

Ann and Sally Bell

(Interviewer)

Okay. So let's just do very quickly, erm ... how you heard about Greenham, and, how you arrived at Greenham?

Ann:

Okay, well, I was living at Reading and working at the university doing a PhD. And I just vaguely heard about - I think I read something in the Reading Evening Post and thought that sounds interesting. And it was mainly the fact that there were loads of women. That was what sounded really interesting to me because I was just on the point of thinking I might well be a lesbian, but I wasn't quite sure. So I thought well, be good place to go and hang out. And erm yeah, that was it really.

(Interviewer)

And how did you actually get there?

(Ann)

Got on a bus, got off at Yellow Gate, and sort of stood around feeling stupid for a while. Lots of mud and lots of women looking dirty. And then somebody picked us - someone turned up in a van who was friendly. Everyone else pretty much ignored me. Which was kind of a Yellow Gate thing at that point.

(Sally)

Yes!

(Ann)

They were so fed up with visitors.

(Both Laugh).

(Ann)

But this woman from, turned out was from Orange Gate called Marian was really friendly and wanted help to get her water into the back of her van. So she offered me a lift back around to Orange Gate. And that's where I stayed after that.

(Interviewer)

And what was so particular about Orange Gate from the other gates?

(Ann)

It was quite - we had a lot of visitors from overseas. And although the benders were right by the fence, there was also a lot of space and gorse bushes and you know, it felt like being in the countryside. So it was a little bit more relaxed. You could spread out.

(Interviewer)

You weren't close to the road?

(Ann)

No, there wasn't a busy road there. It was just a sort of little bypass that went around literally by the gate.

(Sally)

A lot of the women were a bit older as well.

(Ann)

Yeah, maybe.

(Sally)

Not exclusively, but many of us who had come were in our late - well by older I mean mid to late twenties.

(Ann)

Oh there were even some old, old - proper old ones.

(Sally)

And, and we did - actually yeah quite older women used to turn up. But but also Jeanette and ...

(Ann)

What's her name, Margaret, in her van. Her three wheeler.

(Sally)

Oh god ...

(Ann)

(Laughs).

(Sally)

Yeah. But we were, we were very erm, welcoming and tolerant and friendly. I think we were quite a friendly gate. (Inaudible).

(Ann)

I think we were partly because the environment allowed us to be more relaxed.

(Sally)

Yeah, to be more relaxed. We used to have music events and people would come and play instruments and make up songs and stuff. But I mean, everybody did that.

(Interviewer)

And you were living in benders? And you were going back to Reading?

(Ann)

I was commuting. Yeah. Yep. So I would come down on a Friday night and stay for the weekend and Monday morning go back on the train with all the commuters, stinking of smoke (Laughs) and then get a shower at the university before I started work and then come back in the evening.

(Interviewer)

And what about you? Where did you have a shower and freshen up? Must have been difficult!

(Sally)

Oh. Well, I guess I - it wasn't the most, biggest worry. We'd go to Newbury sometimes for showers. That was very luxurious because they had at the leisure centre there, that had really nice hot showers and people would - but you had to run, run the gamut. It was pretty much hatred coming from most of the people who lived in Newbury erm, and we did smell. But lots of people would say, come home and have a shower and a rest and there were -

(Ann)

If you went into the shops they start talking to each other. 'Oh, I think I can smell a kipper in here!' (Laughs). Or worse.

(Sally)

But, but we went to the Oxfam shop mainly if we needed stuff for - and, and, charity shops and the supermarket which, you know, you could get away... But most most of our stuff was bought for us, we didn't have to do much shopping.

(Interviewer)

So who was bringing the shopping to you?

(Ann)

The night watch women would often bring food. People would just turn up.

(Sally)

I mean it was a very, very, very busy place, you know. Thousands of people would come by film crews, you know, for a while there it was just like the, our lane was like the M1 it felt like! And people were just suddenly, you know ... 'Hello!'

(Ann)

A car would just suddenly stop and someone would say, 'Ah, I've just bought you some bread and some milk.'

(Inaudible)

(Sally)

'Right and here's a lot of clothes. Here's a load of bedding.'

(Interviewer)
So who were they? Were they local people?

(Sally)
No.

(Ann)
They were from everywhere. Some people came a long way, some people were local.

(Sally)
There were people from Japan, you know, peace people, you know, post nuclear stuff. People from all over the world. Groups of women would turn up from Iceland to stay for a while but they all had stuff with them, but...

(Ann)
Lenny Henry turned up one morning, we...

(Sally)
(Laughs).

Ann:
We told him to go away.

(Sally) Told him to go away. 'Get out!'

(Ann)
It was too early! (Laughs). We didn't know...

(Sally)
I didn't know who it was. I, some woman came up to me and said there's this man here with a camera crew and they're they're trying to get in our benders. And I said, 'Right!' (Laughs). And they said, 'Well, we're on your side! We're on your side!' 'Well, then why aren't you listening to what we're saying? Go away!'

(Laughs).

(Sally)
And they went, which was interesting. I don't think I would have done it differently. But I might have been a bit, a bit gentler. But he was giving me a really hard time! And there was this poor woman - there was one woman with them and she was staggering around with the camera, you know, and all the kit, trundling after them. And I just - it was just so classic just, pff. And Bruce Kent used to turn up sometimes.

(Ann)

Oh yes. (Laughs).

(Sally)

He would sort of - it would always inevitably be sunset and he'd been told...

(Ann)

No men after dark.

(Sally)

... at Orange Gate. Every gate had a policy but we said no men after sundown. And he would just at sundown he'd say, 'I've just brought you some chocolate!' And toss us this chocolate.

(Both laugh).

(Sally)

'Thank you!' (Laughs).

(Interviewer)

Did some of the other gates ban men completely?

(Sally)

Just Green, just Green Gate.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

Yeah. And that was such a fairy land. That was such a beautiful, pristine spot. That's where you went so you wouldn't have to get into stupid rows with everybody.

(Interviewer)

And the locals did give you any problems, or?

(Ann)

We used to get car loads of young lads.

(Sally)

Yeah they'd go to the pub and then they'd...

(Ann)

And they'd drive past and scream things out the window and throw bags of shit, and...

(Sally)

That was worse for Orange Gate. But we did get it and they did set fire to the common near where our - we were sleeping after we'd been evicted a lot.

Erm, and that was quite scary. Twice they did that. Erm. But erm, nobody was nobody was hurt. Everybody woke up quickly and we all ran out with buckets of water and, yeah.

(Interviewer)

So they weren't politically motivated, or just local lads?

(Ann)

Homophobic more than anything.

(Sally)

Yes that's right, because of course we were, absolutely every last one of us evil lesbians. And, and erm I guess - but but I think actually, it's not that. I think the fact that there was a group of vulnerable women was quite exciting to them.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

And you know, we were doing this whole thing. I mean, nobody'd ever heard of - it felt like in Newbury, Berkshire - of feminism in any way, shape, or form at that point. And we were, you know, they would call us girls and we'd say we're women, we'd refuse to respond if anybody referred to us as a girl. And that was a cultural thing. Just the whole everybody, you know, and in court and everything else. Anyone who dealt with us. We were women - not girls - women. Treat us with respect even though, oh my god. I mean, I looked like, (Laughs) all dressed out of the bin... You know jumble sale stuff. We were all filthy. (Laughs).

(Interviewer)

And the personnel behind the perimeter fence, the police and military, how did they treat you? Especially regarding lesbianism, did they make an issue of it?

(Sally)

That was just one of many - we had a song about we were either lesbians or prostitutes. (Laughs). You know, because we used to do a lot of rituals that freaked them out. (Laughs).

(Ann)

Yes, there was a number of different categories they'd stick us into and complain about. And it very depended a lot on which batch of soldiers it was and what their sort of culture was really. Some of them were really friendly.

(Sally)

Well, yeah.

(Interviewer)

Who were the most friendly?

(Ann)
The Irish?

(Sally)
The Irish ones. The Northern Irish guys. And, but many of them were - they would rotate around me - I think this got left off didn't it - Erm, they would rotate around all the different - erm what are they called? Divisions? Groups? Regiments?

(Ann)
Regiments, that's the word.

(Sally)
With their different hat - oh my god, the hats we used to take the piss out of...

(Ann)
Yes, all these feathers and things sticking out of their head! (Laughs).

(Sally)
But erm, a lot of them, you know, they'd just come from Northern Ireland and they were a mess. They were all riled up. And here's this group of women hanging out free and they're behind the fence. And we were so free. We, we just didn't - we just did whatever we wanted. It was really euphoric for a lot of women who had in some cases left their kids home with the husband and was the first time they'd ever been in anything like that. And the young women as well. It was so liberating we - you know, you didn't have to have a rotor, somebody made the tea, somebody cleaned up some - you know, we were all really quite nice to each other and gotten more and more able to to just talk truthfully, there was just no messing.

(Interviewer)
Do you think that they thought of themselves as feminists when they arrived?

(Sally)
Oh, that said they -

(Interviewer)
Or did they sort of become feminists?

(Ann)
They became feminists. Yeah.

(Sally)
Yeah, yeah, I don't know. I mean, it's just that funny thing. A lot of - some of us did it. I mean, there were a core of us at Orange Gate who certainly were but we were older, and we, from places like Australia, and the States or

London. And, and we were pretty clear about all that stuff. But many, many were - in fact, do you remember? God, the old London feminists and God, you'd go to Sisterwrite in London, and they - which was the feminist bookstore then - and, and they would just be so snotty and nasty - 'It smells like there's a Greenham Woman in here.' Because, because, because there were all these sort of - because they were believing what the press said basically, which was, you know... Oh, the other thing that, that we were was sort of virgin martyrs or, you know, the women who, who, you know, 'It's time, women have gone to war, we're going to peace! You know, to go off to peace!' And yes, sure. Great, but that, that, you know, 'We are ordinary women, we are just ordinary women. And we are, the mothers of the world! And it is because we are genetically want to be mothers. That's why we're here'. So of course, the feminists in London hated that line! So they're thinking oh Greenham, that's all this bunch of wishy washy hippie, you know, earth mother types, which is not true either.

(Interviewer)

Did you read Spare Rib at the time?

(Sally)

Oh, sure.

(Interviewer)

Because yes... (Inaudible).

(Sally)

They hated us! (Laughs).

(Interviewer)

I read some of the er... little bit snippy some of it.

(Sally)

Oh come on women! You know, it was just, why are, why are you believing what you read? Come and see! You know.

(Ann)

I mean it was very diverse.

(Sally)

Really, they were all - everybody was there, everybody. It just depended who happened to be talking to the reporter. And the liberating nature of women to - living with other women who were fearless. It was just incredible how it was catching that sense of noticing, you know, how under the thumb those housewives were, you know, and how amazing it was to have nobody with their feet up expecting them to get the tea, which is pretty much how it was, I think, even for political families back then. Yeah, erm. And so it was, it was, it was women's space. And you know, and it was certainly wasn't just women. I mean, certainly, I think a lot of women kind of experimented a bit. But you

know, there were, there were love affairs that went across the fence, you know, and lots of things went on.

(Interviewer)

Let me stop you there. Love affairs across the fence?

(Sally)

God knows how they managed it, but, (Laughs).

(Ann)

There were one or two. Not very often. Well, women and, and the soldiers.

(Sally)

Well, Peace Camp women and soldiers and MOD, and police.

(Ann)

Not very often, but there were the odd one.

(Sally)

Oh yeah! And there was certainly flirtations, you know. I mean, the whole gambit of British and international womanhood was there at the time. And, and to try and isolate it down...

(Ann)

To say it was all lesbians or all anything...

(Sally)

Or all anything, you know. But what all those women were, were flippin free and brave and strong. Because it was fun to be there free. It was fun to cause fun at the state machine. I mean, it was so easy to get into the base. You can do whatever you wanted, really. It was hilarious. I mean, some of it wasn't. But I think those of us that stayed and kept coming back and all the support, if it had been as bleak and grim as everybody in the press like to portray it, nobody would have stuck it.

(Ann)

It was lovely, it was great.

(Sally)

But it was really fun and supportive and hilarious. We'd have these big meetings. Remember there was -

(Ann)

The money meeting, oh god they were horrendous.

(Sally)

The money meeting would happen once a week.

(Interviewer)
How did the finances get organised?

(Ann)
Once a week.

(Interviewer)
Is this just at your particular gate?

(Both)
No!

(Ann)
This is right round the camp. So all the money that was donated - well in theory went into a pot...

(Sally)
Yeah, there was a - there was a Post Office account, that it got put in so, so...

(Ann)
And then once a week some poor sod from every gate supposed to turn up to this money meeting.

(Sally)
And then representatives from each of the gates would go...

(Ann)
God it was a nightmare.

(Sally)
... to a circle and and you know, try and decide how to distribute the money.

(Ann)
Some people would say they needed a foreign holiday.

(Sally)
(Laughs).

Unknown Speaker
(Inaudible)

(Sally)
One woman said she needed a camera - I think they gave it to her. I mean mostly people got - because who are we, you know, to say to some other woman what she didn't need? And there were all kinds of stuff like the work there was a real thing of working class women, you know, being diss - just having all this money around. And all of us, you know, I say us, because I'm a middle class woman who's had holidays, who's been able to go to university,

who you know, had so much and why shouldn't they? You can just ask your rich parents for a camera. 'I need one.' 'Okay, have a camera.' You know, so those discussions were sometimes intense about class issues. And you know, so lots of women thrown together would never be having these conversations.

(Interviewer)

Roughly, do you think it was mainly middle class women? Or mainly working class or a real mixture of the two?

(Ann)

I think it was a real mixture.

(Sally)

I wouldn't like to say.

(Ann)

It was a real mixture.

(Sally)

We also had a percentage of women who just wouldn't fit in anywhere else, but were accommodated.

(Ann)

Yeah, women with mental health problems.

(Interviewer)

(Inaudible)

(Sally)

Everywhere.

(Ann)

Around all the gates.

(Sally)

And, you know, if, if, if -

(Interviewer)

So mental health issues?

(Sally)

Serious, sometimes very serious mental health issues. And nobody was forced to go away. Some people, some people would wander from gate to gate and we'd say, 'Oh, here she comes.' But but they were accommodated, and there was Pins Carol - she's quite famous - who erm, just had loads and loads and loads and loads...

(Ann)
Of piercings.

(Sally)
Of piercings.

(Interviewer)
Oh, what was her name?

(Both)
Pins Carol.

(Ann)
Metal Carol.

(Sally)
I don't remember what her full name was.

(Interviewer)
Jarrett McAfee, the US Air Force commander called her Iron Lady. I think have been (Inaudible).

(Sally)
It was awful for her. Well she was - she did have mental illness and she insisted that she was from another planet where everything was metal and...

(Ann)
She had an affinity with the...

(Sally)
She had an affinity with...

(Ann)
Cruise missiles.

(Sally)
Yes, that's right. And she taught us various chants to make the metal let go, which we used to sing and watch the lights go out on the base. I mean there was some very interesting things that went on! And Jeanette was singing, we were singing the metal vibration song that Carol taught us. And her wedding ring fell off, which she couldn't - she was divorced and was trying to get it off and couldn't and it fell off - so there we go!

(Ann)
(Laughs).

(Sally)

But um, yeah. But she, you know, people said she she would seem to drink petrol. Everybody was quite worried about her.

(Ann)
Serious issues.

(Sally)
Yeah.

(Ann)
Yeah.

(Sally)
And when she got arrested, they'd make her take it all off. And it was just agony for her.

(Interviewer)
For what purpose?

(Sally)
Well, you can't have all that. You might - I don't know you might...

(Ann)
Or you use it as a weapon or -

(Sally)
I mean, seriously she had nuts and bolts.

(Ann)
They were massive - it was huge.

(Sally)
Yeah, yeah. She was she was completely interesting. Yeah. And somebody said afterwards, years afterwards, that they saw her and she didn't have it. And she was okay!

(Interviewer)
Right.

(Sally)
But it was a quite a healing place for some women to come and just be, you know, work it out.

(Interviewer)
In this real mix of women that were there, different classes, ages, were there many black women?

(Sally)

No.

(Ann)

A few, yes.

(Sally)

There was some - but there were some. There erm, we had a couple of women who came regularly to visit and stay - a couple of South Asian women. And a couple of black women.

(Ann)

There was an American ...

(Sally)

Yes, that's right. She was one of the ones who I'd seen with somebody inside the base.

(Interviewer)

Right, right.

(Sally)

That's right. Yeah. But you know, and we did agonise about this, but what we did was we - Orange Gate had a thing where we took a percentage of our donations and funnelled it into ethnic minority women stuff groups in London.

(Interviewer)

And where were your donations coming from?

(Ann)

People would just come and hand them to us!

(Interviewer)

Individuals? Groups? Any peace groups?

(Ann)

Yeah, yeah. People would have a whip round and then they'd bring stuff over to us.

(Sally)

Trade Unions. All sorts of people, erm.

(Ann)

Oh god, I remember that Christmas.

(Sally)

Oh my god.

(Ann)

It was obscene really, the people were bringing us so much stuff. I remember standing in this load of mud by the bender and people were handing like whole big blue cheeses, a hamper from Harrods.

(Sally)

That was from, that was from -

(Ann)

Linda McCartney.

(Sally)

Um, Linda McCartney. And it was just you couldn't - and people were shoving five pound notes in my pockets and it was absolutely bizarre. (Laughs). We gave, we gave loads of it away.

(Ann)

It really was really weird.

(Sally)

You know.

(Ann)

It was too much excess.

(Sally)

We just took whatever we - you know, but there was a real sense of that. But also this understanding that if you were a black woman, you had other fish to fry.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

You know, and, and - in fact, it was a, it was. I'm trying to remember... We were having these, going to meetings all over the place of talking to people - but, you know, about stuff and occasionally, you know, we'd meet with black women's groups who would just be so furious with us. We took a lot of shit from them (Laughs)... but we did what we could do.

(Interviewer)

Were they from London?

(Sally)

Yeah, mainly, yeah.

(Interviewer)

Any particular ones you can remember?

(Sally)
(Sighs). No. Erm.

(Ann)
I remember going to that thing in was at Manchester Town Hall? City Hall?

(Sally)
There was a thing there.

(Ann)
Yeah. There was loads of rows there between all sorts of different factions.

(Sally)
Well, that was probably because Wages for Housework were there.

(Ann)
Yeah.

(Sally)
Do you know about that? Yeah, I mean, that was that was a whole other thing. That was most - that was just beginning to happen just before I left.

(Interviewer)
Were you there? Oh.

(Sally)
It was - yeah, it was happening but we didn't understand what was going on yet. It became very clear after I left. But you were still there, weren't you?

(Ann)
Yeah, but we've kept ourselves to ourselves that winter. We didn't really do a lot.

(Sally)
Yeah, I was gone.

(Interviewer)
So what actions were you directly involved in? Did you actually cut the wire and go through?

(Sally)
Quite a few times...

Both
(Both laugh).

(Interviewer)

So tell me about that.

(Sally)

Well, there were random things going on all the time.

(Interviewer)

How was it decided that there would be an action? And how did you find out about it?

(Ann)

Well sometimes just be like three people saying, 'Come on, I'm really bored. Let's go and do something.' (Laughs).

(Sally)

I think mainly, it was it was...

(Ann)

But then there would also, there'd be this sort of decision that was sort of (Inaudible).

(Sally)

We'd have these mass meetings sometimes. One was really interesting. And there were lots of women at the gate.

(Ann)

Ten million women, how many was it we were supposed to have?

(Sally)

Ten million.

(Ann)

Ten million.

(Interviewer)

Was that the one where you pulled down the fence?

(Sally)

No, that was the Halloween action.

(Interviewer)

December '83 there was one.

(Sally)

Yeah, that was...

(Ann)

There was one soon after, or I think perhaps just before I went actually.

(Sally)

There were two...

(Ann)

And then I remember one where we were all rocking the fence.

(Sally)

Yeah, well that was -

(Ann)

That was maybe, that was...

(Sally)

That was the, that one that I came, I made sure I was back for. That was the Halloween action. And then there was another one after that where we pulled down...

(Ann)

I didn't know what was going on. (Laughs) I just joined in!

(Sally)

Well, it, it - that freaked me out. The difference in the way that was done. Because in the States, what you do is you'd have an affinity group and you'd work with your affinity group and you decide what your limits were, you'd decide who was going to take notes and you know, not get arrested. And who was going to, you know, dadada and who was going to contact the lawyers and who - and, and you wouldn't do anything unless the whole group was up for it. It was very organised. And that's how people did things in the States. Well, I thought okay, 'Um, so what about our affinity groups?' And everyone went, 'Huh?'

(Both)

(Laughs).

(Sally)

And I thought, well, I like you, I'll come and hang out with you! And then everybody just went poof! And did whatever they liked! And that's how it went. That's how it always was. And whoever you were with -

(Interviewer)

So it was very much an individual group, actual ... ?

(Sally)

No, we all went wherever we - no! It was every individual woman within a context of weeks of discussions.

(Interviewer)

Right.

(Sally)

But in the end, it was every woman for herself and if you were next to a woman you helped her. If you were inclined, or wanted to, or felt like you could. And, and, people would talk the talk -

(Interviewer)

Was there any pressure -

(Sally)

No.

(Interviewer)

To take part in an action?

(Sally)

No!

(Ann)

No not at all. Some people would just stay in the camp and not take part if they weren't up for it.

(Sally)

Yep. And people would say, 'I really don't want to get arrested.' So you'd say, 'Okay!' And you'd try and shield them and protect them or, you know, let them get on with whatever they wanted to do.

(Ann)

You kind of made a decision whether you were up for getting arrested or not.

(Interviewer)

Were you arrested Ann?

(Ann)

Only once - oh, yeah, once completely accidentally. No, I didn't want to be arrested.

(Sally)

I mean getting arrested didn't actually have to do with it -

(Ann)

(Laughs).

(Interviewer)

How were you accidentally arrested?

(Ann)

Well, it was just before one of these big actions - I can't remember which one - and we decided we needed some more toilet enclosures. So me and someone else went off with a saw and found a tree that had fallen over...

(Sally)

That's because the council had dug this big ditch around erm, the land where the fire was.

(Ann)

To stop us bringing the vehicles on.

(Sally)

Right.

(Ann)

So we thought we might as well make use of it and turn it into a shit pit. But we needed - it was right by the road so we needed to, something to, you know, give a bit of privacy. So I cut this tree that had already fallen over, and cut it up into lengths so we can make a sort of tent thing, and erm, and then we got arrested because there were thousands of police were just waiting for this action to happen and they had piles of forms, arrest forms ready and vehicles ready. And so they were itching to go and there was nothing happening -

(Sally)

(Laughs).

(Ann)

So they decided to arrest me and Miranda for cutting this blinking tree down for heaven's sake! Criminal damage to a tree! Yes. So we went through the whole stupid court case and, 'Which end of the tree did they cut, my Lord?' So I got, erm, I got a fine, which I can't ... one hundred pounds I think.

(Interviewer)

Thats quite a lot of money.

(Ann)

Or fifty pounds i think... Anyway, I didn't pay it. But I carried it around in the boot of my car in half pennies for about a year after that, just in case they picked me up, so I could immediately pay the fine and not have to go to prison. (Laughs). I was really Annoyed because that was really stupid thing to be arrested for.

(Sally)

And you got, you got you got, you got done for trespassing in Broady. We had... -

(Ann)

CHECK THIS BIT. arrested there.

(Interviewer)

And you were arrested, Sally as well?

(Sally)

Yeah. Yes, yeah.

(Interviewer)

Many times, or just?

(Sally)

No actually, not that often. I think I was, I was aware of not wanting to be thrown out of the country.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

So I was a little bit careful about what I did. I was always a bit, wary, but I did a lot of you know, casual fence cutting and stuff and the day before I helped take a fence down, and that was -

(Ann)

Well you knew you weren't gonna get caught, because you knew you can easily, well you thought you could easily get away.

(Sally)

Yeah, and I did support stuff. But, but that day we were walking around after there'd been a massive action and just looking, surveying the damage really. We were just wandering along me and Julie and and the Vicar's wife. And erm, and I don't know, I picked a piece of fence off and I think I might have put it in my pocket. And, and picked something up off the ground. Or - did I even? I don't know maybe I didn't, I remember saying something. But anyway, we were just we weren't doing anything. We weren't doing anything. And then suddenly the police came jumped out the bushes with these torches and arrested us. So we actually -

(Interviewer)

And the charge was?

(Sally)

Criminal damage to the fence. And we really expect it to go down because everybody went down. But Anne bless her heart - the Vicar's wife, from Abergavenny - erm, had, she was getting arrested, like continually. And so she had put in a complaint for the way she'd been arrested or something recently, and there was an Inspector to do with her case in the court, taking notes. So they basically had no case against us, erm. The three of us gave

our testimony and we refused to stand up. We were, you know, what, one of the - we felt the court was...

(Ann)

The whole going to court thing was just another performance and an opportunity to...

(Sally)

Yep. So we never stood up when the judge when the Magistrates came in. We never did any of the things we were supposed to do unless we felt like it. And, you know, but we did testify. And they thought erm, oh I don't know. It was just sort of like a piece of theatre mainly, but we all told the truth. And erm, the police, we heard a Magistrate say in disgust, 'Oh, I wish the police didn't always lie!' And they did. They completely made stuff up! It was like, what!? And what we said was, 'Look, if, if we had cut the fence, we would be saying now, as you know, we would be saying we cut the fence! Hand up!' You know, 'We did it! And this is why, world.' And then we would go off to Holloway. 'But in this case, we were just taking a walk! We weren't doing anything. And we did not have any bolt cutters with us and we did not remove them!' And um, so - but we didn't think it make any difference. But they acquitted us. And it was like one of the only acquittals that ever happened. And we were sure it was because that Inspector was there, and there was no evidence. And the police were clearly lying because we got them to contradict themselves, because we didn't have - we all defended ourselves.

(Interviewer)

When you were arrested. Did they take you down there in a police van, or?

(Ann)

Yeah, yeah.

(Interviewer)

They did the whole business?

(Ann)

Oh yeah, you get the mug hshots done and all that business.

(Sally)

Yeah. And then you sit in the cells and you -

(Interviewer)

Were you strip searched?

(Ann)

Perhaps patted you down, I don't think we had to strip.

(Sally)

That was when you got to Holloway.

(Ann)
Yeah, yeah.

(Sally)
It was a whole different thing.

(Ann)
This was just the local police station.

(Sally)
Yeah.

(Ann)
Newbury. But the time when we actually broke into the silos, Jill and erm, Anne and I, and we didn't get arrested they just chucked us out. So it was very arbitrary. It just depended who it was.

(Sally)
Well they didn't want it to hit the press, you know, that it was so easy for us to get in. I mean...

(Ann)
So when they had a lot of, when they deployed a lot of police, then you knew there was a pretty high risk of getting arrested. But on a sort of average day, you were more likely to get just kicked out at a different - if you got into the base, they'd sometimes take you out and put you at the far side just to be awkward. So you have to walk all the way round to get back.

(Interviewer)
So many people, women didn't pay their fines, and then had to go to Holloway. I think it was always Holloway, wasn't it? What do you think that achieved overall? For Greenham?

(Ann)
Well, I think those women - I mean, certainly Anne, she got to know a whole lot about the prison system and women in the prison system.

(Sally)
And she helped a lot of women. Loads of them were just -

(Interviewer)
Anne was the Vicar's wife?

(Sally)
Yeah, she ended up getting a really long sentence. Everybody was really shocked for doing not much, really. And, and she was the first one and that was really, really awful. But she did a load of work with women who is it

mules? You know, who were mainly in there for carrying drugs for men. And, and she so she did - well, I don't know. She, she did, helped an awful lot of people. And I think that's what women did, when they were there, was just trying to be useful. And saw it, as the publicity is maybe helpful, erm, to who was going - but, you know, it was quite - there were tonnes of press. But we didn't cooperate very much with them, because they always told fibs. I mean, they said whatever what they, what their editors wanted them to say.

(Ann)

One or two people who would, you know, make themselves available for interviews and stuff. But mostly we just tried to ignore them.

(Interviewer)

What were the main stereotypes that they talked about with regards to women?

(Ann)

Well, you were either like perfect -

(Sally)

This holy martyred nun.

(Ann)

Yeah. Or you were some dirty lesbian. So it was one or the other. There was nothing very balanced about it.

(Sally)

Oh, and in the pay of Moscow that was...

(Ann)

Oh, that's right.

(Sally)

Yeah, yeah. And rent a mob.

(Ann)

Whipping - there was that stupid article about whipping horses with barbed wire, which was -

(Sally)

Oh, my, god.

(Ann)

Oh my god. We were outraged reading that one.

(Sally)

Two thirds of the people there were vegan for christ's sake!

(Ann)

(Laughs).

(Sally)

There was no way anybody would hurt a horse. My god. But there was a lot of violence against the women, a lot.

(Interviewer)

From the?

(Sally)

From the police, the MOD, the soldiers.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Interviewer)

Physical or verbal or both?

(Ann)

Both, both.

(Sally)

Oh, they would grab, you know - she probably was about the same age as me, but you know, elderly women by the hair and haul them off. And, and you know, what I used to say my mantra was, 'I'm only seven stone, how much do you weigh?' Um and, 'My name's Sally, what's your name? And, I'm a human being, are you?' (Laughs). But you know, just, 'I am very small, you could easily, you know, hurt me a lot.'

(Ann)

Yeah, usually they'd back off then.

(Sally)

And but, you know, for - some women they really, really laid into and um...

(Interviewer)

Why particular women? Or was it?

(Ann)

I think the ones they felt were a bit of a threat to their masculinity probably.

(Sally)

Or, or if they were really gobby.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

But I, we tried to be - yeah, I mean, there wasn't like, again, in America, the whole non-violence thing would have been taught and enveloped and the main topic of discussion and what that meant and what you do in this and role plays and all this stuff and there was none of that at Greenham. And women were themselves and figured out sometimes the hard way, the best way to get round stuff, and the best way to fight another day. But some women just couldn't. They just couldn't contain themselves. And erm, and they did tend to be the ones that - but not necessarily. I mean, there was some men that were just, they couldn't wait some of these guys, you know, to have, for an excuse to hit a woman in public sight and be applauded for it. So there was erm.

(Ann)

Yeah, there was a full range on the other side though isn't there.

(Sally)

Yeah.

(Ann)

The full range.

(Interviewer)

Did the press report on the violence against women?

(Ann)

Not that I remember.

(Sally)

No. There was very little real that got reported, erm.

(Interviewer)

Did it tail off after a certain period? The press coverage at Greenham.

(Sally)

Once, once the missiles went in it was like, you know, there were thousands of people sticking microphones in your face saying, 'How does it feel to have lost your battle against nuclear weapons?' Oh, really? You think a group of women, you know, unarmed women around the fence are going to stop, with our bodies, nuclear weapons coming in? I don't think so! So we'd just say, 'Well, how do you feel about the fact that now your country is a nuclear state - a nuclear colony of the United States? But, but and that's, that was really how we dealt with most of the press. We, you know, they, they thought we were gagging to talk to them.

(Interviewer)

Were you ever interviewed by the press personally?

(Sally)

Must have been.

(Ann)

Probably, you couldn't really avoid someone sticking a microphone in your face.

(Sally)

A couple of us were interviewed -

(Ann)

But then there were also those undercover reporters.

(Sally)

Oh, yeah, they'd embed themselves from the Sun and the Mirror.

(Ann)

But you could always tell because we were way too clean. (Laughs).

(Sally)

There was some women who were really upset because they immediately outed this woman and but you know, had been nice to her and well, I think she said she was she - she implied that she wanted to really say that, the true story. And so they found her a bender, and they were really nice to her and they would laugh, they laughed together and they got to know her and she went and got water and they thought she was actually fitting in. And then she wrote this disgusting piece for the Sun about them, and how disgusting they were! And that was so hurtful. But but you know, every now and then you get -

(Interviewer)

So tabloid infiltration?

(Sally)

Oh yes.

(Interviewer)

Was there any other infiltration, from police or something like that?

(Sally)

Oh, yeah.

(Ann)

Yeah, there must have been. And the phone was tapped we reckoned didn't we.

(Sally)

Yeah. Oh, everything was tapped, the phone box and everything else.

(Interviewer)

I suppose it was pre-mobile days.

(Ann)

Yeah, yeah that's right that's where you went for your phone calls.

(Sally)

Organising, was extraordinary. I mean, we would have these big meetings. Do you remember I've tried to tell about this big meeting, because it's so classic. We know, everybody gathers somewhere and have all these debates, 'We're going to do this and this is what we're going to do. We're going to break into the gate here. We're going to do all this awful stuff and or good stuff. And everybody row about it, and then they go home. And it would rain that day and nothing would happen. But there'd be all these vans of police (Laughs), you know.

(Ann)

It was really easy to spread a rumour!

(Sally)

You know it was so easy!

(Ann)

Yeah we used to go from the, to the phone box and make phone calls or just say a whole lot of rubbish about where we were going or what we were doing.

(Sally)

And then we'd watch the vans go by! 'Look at them all over there!' And it was interesting, because when we, we, we got to know the miners wives who were very active as the miners were doing all this stuff. And they were doing the same thing. You know, it was just really funny. You know.

(Interviewer)

Did you follow the convoys out?

(Sally)

Yes.

(Ann)

Yes we did. We tried sometimes.

(Sally)

Well, we did. Well, they had just started coming.

(Interviewer)

They went to Salisbury Plain didn't they? When they convoys left?

(Ann)

They went all over the place.

(Sally)

They tried to go various places. They were always followed. There was a group of women who were particularly doing that, once it got established. At first we were trying to just blockade them. And people were following as best they could, and trying to be clear about where they were coming out and make sure there are people at the gate. And we would put all kinds of block - (Laughs) stuff in front of the gates that they'd have to get through. But mainly it was about showing it was impossible to secrete these things, and also bloody stupid American soldiers driving on the wrong side of the road down these country lanes with fucking nuclear weapons on the back - they weren't loaded or anything but you know. It was mostly mainly to expose the idiocy of it all that we tried to do but that -

(Ann)

We'd throw paint bombs at them. We used to use flour and powder paint and stuff. (Laughs).

(Sally)

Paint and, and just make them very obvious. But that really upped the level of violence when they started coming out. We got, we got Thatcher's private army, we called them. Which I don't know if that ever came out, or if that was ever investigated. Remember, we noticed - well, the police often didn't have any numbers. They'd take them on before they go and that was true in the miners strike as well. And so you couldn't ever identify anybody. But remember in the night they were all the same shape and size and build. They never had any identification. And they were very violent and scary and nasty.

(Ann)

Yeah I remember running into a bunch of them at Blue Gate. They were horrible. They were scary - it was the only time I was really frightened.

(Sally)

They came at night.

(Interviewer)

Only at night?

(Sally)

No, no not only but - and to Orange Gate, maybe you weren't there. But they dragged us out of our benders and tents and, and um, grabbed all our stuff and were just not nice people. And the miners wives said yeah, they they're a special, special group that's called out and they're not answerable to anybody.

(Ann)

Hmm, interesting.

(Sally)

So I wonder who they were. But they were, they were not nice.

(Interviewer)

Did you ever come into contact - thinking about groups - with Rage? The group that was established and ...

(Sally)

Oh! The Newbury crew against the Greenham Encampment! (Laughs).

(Ann)

Oh Rage, oh yeah! (Laughs) Oh yeah that's right.

(Interviewer)

Did you ever meet any of them?

(Sally)

Oh, God, I'm sure they...

(Ann)

Well didn't some of them live in that house near Blue Gate?

(Sally)

What was their name? They had a name that was... appropriate. It was like Mr. and Mrs. Nasty but it wasn't that.

(Ann)

(Laughs).

(Sally)

I can't remember what it was. They lived just up, in the big house just opposite Newbury and they were a big part of it.

(Ann)

Opposite Blue Gate.

(Sally)

Yeah.

(Ann)

So we did yeah, we used to come across them. I mean, my favourite story about the local people was when they, after they, the council dug this ditch around, which was supposed to stop us from going on the common land - but actually, we just filled it in one bit. So we had a little, a nice little entrance in and out. And actually it protected us from these morons who drove around fast in the cars at night and through stuff. So it was quite handy. And then one night, one of these cars went off the road and fell in the ditch!

(Sally)
(Laughs).

(Ann)
And there as about ten women sitting around the campfire and we saw this happen and we were so fed up that these people... So we just as as one body we just stood up, walked across -

(Sally)
The look on their faces, they were terrified.

(Ann)
Didn't speak to them. They were sitting in the car in this ditch, sort of two wheels in the ditch and we just lifted the car up with all of us literally physically lifted it up and pushed it back on the road.

(Sally)
The ladies!

Both
(Laugh).

(Sally)
Be afraid, be very afraid!

(Ann)
It was so funny. Then they just, they drove off and we just walked away.

(Sally)
They used to make comments and the Newbury weekly news, you know, regularly and we used to read that out around the fire and have a laugh. They were, they were very big on promoting the notion that we were in the pay of, of um, Moscow. Yeah. That was quite hilarious really. We just, we just, we just laughed a lot.

(Ann)
Yeah we did. Great stuff.

(Sally)
It was quite a wonderful culture that developed, and different -

(Ann)
You played the penny whistle didn't you. You and a whole bunch of people learned to play the penny whistle.

(Interviewer)

Did you do any creative art things? Because I know there are some pretty amazing things that women made when they were down there and banners and all sorts of things.

(Ann)

I knitted. I knitted a jumper and knitted lots of stuff. Crocheted things like this. Not this but ones like that. Used to spend a lot of time doing those.

(Sally)

We all had those rainbow jumpers and stuff. And we used to put embroidery floss in to your jumper so that you could make those friendship bracelets. If you got if you got nicked -

(Ann)

Something to do in the cells. (Laughs).

(Sally)

You had something to do. But I think a lot of that stuff was done outside Greenham and brought by women for events. Although -oh God, that mad woman, what was she called? Who was, who was there forever and a big spokeswoman. Can't think of her name -

(Ann)

Not Rebecca?

(Sally)

Long black hair and she did fabulous drawings and she did posters and newsletters and stuff like that.

(Ann)

There was some really artistic people.

(Sally)

But most of the art was theatre. I mean, it was wonderful theatre when we, we put honey on the locks one day and, and um, in the summer and they had to - so they couldn't get in it at that - it killed the gate for the day. They had to get this green goddess in the end (Inaudible) because they couldn't get near the gate.

(Ann)

Oh god, I love that Crown Court singing that was in Reading, wasn't it when everyone's sang in opera? (Laughs).

(Sally)

Yeah, yeah yeah, that was good. They sang their whole defence. And um, yeah, and well, and then there was the one - I wasn't there I'd come back. And I don't think you did that. Somebody will tell you about the Salisbury Plain action, where they just all busloads of women just went running across

Salisbury Plain while they were in the middle of an exercise. And so the exercise couldn't happen. And then none of them, the agreement was that none of them would say their name at any point. So they had hundreds of women, trying to put them somewhere. And none of them would give their name. So they had to, in the end they let everyone go because they -

(Ann)
Couldn't accommodate them.

(Sally)
And they did lovely things.

(Interviewer)
Simple tactics.

(Ann)
Yeah. Somebody got a bus inside the gate and then drove it around.

(Sally)
A bus!

(Ann)
Inside of the base! They gave people a lift from gate to gate!

(Sally)
That was amazing! They - and nobody questioned them get - this bunch of stripy jumpered women getting into this bus and driving around!

(Ann)
(Laughs).

(Sally)
And also, Elena talked about that one where we, one of the things about Orange Gate was that the landing strip was right there. So that's where the planes came in. And we stood and watched and cried as they all came in. But before that um, a group of women did a thing where they um, they glued picnic stuff onto a blanket, plates and cups and tea. And they had a teddy bears picnic on the runway. So they, they got into the base and set up this picnic everything and their teddy bears, and we're pouring each other cups of tea and they all come in their vehicles and stuff. And they tried grip things and everything is attached. You know. And it was just, they had all these crazy women who were having a tea party with their bears. And they had to do something with them, you know. And it was it must have been hilarious. I didn't see that one. And then there was -

(Interviewer)
What year was that? Was that '83?

(Sally)
'83.

(Interviewer)
Was that the year Michael Hesletine visited? Michael Hesletine?

(Sally)
Might be.

(Interviewer)
Were you there when he visited?

(Sally)
I wasn't, but people were talking about it. So it couldn't have been much longer. I got there in August of '83.

(Ann)
Yeah I think it was about October or so that I went.

(Interviewer)
I think yeah, he was February, March I think so yeah.

(Sally)
So must have been the previous year.

(Interviewer)
Do you think there was a danger of getting shot on the base? Because he stood in Parliament didn't he and he said that...

(Sally)
If we got shot it was our own fault! (Laughs). Yes.

(Ann)
I suppose there was a small danger.

(Interviewer)
Did you feel that that was a...

(Ann)
Yeah, there was a bit of a danger.

(Sally)
Well, it's interesting though, because -

(Ann)
I never really felt at - I felt more at risk from the locals at Newbury than the people in the base really.

(Sally)

But if, you know, if you went certain areas that freak them out, you knew there was a risk. Because it was - yeah, you did. But if you, you know run into the Americans because they didn't give a shit. But one of the things about women who lived there a long time, I mean Blue Gate, that was near, near where the silos were and everything. But that they were such a chatty, friendly bunch. They were crazy. They were under so much pressure, that tiny piece of verge, that one tent, they all slept in it. And it was very hard work living there. But they were always this lovely, friendly mad bunch. And they built really nice relationships with the regulars on the gate. And, and that was true actually everywhere, there was usually a couple of nice people that you got to know. And they got to know that the, the ones that got arrested constantly got to know the police that, you know, down there. So they would do stuff like um, somebody broke their leg at Blue Gate, and they called the ambulance for her and, you know sent a...

(Interviewer)

So there was compassion there?

(Sally)

You built - well you had relationships! You know, and they realise - we're all real people.

(Ann)

I mean, that was part of, it was a part of a strategy really about making sure that people, that they understood that we were just ordinary people.

(Sally)

You know, and also...

(Ann)

Well also that, you know, then if someone's a real person, you've got to think about what their point of view is and consider it haven't you.

(Sally)

There were lots - Indigo, particularly, Annie, Indigo Gate was next up from us, and after Red, but we kind of had a connection with them, but they had a real thing about talking to the soldiers. And, um and, and, and Annie Butcher, god she was a ...

(Interviewer)

To talk to them or not to talk to them?

(Sally)

Well to talk to them! To chat to them, to be friendly. I mean, they had nothing up there just a piece of the verge. It was a very hard place to camp. They were

right in their faces all the time. That Gate got lots of young men actually buying themselves out. So just buying themselves out of the military.

(Interviewer)
Yeah. Because of?

(Sally)
Yeah.

(Interviewer)
Oh that's interesting.

(Sally)
And they had leaflets and stuff that they would pass them about how to get out and, and all sorts of stuff. So, so that was another agenda I think some women had.

(Interviewer)
Close relationships to build up that level of trust.

(Sally)
And actually have real conversations about why were we there and...

(Interviewer)
What made you leave, was it just sort of life progressing with work and just couldn't give it the time?

(Ann)
Well, you left first and you, you went back to the States. And then I stayed for another winter. And it was, it was only about three or four of us most of the time at Orange Gate then. It was very small numbers.

(Interviewer)
Were you still in a bender at that stage?

(Ann)
No, well I think we had tents? Mostly, so you could pack them up just little tiny tents. Yeah. And, I don't know, I just -

(Sally)
Felt like it was time.

(Ann)
Yeah, like the time was over. It was time to move on and do something different.

(Sally)

I remember be- beginning to get worried about my sanity. And I could see that some women who had been there forever were really going a little loopy. And I didn't want to get that institutionalised.

(Interviewer)

What do you mean by they were sort of getting loopy? In what way?

(Sally)

Paranoid. There was discussion, and some people really believed it - and it wouldn't surprise me at all - that, that there were some electronic weapons that were being tested on us from inside the base. People were getting headaches and finding it difficult to think. And um, it probably we were sitting ducks for that kind of thing. But I don't know what, how they would have known what we did. We certainly didn't do anything that dramatic. But there, there, there were, there were women who who seemed to just start, they could only talk about certain things and on and on and on and um, and get into big rows if people didn't have their own particular brand of ideology. And I think possibly the whole business of Wages for Housework was starting to kick in. And they were starting to be stupid rows about stupid stuff. And, and, very, you know, it was like, yes, but look at this. **This isn't right we've all been really racist. And um, some of my own political experience made me think I smell a Maoist here! (Laughs). Ah ha. You know, there's no, no, no, no, no. I don't operate out of guilt. It doesn't work for me. You can if you want to, but - there was a load of middle class, white guilt, always there. And, um, and so I think that that particular woman was able to come in and totally knew how to tap into and manipulate that. But it does - I don't know what for. Seek and destroy, why destroy Greenham? But, you know, that did seem to be and they'd get into all these feminist groups at the time and blow them up. But at that point, we had no idea the implications, but it's just, you know, Sean's got funny and why are you castling me about this at this point, you know, and in this way, that seems very unproductive?**

(Interviewer)

Were you there when they went off to Russia? On a trip? It was '85 I thought. Maybe it was eighty...

(Sally)

No I was gone then. You were gone then...

(Ann)

Hm, yes.

(Interviewer)

And that ended up in a split because of accusations of racism.

(Sally)

Oh, yes! That's when somebody - yeah, yeah.

(Ann)

I can't remember the year now.

(Sally)

Heard about it. Yeah. And that's when things just went, you know, you're either on the side of - Yellow Gate was Wages for Housework and other gates had nothing to do with them. And they were saying they're the real Greenham. And we were saying, no, they're not. I don't know, Pixie went through that whole - where they there during that or just after? They come after -

(Ann)

They were there a lot longer that we were weren't they. We just live up the road.

(Sally)

We have some friends who live near, just up the road who were there until they officially formally closed. So um, so they might be able to talk about that now.

(Interviewer)

So when you left Greenham finally, did you know that was the final time you were leaving? Or did you just sort of drift?

(Ann)

I think I just sort of drifted. I don't think there was, didn't feel like a final time - I think, you know, go away for a week, and then you go away for two weeks, and then, you know, be away for a month and then...

(Sally)

People got involved in other things as well. Because you ended up ditching your PhD.

(Ann)

Yeah. I gave up that.

(Sally)

And moving to London.

(Ann)

Yeah. But that was quite a long time - I gave it the PhD long before I moved to London.

(Interviewer)

Did you sort of think about Greenham a lot after you left?

(Ann)

It felt like we took Greenham with us, it didn't really feel like leaving it because all our peer group had moved, bit by bit we sort of moved to London, and then you came back from the States and you were there...

(Sally)

I couldn't stay. I couldn't, it was that thing like you'd been in - no, no. When I went back to the States, I couldn't stay there. Because I felt, I think there was some - we talk about how fun it was and that's what I remember. But there were also, it was a lot of fear and a lot of violence and a lot of hardship in some ways at Greenham. Yeah. And it was not an easy thing to do, in some ways. And I think we all had a bit of post traumatic shock from some of the stuff that was normal for us. That really isn't - it's a bit like being in a war in a way. Maybe we had that group of soldiers that no one else has the slightest idea what you've been through.

(Ann)

Yeah. So it felt much more comfortable to stay with those people there.

(Sally)

And so we ended up coming back together.

(Interviewer)

Were you two together at the gate?

(Ann)

We got together at Greenham.

(Interviewer)

And then you had to part when you went back to the States?

(Sally)

And then you came to visit and I went back because -

(Ann)

By then I'd moved to London, and you came -

(Sally)

Yeah. And I came back and it was just oh, god, what a relief. And we lived in squats, lots of us -

(Ann)

Well still, you know, most of our friends -

(Interviewer)

About 85'?

(Sally)

Yeah about then.

(Ann)

Yeah, but still about half of our really good friends, probably more than half, we made at Greenham.

(Sally)

Still, the ones that are the closest, the ones, you know, the ones you'd easily do anything for. And um, became like this whole family really.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Interviewer)

Do you feel people nowadays know much about Greenham?

(Ann)

Not at all.

(Sally)

No, it's quite interesting. Because because I came to parenting quite late. And but you know, at the school gate where most of the women are twenty years younger than me, um and nobody had heard of it at all. And Wales was a really a big hotspot.

(Ann)

And it started from Wales didn't it.

(Interviewer)

And those are women in their thirties? So millennials?

(Sally)

No, no.

(Ann)

Not a clue. Not a clue.

(Interviewer)

Why do you think that is?

(Ann)

Why is all women's history - or most of women's history ignored and forgotten?

(Sally)

Yeah, I mean, it was so radical. I don't think people now can imagine this group of women living without men. I mean, the endless rows. Why are you women only? What's? Why do you? Why don't you want to have men? Wouldn't it be stronger with men? You know, well, that - I think actually

people would wonder about it now. And I feel sorry for young women that you know, missed out on that because it was so, so empowering. You don't realise how much social norms are tipped in favour of women accommodating mens power in their most basic relationships, and it's it's such a liberating thing to live that way with, with other women. And, and just see how strong you are and how brave and how you can laugh in the face of danger and do something like when they got this leaping dog snarling at you you go, 'Hello puppy!' and they go, 'Oh hello!' because they're not trained to react to that. And, you know.

(Interviewer)

Do you think millennials now - going back to that - whether they would do another Greenham? Can you see Greenham happening or something?

(Ann)

Yes, I think it would be just as attractive.

(Interviewer)

Do you think there would be enough people to er, do it?

(Ann)

Yeah, why not?

(Sally)

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

(Interviewer)

Of the very young generation, eighteen to twenty-four.

(Sally)

I mean, there's all those fabulous young women that have started saying, you know, 'I'm not going to shave my legs!' My god.

(Ann)

And the whole me too thing.

(Sally)

And all, the me too thing. I don't know if many of them I would go so far as to

-

(Ann)

I wouldn't be surprised, everything comes around.

(Sally)

I mean, I look at Meghan Markle, and she says she's a big feminist staggering around pregnant in you know, nine inch heels. What are you talking about honey? Really? Gazing up adoring the, the husband the whole time?

(Ann)
(Laughs).

(Sally)
Even though she does - I mean, that's where we are, you know, she's very self directed. She does what she wants. She's feels very strong and liberated in herself. But she's still got does this lot. So nobody's threatened by her, you know. Erm, and, and we didn't do that. We stomped around and the young women there, the sixteen, seventeen year olds in their big boots, which within years, I said, you know what, they're going to put high heels on those boots. That's how they're going to get girls out of Doc Martens. And that's exactly what they did! And it's such a quick jump to women's staggering around in clothes they can't run with. I mean, you know, that's my little thing. But it's interesting to see. Maybe, maybe the time is right. But I would recommend it.

(Ann)
(Laughs).

(Sally)
Have a movement, do an action and just do it with other women. It'd be amazing.

(Interviewer)
There was no social media in those days. What impact do you think it would have had on Greenham?

(Ann)
I was thinking that the other day. Yeah.

(Interviewer)
I've been thinking quite a bit about it.

(Ann)
Because we used to get things ran by those, we had those telephone trees, didn't we? **(Laughs).**

(Sally)
Um, and telephone trees where every third person knew their phone was tapped. So, you know.

(Ann)
And letters, and -

(Sally)
How did we do it? And, by word of mouth and people got together physically and chatted to each other a lot. And you drive places and tell people.

(Interviewer)

Do you think with social media there's a danger of hitting the button, like, or whatever it is on the course and then perhaps not actually doing anything?

(Ann)
Yeah.

(Sally)
Yes. Possibly.

(Ann)
And it would have been far easier to infiltrate it with all sorts of stuff very quicky.

(Sally)
I know. I mean, that's the thing. Yeah, yeah, yeah of course. Because they'd be following all of those tweets and messages wouldn't they. I mean, they could not keep track of us. Because - and half the things we said we didn't do anyway.

(Ann)
I suppose you could have WhatsApp groups, that would be a bit more - work a bit better.

(Sally)
Probably that's what they're doing.

(Interviewer)
I think they can probably listen in to absolutely everything.

(Ann)
Ah, I'm sure they can.

(Sally)
They can listen in to everything. But they did listen in. I think what was so strong, was this combination of being a committed group, but also very committed individual - it was it was anarchism at its best really. It was, you know, we'll talk about it to death, in this way of feeling deeply responsible for our actions, and then we'll do what we want. And most of the time, when women acted, it was pretty well considered. Other women would get mad at them and say what to do that for -

(Interviewer)
There really was no leaders. Anyone who tried to be a leader, you'd mostly turn away from them.

(Ann)
So it was truly non-hierarchical, yeah.

(Sally)

No, and there were famous women. But, you know -

(Ann)

They weren't leaders.

(Sally)

They would try really hard. Some of them would say I'm not speaking for everyone, I'm just speaking for me. But they always went back to the same one. Yeah. Well, Ann Pettit, she didn't like the women only thing and she, oh god I had massive rows with her all the time. And she say she used to control and bring her husband and her son was it, at Orange Gate. It was like, 'Oh maybe Ann!' 'No, we must - 'And also that thing of being so terrified, 'Oh, the press will paint us as filthy lesbians! We must be much more respectable. And don't let her talk!' And grab the microphone because somebody was talking, trying to talk to some dirty woman in a blanket, you know, who was probably vastly more articulate than most women you find anywhere. But she was very worried about the image and it didn't make - what, everybody dropped that because it didn't matter. You suck up to them, they still print the horrible stuff. So we just said what was true.

(Interviewer)

What do you think Greenland's biggest achievement was?

(Sally)

Oh god a generation of women who have done wonderful things.

(Ann)

It's the change it has made in the individual people's lives I think.

(Sally)

And I think we did have a big impact on the Cold War. I don't know if we stopped nuclear weapons. But people in Britain, even with the press completely biased in every way, did begin to realise what was going on. And we opened up the debate. And that's what we wanted to do. Yeah, and I think it made the whole stupid thing unsustainable in the end of the day.

(Ann)

And maybe you'll find this out as you go around to think about how it's influenced our children as well. Because I think, you know, Nathan loves hearing about our stories.

(Interviewer)

Well, I was gonna ask you - I was going to say, do talk to your son, and your family and your friends about Greenham.

(Ann)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, our nieces like to hear the stories sometimes and Nathan does.

(Interviewer)

Do they come to you and ask?

(Ann)

No, not the nieces. But Nathan does. And I think he's got a real sense of you know, you, you only, you know, you don't have to follow rules, if they're really stupid rules, getting you to do things that are not the right thing to then you question them.

(Sally)

Yeah, it's having a strong moral base and question everything, that's for sure. But then Judy, says she feels a bit sad because she never talked to her kids about it. So, and then she thinks maybe she's they would have liked to have heard. But there is a sort of reticence about... like, I don't just talk about it to anybody. It sort of gauche somehow.

(Interviewer)

Apart from, obviously, you're part of this project, and you know that the interviews are gonna go into the Women's Library at LSE, and pop up exhibitions all over the country, what other ways do you think Greenham should be remembered in? Are there particular things you'd like to see?

(Ann)

It's so hard, isn't it. Because I don't know that you can really, you know, you can't, you can't let, make it real for people now, who weren't there. I don't think it's possible.

(Interviewer)

But do you think it's important to teach the history of Greenham?

(Sally)

Yeah, I guess. Yeah, it's, I think that the lesson, if there's - because that's what's going to happen, they'll try and boil it down into this March that some women in Wales took and then they, and from that, to the anarchic chaos was what it looked like, from the outside is such a big jump. And I, I would like people to remember the chaos as well. And that chaos is the beginning of creativity. And that, actually, in certain circumstances, a kind of anarchism is the best way to defy a calcified authority. Because you do what you want, they're not expecting that. And if you have a really good, firm, joyful moral base that you're working from you, you know, there's a freedom there that, that your big, solid enemy cannot fathom. Free people are a lot harder to put in a box. Whether a physical box or a mental box. And, and there's huge freedom in that and the courage, the courage that you get from living in company, cooperatively, and the strength that you get, whether it's men or

women, but that also that it was a women's movement, and that really helped a lot of people break free from, from stereotypes - men and women.

(Interviewer)

So really, it's like remembering that diversity, the sort of chaotic stroke, anarchic bit of it?

(Sally)
Yeah.

(Interviewer)

I can't see that on the school curriculum!

Both
No! (Laughs).

(Ann)

But also that thing of learning to live in community with people who are different from, who are really different and doing that without an imposed hierarchy and set a rules. There's something very empowering about that.

(Sally)

And having to rely on relationships to get you all through!

(Ann)

I think I wasn't very good at relationships before then. I think I've learned a lot about how you do relationships, how you live with people, by that experience, and that's definitely changed the course of my life and the way that I've lived my life.

(Interviewer)

You said something earlier, Sally:, about the sort of moral authority to sort of hold your own ground if you believed in something.

(Sally)

Yeah, yeah.

(Interviewer)

Would you say that's a key thing to remember as you learn about Greenham?

(Sally)

Yeah. But while understand that - I mean that loosely, because, because the moral understanding that everybody's moral ground is going to be a little different. And you've got to respect that too. You know, like, you know, my, my boundary is I cannot buy anything from Nestle. I just can't, that's it! But, you know, I can't condemn people who do, you know. Because we all have our -

(Interviewer)

I don't buy anything from Krups because a friend's parents were used as slave labour.

(Sally)

Oh!

(Interviewer)

By Germany during the war. I mean, they survived but -

(Sally)

Yeah, it's -

(Interviewer)

I just can't bring myself to hand over my card.

(Sally)

That's right. And there are certain lines, I can't cross. But maybe it's a good thing that you can cross it because you might be able to get them from behind in a way that I just can't. I mean, we all have - it's that thing of learning to trust and, and, and not con - not condemn each other over the minutiae of -

(Ann)

Why don't you start looking at the Labour party happening again now?

(Interviewer)

Don't get me onto that until we've finished this! Are you saying that in a way Greenham is impossible to remember?

(Ann)

You had to live it really, I think if you had to be there in a way.

(Sally)

I think like all history, the people in, from the future will look back and draw conclusions, you know, and we can tell our experience - being in it, I mean what I learned from it is going to be different from what people looking at it we'll learn from it.

(Ann)

And that will be different from what I learned from it!

(Sally)

Yeah, sure. Everybody -

(Ann)

We all come out of it with our own different set of stuff.

(Sally)

Yeah. Yeah, but that probably doesn't help. (Laughs).

(Interviewer)

Having things like the Women's Library will help to, hopefully not have everything remembered in those stereotypes that you were talking about earlier that you will see the diversity of experience that comes through from the women.

(Ann)

Yeah, that would be good.

(Sally)

I'm really curious to know, I mean, will there be a computer to pick out various, of all these thousands of women? Or are there going to be main themes? Will people have really different ideas? Because it, it was such, everyone will have unique takes on it. I'm curious if there's a bottom line or several - I'm just curious about it. Because there will be people who have utterly different views about it, about it all and that was okay. That was really okay. And, and it rocked like a boat sometimes, it really did. Because there were no holds barred. People would really yell at each other. But they would listen as well. I mean somebody decided that I was a CIA spy at one point.

(Interviewer)

It's the accent!

(Sally)

It was horrible! I was just absolutely devastated until a friend said, 'Well if you're a spy...' and we're you know, counting out our pennies and cafe, 'Where's your money!?''

Both

(Laughs)

(Interviewer)

It is difficult looking back, do you think it's, can you be objective? Really objective looking back at the past?

(Sally)

Oh, it feels so coloured. It feels so coloured. I do notice when, when women get together what they, what they, we tend to talk about is funny actions that we did or what happened when, you know, and how this or that bailiff you know, in the middle of the thing when, when Mary was running around and sprinkling thyme around him in a circle with saying, 'This is giving us lots of thyme. (Cackles).' Stuff like that. And, you know, it's...

(Interviewer)

Those are fun times.

(Sally)

We think of the stuff. We made that pearl, the peace stuff. Who was, who was lovely. Somebody gave us a chunk of raw silk or something that was what - and so we decided to make a dove and we stitched and we sewed, we made this very pretty bird and climbed up a tree. There were big trees leaning over the fence, stuck it out as far as we could. And there's - before we were even finished doing, that there were three soldiers down there squaddies with, 'There are women in a tree! They are, they are putting something in the tree. What is that?' 'It's Pearl, the peace dove!' 'It appears to be a dove of peace!'

**Both
(Laughs).**

**(Sally)
You know, that kind of stuff! You know, it was it was fun! It was nuts. It was really nice.**

**(Interviewer)
Obvious question here. What was the worst time? The lowest time at Greenham?**

**(Ann)
I think the, well the first time Cruise came out that felt really, really grim, didn't it? I remember that. And that was the morning after that, that we painted my car.**

**(Sally)
Oh that's right to cheer ourselves up. And then we stencilled animals, and then all the conversation was okay, it's in there. It's gonna stay in there. How can we keep it in? That was quite funny. And, so yeah. I think, I think for me, low times were when there weren't enough women.**

**(Ann)
I quite liked that, it was nice and peaceful.**

**(Sally)
And there was lots of activity. Well it got peaceful later, but when they were coming in and out of the gate, and there were scary soldiers, you know, I mean, when there was a lot of nastiness going on, and it was you and one other person holding the fort. That, that, got that was, that was hard. That was hard. And you'd try to figure out, would it be better if I joined another gate? Or should I stay here and keep this one open?**

**(Ann)
I suppose it was different for you because I always had the option of getting in the car and going home.**

**(Sally)
Yeah it was my home.**

(Ann)

Or getting on the bus and going home. Yes, it was a big difference.

(Sally)

And sometimes, and the other would be true too, you know, if you'd had a really rough week, and then, you know, a load of a load of women drive in from Italy or something.

(Ann)

Thinking their going to have a big party weekend! (Laughs).

(Sally)

With their big smiles and lots of booze and, and, 'Where should we put this? Where should we sleep?' 'Anywhere you want!'

Both

(Laughs).

(Sally)

Yeah, 'Over there!' (Laughs). So it was hard sometimes to be as hospitable as we like to be. You know, Yellow Gate were just nasty. They didn't, weren't nice to anyone, because they had so much of that. But we managed to pull it out and be nice to people most of the time, but it could be exhausting. Trying to be a hostess when you hadn't slept very well for a week because of the noise and the hassle. So that was hard sometimes. And I think actually, that's why you, end up with I think we were quite exhausted. I think that's what I meant when I said -

(Ann)

Yeah, I think that lack of sleep, there was quite a serious lack of sleep.

(Sally)

Yeah, yeah, it was just, it was very tiring.

(Ann)

Because you never knew what was gonna happen in the middle of the night.

(Sally)

Yeah, it was great when we had the night watch. Lots of people would just come - we couldn't believe it - and just roll up and say, okay we're the night watch and we'll sit up tonight you guys all asleep. It's like how can they do this? (Laughs). How can they do this? We were so grateful.

(Interviewer)

What, um, we're getting towards the end now. What would you say the impact of Greenham was on, sort of feminism in the UK? Have you ever thought about that?

(Ann)

No, I never have.

(Sally)

Well, what happened next was, you know, the backlash and you know. Um, so it didn't seem to have any at all. I think all those liberated young women went out and did a lot of amazing things. I mean, I bet you'll find out that vast quantities of women ended up in women's aid working, you know, in some kind of way went off and became social workers and you know -

(Ann)

Counsellors.

(Sally)

The voluntary sector, lots of psychotherapists and artists, um, but doing really brave things.

(Interviewer)

Are you still involved in any sort of causes or?

(Ann)

We don't really have time, we got the kids! (Laughs).

(Sally)

The last thing we did was was when they were trying to fly calves, veal calves out of the airport down the road.

(Ann)

Oh yes we did something then, that was before Nathan.

(Sally)

A load of Greenham Women set up camp - but we didn't go did we, we brought food. It was hilarious we just thought oh no I really don't want to sleep in the mud now! Yeah, but we all campaigned against the mobile phone mast stuff.

(Ann)

No, we don't do much. But I think, I think probably we would do if we didn't have Nathan to take care of.

(Sally)

I mean, what Pixie and stuff -

(Ann)

I feel like I'm almost ready to do something again some days these days.

(Sally)

Yeah.

(Ann)
Just feel a bit of a stirring as well.

(Interviewer)
A change in the air?

(Ann)
Yeah, a change in the air.

(Sally)
You know but you have! You, you work for Adoption UK. You're actually changing policy in Welsh Government all the time about how children are dealt with in school. All children not just (Inaudible) good way in but but that's what, what you do. I worked in women's aid for years and years and, and Pixie in, over there well, Arwi set up forest school where in Wales, you know, and locally. So, so everybody's doing, you know, you've just sort of immersed your life, life in -

(Interviewer)
But very much affected by Greenham really.

(Ann)
Well I think that sense that you can make change and have agency -

(Sally)
Yeah. That's true, that's a really big thing. Yeah, yeah. But you can change the world. You can. Because just because you can do it and then see what happens.

(Ann)
Just by speaking truth to power kind of stuff.

(Sally)
Yeah just being brave enough.

(Ann)
Just saying what needs to be said.

(Interviewer)
Those are two really strong achievements of Greenham.

(Ann)
Yeah. Definitely.

(Sally)
I think a lot of women once menopause hits, a lot of women say, seem to say, I just don't give a shit anymore. I just say what I think I can't be bothered worrying about whether or who I'm offending. But actually, that's what it felt

like at camp. And I lost that there. I just don't care if I'm gonna offend anybody.

(Interviewer)
Early menopause?

(Ann)
Very early! (Laughs).

(Sally)
Well there's something about just not, not having to cater to this sort of patriarchal ideal about how women are supposed to behave. We didn't have that. We just didn't under - on any even subtle levels, because there weren't any men. You know, and you could see the difference when a man was there. How, it's so hard not to get into a thing of looking after, making you feel alright about it, you know, don't be threatened by all these women. And you could - and we just ditched that and said, 'Go home, Henry!' God.

(Interviewer)
So when sun went down, the men went. That was it, end of the day.

(Sally)
Yeah.

(Interviewer)
Bye, bye.

(Sally)
Well.

(Interviewer)
And there wouldn't have been that many there during the day?

(Ann)
There wasn't many in the day. There was very few anyway.

(Sally)
No, but sometimes bus loads of people. You know, 'We're from Manchester CND, and we've come to give you wonderful women all of our support. And here's loads of clothes. And here's some money. And here's, here's lots of cake!' We got lots of cake. And chocolate and little bottles of whiskey. Yeah, and -

(Ann)
We did drink a lot.

(Sally)

Sometimes they would set themselves up and have their pictures taken by the fence it show that they did they made this pilgrimage, you know, and, and stuff. But they, you know, they were mostly respectful. Occasionally, no it was there - it would be women who would come with their partners and want to stay with their partners, their male partners. And then they'd have this big row and sometimes we'd think they were planted because it did cause all this ruction, you know, oh my god, it wore us out. Defending women only space was exhausting. And I think they were plants. You know, this is something that really winds them up. So go wind them up.

(Interviewer)

Did any of the women stay and their husbands leave?

(Sally)

Oh, yeah.

(Ann)

Oh, yeah.

(Interviewer)

On the spot they made a decision?

(Ann)

Some did. Yeah. And certainly some of them came back ...

(Sally)

My parents came to visit from the States and they came for the day. And um, they were Republicans, you know. And my mother came first she was going to do it with me. And she was just appalled by what she saw. My dad was appalled by the fence, just the fence and what was behind it what we were doing there. But you know, he went back to your flat in Reading at the day on the train and missed the stop, and had to figure out how to get back. And my Mum stayed.

(Interviewer)

Sadly, still lots of nuclear weapons in the world.

(Ann)

Looks like there's going to be a whole lot more.

(Interviewer)

Do you still fear a nuclear holocaust?

(Ann)

Not in the way I used to. I'm far more worried about climate change and plastics.

(Sally)

Well, the whole thing it's like sink or swim people, we've got to grow up.

(Ann)

I mean, there was there was a period when I was at Greenham, where I used to look at the sky and literally imagine that any second there could be a nuclear bomb or missile.

(Sally)

I know. Yeah, a lot of people came because that's how they were feeling. But they just couldn't stay home. They had to feel like they were doing something. Yeah. And that's, that was the sort of Earth Mother thing, but they very soon stopped being Earth Mother because it was just too much -

(Ann)

And you can't live with that level of fear for too long can you.

(Sally)

And, and actually confronting what you fear is really helpful.

(Ann)

Yeah.

(Sally)

And I love, that's what I love - what gives me hope is, you know, the young people in America, you know, about gun stuff, and how that whole, that high - that bunch of high school kids have just, you know, transformed the stodgy old, white, male thing about we have to do what the NRA tells us to do. And, and all those kids that that didn't go to school, you know, to say, 'Are you thinking about us?'

(Interviewer)

Oh the climate change thing last week?

(Sally)

Yeah. And it's not just climate change. It's everything. What are you fucking irresponsible adults, doing here? Except making our world impossible for us to live in? And they're shouting about it. And I think, I think -

(Interviewer)

That's really hopeful.

(Sally)

Really, really hopeful. I just hope there's enough time before you know, me, that's all wicked. Well, I sort of feel like, at my age, I just think thank, thank god, you know, that there is a response arising now. It's full of energy and the Me Too thing, you know, really start - really naming what I was just absolutely nobody's been allowed to name. It's like, no we're liberated, don't mention

that bit. That's, that there's truth coming out, I guess. And politicians can't really lie anymore.

(Interviewer)
Hmm.

(Sally)

Although sometimes they seem to be getting away with it. But that's because they've left - I mean, education is just a spin. I was brought up to be a thinking citizen, that's what they said school was about and the teachers took that seriously. You got to be, in a democracy, you have to have an educated electorate, and you have to be able to debate and you have to be able to think about issues so you know how to vote. And that's all just gone now. It's all worksheets and to test, apparently.

(Ann)

Although the new Welsh curriculum when it comes out -

(Sally)

Welsh curriculum's going to be great,

(Ann)

It's supposed to make them all think again.

(Sally)

But in America, all those neglected people in every possible way of course, they're going to rise up the first person who says I hear your pain. But anyway...

(Interviewer)

I think that's it unless there's something else you would love to, to share or a strong statement to make at the end...

(Both)

(Laughs).

(Interviewer)

It's been great listening to you. Thank you very, very much.