me a while to realise that actually that you know, yeah.

No smoke without fire?

Well whatever, yeah. You know, they obviously yeah it was - because I didn't realise I could be, you know that it was a possibility. So, so then when I realised it was a possibility, and I was in Liverpool and I did know one or two lesbians, but d'you know what I mean, it was quite a - it is quite a homophobic community. So, so even though now we have the gay quarter, which is by where I grew up, it's still I think if you're from Liverpool, it's you know, well - I've been away for a while so hopefully, it has changed a bit actually but erm. But you know, the last time when I was living there at the turn of the century some young lad was murdered in his fucking flat. So you know what I mean? Like it is, it is not nice. You know, and I think particularly if you're from Liverpool, I think people are more tolerant of people coming from elsewhere. I think that's the same in any community. You know, erm it's all right other people - other people can be whatever they want to be but like we're not like that - d'you know what I mean? So, so erm, so, it was great for me to be to go to Greenham and just see, like lesbian written on a tent.

Oh, really?

Like, it was a badge of pride, not something you had to sort of, like, keep your head down about, d'you know what I mean?

That must have been an experience for a lot of women.

Oh, absolutely. Well, my experience of Greenham was erm, was erm, like, all the women, virtually every woman who came there had a dabble whilst she was there.

(Laughs).

Do you know what I mean, and like, a lot of them went away, and, and went back to the straight world. And some of them went away and stayed lesbian, you know, you know. But, but like, sexuality is such a fluid thing anyway, because I know a lot of women who've been lesbian for a long time, who then end up with a bloke, d'you know what I mean and that's, you know, that's cool, whatever. I think sexuality is a fluid thing anyway and that the majority of people are probably quite bisexual. And it's, you know, it's, it's societies, whatever that makes people have to be one thing or another. And I'm sure you know, there are people at either end of the spectrum but most people I think are - well my experience of Greenham is most people are very fluid. And I know when I lived in Brighton, some of my, my gay friends used to say, 'What's the difference...' The big, the big standing joke is, 'What's the difference between a straight man and a bisexual man? Two and a half pints of lager.'

(Laughs).

Which I think is also quite true. Yes. So, so d'you know what I mean, so.

That must have been great as well if you are the people, that women were arriving, that were open for being,

Well I had a great time there I had, like lots of very open relationships d'you know what I mean. I practised non-monogamy while I was there, it was nice. I was able to be - we were all open with each other about whatever, whatever. You know, it's not how I've chosen to live since being there. But I wouldn't like knock it as a way to live. And it wouldn't be like I would say I wouldn't do it again d'you know what I mean, if, if I was living in that sort of community.

And did you feel like it caused any friction or do you think it actually helped to kind of give the group cohesion and bonding in a way? Like, I don't know if that - or neither?

I just think it is what it was. I think we were a very loving community. And I think it helped, it probably did help to bond the community in a lot of ways, yeah. I'm sure it caused friction as well. And yeah, a bit of friction between individual people or whatever d'you know what I mean but erm. But mostly, I would say I found it a very positive, a very positive thing, I think. And not, not, not sort of exploitative or d'you know what I mean or seedy or anything like that.

Quite mutually agreed?

No, absolutely.

Sort of collectively agreed almost?

Yeah, yes. Yeah.

Which is interesting as well about the Green Movement. Isn't that I know, there's a lot of my friends who are in the radical Green Movement. Also not all of them at all again, but lots of them do have a polygamous lifestyle and feel very strongly about that as part of affirming their of their way of living. And I think the police really exploited that and they had, they definitely were infiltrated by men who got some of those women pregnant. Of course, that couldn't happen at Greenham.

No.

Because no, penises. So that's, I just think that's interesting. I suppose it's sort of an, I mean, obviously, that is - you can keep, if you can keep talking about anything you want but I know I need to, or want to ask you - yeah, obviously anything else that comes to you, we've still got like, half an hour so feel free to keep talking. Because it's fascinating, you've been really brilliant. But, um, the last question we are trying to get everyone to answer at least at some point is, do you think it's - can you explain why you think it's important, if you do, that Greenham is remembered and women, other women younger women get to hear about it?

Yeah, em, I think it's nice that Greenham is remembered. Erm I think it was, it was - it's difficult because I was there, d'you know what I mean? So you can't see it from a, from an objective viewpoint if you like, but it was erm, you know, it was erm - I think, I think there's two, I think there's two separate things. So I think as a, as a protest movement, it was erm it was massive, and it was inspiring, and it was sort of successful, in apart from anything else just in its longevity, you know. So like, the Occupy movement, it would have been great if that could have carried on. You know, and if it was like, and maybe it'll flare up again, but erm. But, you know, you see the problems with homelessness and you just think, why aren't we fucking just squatting places - d'you know what I mean? Where I live, like, most of my village is empty in the winter. And there's loads of people got second homes, and I know half of them are because I work with their fucking kids all summer. And I just think I should just go and live in one of their fucking houses over the winter d'you know what I mean, for a laugh - maybe I will next year but erm. But I just think, erm, you know, when you look at the inequality in the world, I think Greenham could be an inspiration, as, as a, as a, as a way to, to live, if you like, you know, it was a good way to live. Having said that, I didn't find it sustainable, but whatever d'you know what I mean, it's still erm, it's quite inspiring, in terms of living communally and living collectively, and living simply, and living on the land.

Which are all things we need to learn how to do.

And of being able to sustain a large group of people, a large, diverse group of people with a common goal, but with everybody being able to, to have a different focus. I think that was really nice. I think that was a really big thing was that all you know, we could all come from different places, and be doing it our own way. And I know, like, the party gate, where I lived, was looked down upon by the Green Gate, or we felt by anyway, the Green Gate and, you know, the cosmic women at Green Gate, and they were superior to us. And the, you know, the politicians, at the Yellow Gate were superior to us. And then it was all straight women up at the gate up at the top, up at Orange Gate.

Oh and that had the creche and things - didn't it? Quite a family a family sort of feel.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Family gate.

Okay.

Yeah. So erm, you know it, but it was, it was all nice. It was all it was all like, even though whatever, you know, we all had our own little things, and everybody could find their place within that.

Yeah.

And that was nice, as well, was that there was room for everybody that everybody was accommodated.

Yeah.

Even the journalists and the infiltrators were accommodated and hugged it as well d'you know what I mean! (Laughs). And I thought that was great. You know, and I think that, you know, the fact that it lasted for as long as it did, you know, it lasted as long as the base was there. The gate, and that just goes to show how well that that worked.

Yeah.

So I think like it's inspiration for organisational lack of it, then I think that's, that's, that's really nice. And then erm - so that's just like it on its own and then just to have it as as women's space, you know, just as a, as a - and maybe that is why it lasted so long because it was women's space.

Yeah.

And I think having it so so there's all the all the beauty of its of its political structure ...

Yeah,

... if you like and it's political focus and all that. And then there's just the fact that it was women's space and it was women, organising and living and all the practical side of that, that happening is also really inspirational.

Yeah.

And erm, and erm, and yeah, and can be a great, hopefully a great erm like teaching to the law, or whatever for erm for, you know, for women who were coming on coming on. Because like I, you know, erm the patriarchy is in its death throes, you know, and women need to, to step up if you like. I'd like to say women need to seize power, but but the thing, the thing I find with the way the feminist movement has been distracted over the years is that is that we can't get caught up with demanding equality with men. You know, that's, that's a distraction that's maintaining the patriarchy that's using women to maintain the patriarchy. And that's what the fucking problem is, not what the answer is. And erm, and that we need to be looking - and I think that young feminists now are maybe hopefully seeing that. It's quite interesting, because, because I think my mum's generation burnt their bras d'you know what I mean. And erm yeah, and then, you know, we got Margaret Thatcher. And Theresa May, yeah. And it's like, it's like, it's like, no, women don't need to be equal to men. The feminine needs to be equal to the masculine.

Yes, that's, that's interesting.

That's what feminism is.

Yeah.

I think so.

Hmm like that!

Oh, I like that, I might - you can quote that!

I might close it there, that's lovely. And it is, it's about being more creative. And if, our liberating needs to be more creative about how we make the next era isn't because, yeah.

And it's like, so so maybe then, so maybe then, what I love about Greenham was it was like the soft power, encountering the hard power.

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

D'you know what I mean, yeah. And the hard power trying to smash the soft power, but it just kept going 'Blablalabla' through the holes in their fence. Yeah, no, it was quite nice like that. So that's probably yeah, quite a good place to end it.