

## Jane Hickman

Jane Hickman, thank you so much for joining us today to talk about your experiences with Greenham Women. Can you start by telling me what how did you come to represent Greenham Women? What, what brought you there?

**Well, I suppose it's like, the way most lawyers get their clients, which is you're sat in your office and the phone rings one day, and a voice on the other end says, 'I need a lawyer.' So it was, it was like that really. I think I'd just about barely heard of Greenham. And the way I would have seen things at the time is, that's not my politics, really. I was more a (Inaudible) socialist feminist and a separatist women's camp in a muddy field wouldn't inspire me with, you know, organising the revolution or whatever.**

Yeah.

**So - but I still thought it was very interesting. I'd been doing a lot of feminist stuff in London, I mean it was post Thatcher. So it was a terribly depressing time. And the only real signs of life - forget socialist feminism, forget the labour movement, forget all that because that was being progressively squashed out. But feminist stuff actually was really bright. And I have to say the old radical feminists were the ones who were, kind of make, certainly making the publicly visible protests and the Women Against Violence Against Women. And Reclaim the Night was really hyperactive. So I was quite happy to be representing feminists. I felt very at home. I've been a very active feminist myself for quite long time.**

Yeah. Were you, were you based in London?

**Yeah, at that time, I lived and worked in London. I was at a legal aid firm, kind of lefty Legal Aid firm in South London, Brixton, Stockwell borders.**

Right. Okay. And what, what around what year was this when you've got involved?

**So that would have been the summer of 1982.**

Right. Okay so quite early on. Yeah.

**Yeah. And the call came from one of the women who had been arrested and had taken part in this action where a load of women had got in through the front gate, and taken over a sentry box. Then they'd eventually been flushed out by the police after quite a period of spirited resistance, singing of songs, and the weaving and so on. And they were flushed out, nicked for breach of the peace. So now, that's normally a very, very minor charge. I mean, it's not even a charge. It's, it was, it is a civil procedure. You're not accused of a crime, but you're just accused of breaking the peace. And if the court is satisfied, you've broken the peace, they order you to keep the peace for a period of time or else you forfeit a fixed sum of money. It's usually one year,**

fifty quid. But you have to agree to that. That was the thing. So I thought, okay, let's see what we can do. I've represented people on that before, and you can have a bit of fun with it. So I rocked up to a meeting of the Greenham sisters. And there they were singing and knitting and weaving and holding hands and having a great time basically (Laughs). And it emerged that what they wanted to do - I think I got my trainee, I had a trainee solicitor at that point, because I had been at the job for a bit by then, not that long. I suppose I'd been in the law for about eight years and qualified for five years. So we discovered that what the women wanted to do was that they had, they had a saying they would say, 'It's not us on trial, it's them. And we'll take our case to them.' So they were very firm and very clear about that. So we agreed, I'd have to get some barristers to represent them. And we needed to try and work out what a defence would be. So I remember flicking through a law book when I got back to the office. Well, in fact, it was a massive encyclopaedia, about fifty volumes and it was the only book a solicitors firm would have is this wretched encyclopaedia, which was a bit of a tease because it would give you a taste of the law but not really answer any detailed questions, which is why you solicitors back then had to use barristers. Not quite such a problem these days with the internet. So I was leafing through it and I saw the genocide act and I thought hm, come across that in Stockwell very much. Let's have a look at that. And of course, all of the provisions had been laid out post post World War Two. Europe, led by Britain had enacted various deducted various conventions that outlawed genocide. And this seemed to be the right quarter to begin because clearly what the women were upset about was the proposed advent of cruise missiles. And the thing about cruise missiles is they would fly, fly very close across the ground thousands of miles to their destination and then land with pinpoint precision by which they meant within one-hundred metres. Although of course, if you're standing one-hundred metres away from their target, it's no, no comfort to you if you've been blown to smithereens. And the problem with that is, of course, the early warning systems that the Soviet Union had set up wouldn't detect these in time to do anything. So it was a kind of step towards a first strike nuclear weapons system, instead of what had basically been a philosophy of massive retaliation, mutual assured destruction. So it really was a very toxic proposal. And as we were late to find out when we were preparing the case, fifty-five percent of the population of England and Wales live within one-hundred miles of Greenham and one-hundred mile radius is the area that the cruise missiles would be fired from. Because at any sign of tension, they'd be taken out from the base, they travelled to some remote spot where they would conceal themselves in a forest or farm, barn or whatever, and be fired as necessary. So the only way to combat that at the time of particularly high tension would be to blanket one-hundred mile radius of Greenham with nuclear missiles and a first strike. So we'd upped, we were proposing, we and the American government, we're proposing to up the anti. Turn this into a, one of those shootouts, you know, who shoots first wins. Yeah. So, I mean, this was arousing really strong passions. And interestingly, it was particularly among women. And the peace movement had always been men and women together, and there hadn't actually been any notion that it was particularly an issue for

women. But I got to know very quickly talking to these women that it was particularly an issue for them, because they looked at their children, their small children, and they thought about the 'Protect and Survive' leaflet that was coming through the door, telling you that what you should do is you should build a shelter under the stairs with maybe an odd door that you might have lying around and some bits of polythene in your four minute warning, and fill it with enough food for you all to last for two weeks and try not to breathe too much air. You know, and these women would just they would be weeping with just the pain at the thought of having to do that. You know. So, yeah, it was kind of an unstoppable force. It was really powerful. So we got, we got ourselves together. If we want to take the case to them, then we have to come up with a bit of expertise and not just emotion. So we decided that we would call some expert witnesses. We got the barristers in and we started having meetings and I think there were about eighteen women in that first - well, the silo was the first big action that (Inaudible). And we worked out the defence and we've got expert witnesses. We got E.P. Thompson, who was really such an esteemed historian. He really was huge stature. Erm, the Bishop of Salisbury, Bishop Baker, and we got a woman doctor, Cleary, from the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons as experts and come the day, we're all congregated at Newbury Magistrates Court. Vast crowd of women outside and, you know, some press, not a huge amount, because Greenham wasn't big news at that point. In fact, hardly any - I mean, if I hadn't really heard of it if I didn't, if I wasn't really up with it, then I think actually, probably most people weren't.

Absolutely, yeah.

Because I did have reasonable antenna. So we got into court, and we had, you know, I think we were, they were tried in two groups. So I think we had - perhaps we had just eleven in the first group, which would be the group that had actually got inside the sentry box. And prosecution presented their case the main exhibit was the wife of an American officer who'd wanted to come and shop in the canteen and she hadn't been able to get in because of these unruly women disrupting the front gate so her shopping trip had been entirely spoiled. So you can imagine the irony that kind of was poured on her by the women who were worried about their day being spoiled by a nuclear weapon (Laughs). And it kinda went on like that. And because the police always had great fun poked at them because the police were, they were inherently absurd as a counterposing force to the Greenham Women because the Greenham Women were entirely non-violent and didn't buy into this idea of the state having this monopoly on force. Well, they let them have the monopoly, but they didn't - they weren't impressed or interested, or scared or worried. And it was of no consequence to them compared with being nuked out of existence. So the police officers had rather a hard time. All of this was immensely entertaining. And then we got on to the defence case, and that's when the fun and games really started. Because now the case really was brought to the magistrate. So some of the women's sang their evidence, some of the women's sang their evidence with a chorus. I remember, because, I think my

recollection is was, was it that trial? One of - no, it wasn't that trial it was another trial where the daffodils appeared, because it was springtime, so I can't quite remember what all the props. But anyway, it was just very, very, very funny. And the theatre was absolutely amazing. But of course, the thing - it was inevitable, I suppose, that they were going to be found guilty of the breach of the peace. Looking back, I didn't even - at the time, I actually thought it was possible that the magistrates would just say, 'Yeah, you're right.' Because the emotion, the power of what they were saying was such and when each of them gave their evidence about what had brought them to Greenham, and mostly it was women, which I'm not entirely but a lot of little children. It was just, I found it overwhelming. But, of course, what the magistrates didn't reckon with they thought, I'm sure they'd be thinking, well, it would just dispose of this all right. We've, we've found it proved and now will you agree to be bound over to keep the peace? And they weren't expecting what came back at them. And it was something I'd found very difficult to wrestle with. I had only ever defended people in criminal cases who wanted to be acquitted, and who definitely didn't want to go to jail. And I knew, well I'd been obviously in prisons through my work, that life in prison is pretty hideous. Even for a couple of days, it's hideous. And er, but I knew what they were going to say. They said, 'No, we're not prepared to be bound over to keep the peace.' And the magistrates were so pained like, they were almost like, 'Please, please don't make us do this!'

(Laughs).

But there is no alternative. There's no - they weren't going to back down. So the magistrates had to do what they obviously didn't want to do and send the women off to jail. And the effect of that was dynamite. Because the press was stunned and awed. Because these weren't just now a bunch of troublesome women who kind of making free with the taxpayers shilling to defend themselves against nonsense. They were actually going to be martyrs. And it is a sacrifice. I mean, to go to prison. I think it's more common now. But back then it wasn't. It really wasn't. So I think some of the CND people had been doing it. But they'd been doing it quietly without this level of publicity. It was the combination of the women and the testimony about the children, the expert evidence. There is a lot of razzmatazz. We're also probably lucky because it was within reach of London so journalists could get there and back reasonably easily, all of that helped. And so off they went to prison. And that was, that, so that was that was the first case. The barristers acquitted themselves heroically arguing until they were blue in the face that genocide was on the edge of being committed. We lost - well, we didn't lose. We won. We won.

Yeah.

And then there was another trial of the remainder. They'd all gone off to prison. Anyway, when they came out - see, this was really what launched Greenham I think. I don't think there's much doubt about this, because that

was in October, late October '82 I think that trial happened. And already the base had planned this big demonstration, Embrace the Base on Sunday the 12th of December, Close the Base on Monday, 13th December. And normally, you know, you might have had five-hundred or one-thousand in response to that call I would think. But, as they came out of prison, the journalists were waiting with the cameras. Some of the journalists have brought champagne which wouldn't have been the women's choice I don't think. They wanted a nice cup of tea! (Laughs). But they had the champagne bottles shaken in front of them. Great razzmatazz. And they all said, 'Come to Greenham!' 'Women of - if we can do this you women in Britain, you can come to the base!' So from the 12th of December, I mean, I was there from - I think I stayed actually, I stayed over the night, which I try not to do very much, because I'm not a camper. I'm not a happy camper lets say. But you have to show willing.

Yes.

So er, so in the morning, everybody's waiting anxiously and these buses start to roll in, and they rolled and they rolled, and they rolled. There were just more and more and more of these bloody coaches and buses arriving packed with women and cars and women walking there. And it was just, it was like, oh my god! What have we done? This is incredible. And erm, I don't know what the, wild estimates, but I think probably the most reliable, about thirty-thousand women turned up.

Yeah, yeah.

And considering where Greenham is, because it may be convenient for London journalists, but it really isn't convenient. And women had travelled from old parts of Britain - might be the United Kingdom, this United Kingdom. I'm not quite sure how far they came from. But they came, I know, some came from Scotland.

Yeah.

And er, and these wonderful images of the base decorated with all these mementos, and, you know, pictures of women just, you know, looking like they're shopping. They're going along with a coat and a head scarf and a bag in their hand. And er, just trotting along the fence, and finding a position and standing there. And then we did all hold hands, and we reached all the way around. So that was the 12th. And then on the 13th, yes, the base was closed. There was just the sheer weight of women lying down. There just weren't enough police officers to carry them away (Laughs). That did it. And there was some very determined attacks on the fences. So it was an immense success. But of course, the price of success - there are, there's always a price to pay. The price to pay was well, you have to do something better next time.

Yeah.

So the women started talking about what they could do next. And I know what was planned that they would dance on the, one of the silos at dawn on New Year's Eve. I think there were other things planned. Don't let me suggest that only the things I were involved in were the only things that were planned! (Laughs). They were doing stuff all the time, every day, they were doing some sort of, some sort of something. Erm, so the - come New Year's Eve, all the lawyers were standing by. Got the whole of the the original team all waiting for a call and no call came. So in the end, I guess we all thought, didn't happen. Maybe they couldn't get in. I don't know what happened. But actually, they have got in. They'd done this magnificent dance on the silos and they're these wonderful pictures of all these women holding hands on top of the silo with the sun rising behind them and a couple of police cars, beaming their headlights at them. Fabulous imagery! It was just brilliant, and fantabulous, fabulous photography as well.

Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

Yeah. And er, but our phones hadn't rang and they said they phoned and phoned us and nobody answered! (Laughs). And, I don't know, we don't know. I mean back then phones are not reliable like they are now. You're were always getting crossed lines and odd clicks and calls not getting through and two calls come at once. Phone System was not, not as you know it now, but even so, and all of us. So it, we ended - we suspected that it had been deliberate to separate them from their team. So they had picked some other lawyers, but I think quite quickly, they missed what we'd brought to it. And they came back to us. Because we had been, I think all of the lawyers were feminist activists and that's important. I mean, it does help a great deal if the lawyer and the client are aligned in their belief system more or less. So we got that case ready and this time, a new twist. We decided that we would just have women witnesses. So same thing, trial took place. Oh yes with the daffodils er, spring so everybody happy bunches and bunches of daffodils and all the supporters bought daffodils and daffodils flew to and fro (Laughs), through the court. It was just again, it was, it was lovely. And it was great having women witnesses, and we got some very interesting women. There was Dr. Stuart, who was a medical researcher based in Birmingham, and she had done the first study on survivors of the nuclear bomb at Hiroshima. And she was the first person who'd worked out the type of damage that radiation causes to human cells and human, human DNA, in particular. So her work had been, you know, epoch making. So of course, being a woman, she worked in a small shed at the back of the main university building on obviously, string and chewing gum budget. But er, she was so full of insight. She was, she was elderly, and distinguished, and a bit growly, she was a bit like a crocodile. And she was captivating! So that was great. Another witnesses we got was from America, and nun. And she'd done the ground breaking research on the Hanford Nuclear plants, which is somewhere on the East Coast. I'm not sure if it's Pennsylvania, or somewhere north of New York. But she found that the community around Hanford had an absolutely

statistically impossible rate of cancers, and that the same type of DNA damage was happening to workers and families and residents around nuclear power stations that had happened when, that Stewart had found when she was in Japan. So it was pretty powerful evidence. And the third one I can't remember. I think, I'm not sure if it was Dr. Cleary again, I think it was somebody medical. But er - or maybe it was a philosopher, it'll all come back to me one day. And I think the the evidence was more onpoint this time, because it wasn't just a religious objection, or a historical analysis, it was actually the hard science. And that did rather point the way forward for this particular group of women as I'll go on to relate. Same thing happened. This time thirty-six women went to prison. Huge headlines again. Because you could see the media and the government and everybody starting to think, where's this going to stop? How many women are going to go to ... we can't, we can't sustain this number of extra prison places. It's going to require - because actually, there aren't that many places for women and in the English prison system. You don't want to be sending them in batches of thirty-six at a time. That's quite a extra numbers digest. That's when it started to get rather nasty and they started changing tactics. The Newbury council got involved on the basis that this was a disgusting nuisance, and residents themselves had had to come out clear all the trash and rubbish left on 12th December which were these wonderful mementos left on the fence - so disrespectful. And the Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine announced in parliament that it would be necessary, in certain circumstances, for the British police to shoot the women with live ammunition because obviously, we couldn't let it get to the point where the Americans were shooting British, it's like ... (Laughs). Yeah

(Inaudible).

They didn't say, 'Don't shoot these women.' That, that obviously wasn't part of their repertoire. And the women just treated that with complete contempt and the invasions of the base had now kind of cranked up to a point where really it was an open gate. Everybody had bolt cutters, and was just cutting their way through the fence. Every couple of nights they'd be a new incursion. But in terms of mounting the big spectacular, what next? Well, this is where it got really interesting. So there was a meeting in in the early summer of '83 of a group of women who had been involved in the, in the sentry box case. Because they weren't - there were one or two crossover women, but mostly they were different women. So the sentry box women got together. And because these women were some of the most early occupants and supporters of Greenham there was a nucleus of really effective organisers among them. Which may be wasn't so necessary later the whole thing was done collectively by women at the camp. But in, at the early stage, the support tended to be outside the camp. And although, you know, it, it was formed a larger proportion of joint efforts of the women in the site and the women outside the camp. And so these women with an organisational bent, including me, got together and said, 'Well, what can we do next? What on earth can we do next?' And so we're tossing ideas around and out comes the idea of, well, why don't we sue the government? And then well, we could, why

don't we sue the American government? It's not the British government that's doing this. Why don't we start a court case in America? So this, (Sighs). Yes, and we've only got, what, maybe three months to do it, because the nuclear weapons are going to be coming in October. So we've got three months, we'll just take a whole load of women over to New York, and I'll find them somewhere to stay, and we'll get lawyers and we'll sue the president. That's kind of reasonable, no problem! Before the internet, before mobile phones, you know, when air flight was still really expensive. But never one to duck a challenge. Yeah, okay, let's do this. So, first thing, I went over to the states on my own because I'd been to high school there for a year and lived with an American family as a scholarship student. So I had a little base there and they were all quite lefty and lived in Radek, a small town in rural New Jersey that was a Jewish settlement established by Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the new deal for Jewish garment workers from New York. And these poor garment workers have been stuck on a pretty much a collective farm in the countryside in New Jersey. Currently, they lost their tractor and it was only sometime later they discovered it under a load of animal dung. They weren't Practical Farmers, but what they were was they were poets, artists, musicians, composers, singers. And it became this artistic enclave and I'd had the immense good fortune to end up there for a year. So I returned there and said, 'Help.' And they said, 'Sure thing!' So I got lined up with them. They said, 'You have to fundraise.' I said, 'How on earth am I going to do that?' They said 'It's easy. Just ring people up and ask them for money!' (Laughs). So they got me on the phone. And it was so easy to separate Americans from their money at that point. I can't tell you. Affluent Americans just handed over their dosh. So it was a foretaste. I wasn't going to be the fundraiser, but at least I could see it wasn't impossible. I had some friends over there who directed me to the Centre for Constitutional Rights in New York. So we teamed up with them. And they were, they were quite sceptical at first. But gradually they were persuaded that maybe this was possible and, it might be a good thing. But they were very much taken up with action for indigenous people in South America, a lot of Pacific cases for Pacific Islanders who'd been shunted out by the British and American governments from the various places that they'd lived, so that bases could be stuck there. So the CCRC eventually agreed somewhat reluctantly. And we agreed a basis for fundraising and I came back to England and we met again, and we said, 'That's a brilliant idea.' In the first sentry box case, half the women had been Welsh women. And we'd be meeting as an all English group at that point, because the Welsh women mainly lived in the Rhondda Valley, and they were mainly married to miners, came from that particular community. And they weren't affluent, and it wasn't easy for them to travel, whereas the London ones tended to be more affluent and more able to get about. But we organised, we said we can't do it without the Welsh women, so we'll get them in on it too. So we enlisted them and they were absolutely for it. They were splendidly supportive. So now we had the group. So we, we selected a number of us to be administrators, lawyers and run it and a load of them to be plaintiffs who would go over to the States and fundraise, win publicity and take the court case, so that's what we did. And in three months, we had the



whole thing organised. We had funding for everything - flights, the Welsh women needed winter clothing that was fit for the weather - well, I think we all did, but some of us funded our own and, you know, there was so much to do, and we found it within - we built up an American support base, and they found this accommodation for must be in about twenty-five of us across New York. We'd be billeted - I spent one night in a plush, some sort of film person's pad with this deep, thick carpet and the rim was contoured in layers. It was, it was, it was very odd, very unusual, like an inverted pyramid. And the next night I was in some sinkhole with cockroaches (Laughs) . But eventually I found a staple billet where I stayed for most of the time I was there - very nice people. And I worked at the CCRC for a month on the case. And that was, for me, was brilliant! Wonderful. What an opportunity for a lawyer at that point, because their way of working was completely different from what we - on legal aid. A legal aid order meant one lawyer, no more. If any other lawyer appears then they're doing unpaid. But there they were working in teams of four, five, six on a case. And you could see how that actually stimulated this wonderful exchange and creativity around the legal end of it. And we got together a huge dossier of expert witnesses from all around the world. And we also mobilised in England. Well, I was a member of Lambeth Women for Peace by them, having swallowed the whole ... absorbed the ideology. And er, Lambeth women's, Lambeth women for peace did quite a lot of work on this. And what we devised, which came out of an interview with a journalist Duncan Campbell, was to put a peace camp outside every American base in the United Kingdom on the day that we went into court. And the beauty of that would be that we'd mobilise women all around the country. Well, I've learned from Duncan Campbell, rather to my surprise, that there were one-hundred and two US bases in Britain, and they spread from Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Lewis, all the way down through the country. Yorkshire, wales, lots in Wales, lots in Suffolk, Kent, you know, wherever you look, London - they were everywhere! Staggering. One of the women in Lambeth Women for Peace was a designer and she made a polystyrene cut-out of England and stuck one-hundred and two little US flags, one on each base, and photographed it and made this beautiful poster. So the poster got distributed around the country. And it invited women of Britain to mobilise outside their nearest base and we'd tell them what the day was when we got a bit closer. So that was huge. It really, really was. It was really far reaching. And of course, it just stimulated everybody to write to their MPs and to send money. So we'd set up a, an office for what - the group was calling itself Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles. And it had a little office, inside my office in this firm in Stockwell. And checks were flooding into us, checks for flooding into the camp, checks were flooding into the CCR in the States. And it raised a shedload of money. So the money that came to me went into a proper trusty bank accounts. The money that went, the money that went to the camp went to camp purposes, which I never inquired into (Laughs). The money that went to the Centre for Constitutional Rights, I suspect helped fund the next year of their work for indigenous people all around the world. And if that's so, then brilliant, absolutely brilliant. So that was lovely. The level of support was fantastic.

Amazing.

And as we approached the time when the missiles were supposed to come, which was supposedly the end of October, we were so fortunate that a very, very brave woman who worked for the Ministry of Defence leaked the proposed date that the weapons were to come. And sadly, she ended up serving a prison sentence for doing that. And I was always very sad. I wished I'd represented her because I think she'd have had a really good crack at an acquittal. So we knew that the weapons are coming on 9th November, so we got the British peace camps lined up. On the day, 9th November, we trooped into the federal court, second circuit, federal courts in New York to file our suit, as they would say, and to apply for an injunction. You're allowed to apply for an injunction without your opponent being there if it's urgent. And it was urgent now, having left it the very last minute. But notwithstanding that the representative for the federal government turned up with District Attorney for the Southern District of New York and that time that was when Rudy Giuliani so there's us and Rudy.

Goodness.

And the plan was that the lawyers would ask the judge to recognise, to admit me for the day, recognise me as a British attorney. And I have prepared the most wonderful address about, you know, the Royal prerogative having been abolished in the United States or the human (Inaudible).

Yeah.

So one of the lawyers stood up and introduced me and said to the judge, 'And so I'd like to ask you to admit Miss Hickman.' And he said, 'No, I don't think so. Proceed.' (Laughs). So that was the end of my day in court. One of the most entertaining bits was watching Rudy Giuliani, because the women as usual, were pretty irrepressible. And they made him so nervous. It was really quite funny. So we made our application, the lawyers laboured heroically all day, and the judge was, 'Pff, on your bike.' In American ...

Yeah.

We're not interested in this. And so we turned down. But we had our pyrrhic victory again I think because we were top item on the news on the network's all the way across America, ABC, NBC, CBS, you know, we were it! All over the papers, more money, more money, more support, more letters, more anxious people. They were setting up peace camps when I left in lots of places in America. I've got a magazine here somewhere for one at Seneca in north of New York State. So I think we had a big impact.

Absolutely.

**So that was it. That was great. And we, and the case ran for a bit. Because we we'd been in on a, on this kind of one sided no notice application. So we had to go back a week later for the on notice application. And we got the same dusty answer. And we were back about fourteen months later at the beginning of 1985 on appeal. And perhaps not surprisingly, we lost that as well.**

Did you see any difference between the media in the States and the media in the UK around, yeah, around the protests and the cause?

**Well, that there was a difference. I mean, the price of going to the States had been that we had to tone some of the stuff down. And the Centre for Constitutional Rights hadn't wanted a clown show. Which we were very good at generating at Greenham.**

Yes.

**Because it just took the piss out of them. It undermine - it deflated all of this pomp and ceremony. But that wasn't going to be what we were doing there. So we were playing this kind of rather more straight. And I don't know if it was in response to that, but the American coverage seemed, more respectful and less ... I mean, British coverage was a mixture of ... it kind of conveyed a mix of hilarity, bemusement and disgust in varying quantities (Inaudible). But we got treated pretty seriously out there, which was great! I mean that's much more the American thing because, as everybody says, they have a different sense of humour. Can't say they haven't got one but it doesn't work quite the same.**

Yeah.

**So that was it. Then we came back - what next? It was getting really difficult to beat that. I know a load of women went off to the Soviet Union as it then was and I knew they were very effective in making connection. Meanwhile, the life at the camp was getting evermore brutal with the bailiffs now on their case all the time. Any of the women's possessions that were found on the ground would be picked up and chucked in one of those rubbish disposal trucks. And it was horrible, and it was cold and it was wet and it was gruelling through the winter. And I don't know how they did it. I couldn't do it. Even in a tent, I found it just about intolerable. I think doing it without a tent would be just - I don't know how they did it. Very brave, very determined, but by now there were a vast number of women at the camp. And it was, it didn't go in any one direction. It was kind of aiming everywhere. And we know it hit its target, as it were, if I can use a military metaphor, because after the Iron Curtain had dissolved itself and the wall had fallen and the Soviet Union had dissolved, Gorbachev was over here, speaking to a group and one of the other Greenham Women, one of the women who'd been on all of these actions and gone to America, Rebecca Johnson, was there when he said, he was asked why he changed his mind as to the strategic posture of the Soviet**

Union, in relation to nuclear weapons. And he said, 'Well, it just became apparent through all the protesting that was going on in the West and things like Greenham Common that the West, people in the West didn't want war anymore than people in the Soviet Union did. So it was a no brainer.' So that was explicit recognition that what we'd done had made a difference. And I was very happy. I was, I thought, I'll settle for that. I'm not sure I've ever done anything else politically that's made much of a difference.

But yeah, that's quite a big one isn't it. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. So that was it. Anyway, so I kept on for another - over the next year, there was there was quite a lot well into 1985. There were, there was a wonderful - it was, I'd, I was, I had no idea this was going to happen but twenty-one women got into the base, and they managed to steal a US air force bus. So they all loaded on board singing and, you know, making merry and drove around the base as dusk fell, pursued by this cavalcade of American trucks and British police cars and sirens and people with guns and trying to intercept them. But of course, the base was a great big flat space. So only sooner did they get in front of them, and the bus would nip around them. They didn't actually want to cause a crash so ... this went on for a really quite a long time until eventually, they were corralled and dragged off and charged with stealing a bus. Not with the normal little offence of taking them driving a motor vehicle, which is lesser but actually with stealing this bus. So they got a Crown Court trial, it was fabulous. So when we were preparing this, I think had different teams at this point. But there were twenty-one of them. And at that time, any defendant in a criminal trial have the right to object without reason to up to three jury members. So if you don't like the look of them or feel they're not your kind of person who can strike them out. So it wasn't used that much. But it was typically used if you saw somebody with a suit and tie on, especially if they were carrying the Telegraph or the Times, they'd be off the jury! So we plotted this carefully, we got into court and what happens is a crown court summons a panel of jury members, so they probably have forty - on a Monday morning forty or fifty panel there. And er, but we had sixty-three objections between us. So first jury member comes up Mr. So-and-so, object. Mrs. So-and-so, she's sworn. Miss So-and-so she's sworn. Then there'd be six men in a row because it was generally about three to one male to female on juries. Why? Don't know. Why did that happen? Maybe the women weren't on the electoral register so much, because that's where it came from. So we didn't even have to use up the whole sixty-three objections to get an all woman jury.

Nice.

So nice. And er, so we did the usual and ran through the evidence, and I can't remember if we called experts, we may have done. And got to the end of it, and the jury retired, came back. 'So have you appointed a foreman?' 'Yes.' Forewomen actually. On the charge of stealing a bus how do you find the defendants, guilty or not guilty?' 'Not guilty.' Just, (Laughs), victory! So that

was, that was, that was good. That was a foretaste of what was to come because a lot of people have now done this, and been acquitted. The Ploughshares case they were acquitted. I think there's been aircraft cases where they've been acquitted where they've obstructed aircraft from taking off with migrants.

Yes.

There's been a variety of cases where acquittals have been secured on that kind of a defence, so that was wonderful. And it kind of rolled on. I was in the High Court sometimes and sometimes Magistrates Court. I know, we had one big Crown Court trial, that this was, I think, probably the last one I did. And the Daily Express had infiltrated into the camp, journalist posing as a Greenham Woman, and apparently should be treated with generosity. She didn't have a sleeping bag, she was given one, she was fed, stayed there for three or four days, and then did this disgusting expose in which she said they, you know, they're sleeping in silk sheets and conditions of great comfort - all of which was completely untrue. That was in the Express on the day the trial started. So we applied for the trial to be stopped on the basis that this was so prejudicial, because it meant, it meant that they were saying basically these women are hypocrites.

Yeah.

So the trial was stopped and the Express was reported to the Attorney General, who obviously must have deliberated for a long time before deciding to take no action at all. But actually, it was a deliberate interference with the process of justice. So they should have been done for contempt of court.

Do you know who the journalist was?

I can't remember. I've probably got cutting somewhere in my archives of cuttings, but haven't got it to hand. And what was happening through all of this was a transfer of skill from the lawyers to the women at the camp, and they were becoming more and more able, and confident in arguing their own cases. And at first, perhaps one or two would argue their own cases, but they'd mainly be represented and the ratio shifted and shifted, until really they were doing so well without lawyers, there wasn't much point. Having lawyers, lawyers are much more constrained in what they can say.

Yeah.

And they're also hostages in a way, because if the courts upset too much, they can't really do much to the defendants, but they can take it out on the lawyers. And we had a case of that. One of the lawyers was picked on, really, I thought very unfairly by a judge reported to the Bar Council and barred from practice for six or nine months. That was pretty shocking.

Yeah!

**That was, you know, it was a dirty fight in a lot of ways. They didn't play fair. Maybe they thought we didn't either, I don't know. So that was it, really. And then they didn't need me anymore. And things moved on. Moved on particularly to the Miners Strike. That was the next thing. And that took up all the energy of the Welsh women.**

Yes, of course.

**Because it was their community that was under attack.**

While you were still involved, did any laws change during that time?

**They abolished the right to object to a jury member without cause.**

Did they, during that time?

**Yes. (Laughs). It was clearly a response to our case? They did not like that. Just using the law.**

Yeah.

**I'm sure they did. I can't remember off the top of my head. They constantly changed the law. They were constantly tweaking it to try and make it more difficult. There was the um, there were the cases against the travellers. The litigation, the one that found repetitive beats that was, was it 1985 or '88? I can't remember, one of those, that tried to, was obviously aimed at peace campers and people who rolled up in their caravans.**

Did you ever come across any colleagues that disagreed with the what you were doing and the people you were defending? Did you have any, you know -

**Professional colleagues?**

Yeah.

**Not in the firm I was in the firm. The firm I was in, Fisher Meredith, was a lefty-ish firm. No, I don't, I don't think I did. I don't think they'd have communicated if they ...**

No.

**I'm sure there were the usual sarcastic letters in the Law Society Gazette. But nothing stands out. We didn't get any real professional flack - apart from the one who was suspended from practice.**

Of course, yeah.

**I don't think it erm, I doubt it advanced the careers very much of the lawyers who participated. Although I knew one of them's taken silk now, so that's not so bad.**

When you stayed at the camp, was there a particular gate that you used to stay at?

**Yellow.**

Ah right.

**Yellow was the main gate, you was the gate - the other gates were more lifestyle gates. The Yellow Gate is where the action happened. The troops, the police, everybody, the traffic came in and out. So being there meant you were in a goldfish bowl. It also meant you were there when anything happens so you could quickly react. And the women are the other gates - well, this is a terrible generalisation because everybody did their own thing really - but they had themed gates. There was a gate for young lesbians, there was a gate from environmentalists and a gate - I don't know, religious ones, all sorts.**

Yeah. And were there times when - did you ever consider if you were doing the right thing? Did you ever think, you know, what am I doing? Why am I involved?

**(Laughs). Probably. I should think I did at some of them are maddening moments, because they could play up against authority using anybody as targets. So I'm sure I came in for some of that stuff myself.**

Yeah.

**Being a lawyer, you, you get it, you get it as a lawyer. But um, nothing, you know, really, really bad.**

No.

**It was very amusing to watch - the staff at Newbury Magistrates Court didn't like it at all. There was one - a clerk of the court, I can remember we were in court one day, I can't remember who the advocate was, whether it was me or one of the barristers. But erm, his job as the court clerk is when he has three lay magistrates, they decide on the facts, but he has to decide on the law. And er, somebody had applied for something and he sat on a swivel chair. So after you applied the bench might say, 'Can we have a word?' And he'd swivel around in his chair and they'd, 'Whisper, whisper, whisper.' Unless it was going to be a really long discussion, in which case they all went out. 'Whisper, whisper, whisper.' So we asked for this, whatever it was. And er, we could hear him going, 'Whisper, whisper.' And then there was a pause, and he said, 'But how impertinent!' (Laughs). And then he swung back around again. And they said, 'No, your application is refused.' (Laughs). He was just**

**dreadful. He was - and they took a gleeful pleasure in refusing legal aid, that kind of thing.**

Yeah. Just like kind of power trip.

**Yeah, yeah.**

Yeah. What did you find most difficult about being part of the movement about defending them?

**I don't think I found anything particularly difficult. I think it's difficult if you're in a firm to commit yourself that far to a cause. I mean, that's - I had trained in law centres. And so I trained to practice law on a sort of alternative basis where the objective wasn't necessarily winning a legal case, but it might be achieving publicity for something, that can change that way or mobilising people to effectively protest. But doing that in a firm, and I was, I had been made a partner in the firm in July 1983 - which I don't think was thanks to Greenham. I think it was due to my endeavours before Greenham really. But of course with that comes the expectation that you're now a key fee earner, which was a word I used to hate. In the end, I think I surrendered to it. But the idea that you came to practice law to be a fee earner ...**

Yeah.

**It's terrible, isn't it?**

Yes.

**But that's what happens. You become a partner, now you're a fee earner! (Laughs). And you have a target, and I was so off my target for the Greenham years. It was just shocking. So that was a stress because then I wasn't just working hard for Greenham, I was also working hard the rest of the time to try and get my targets, my fee targets. But I think in the end it did the firm good because it enhanced its reputation.**

Yes, absolutely. And how was working with the Greenham Women informed the rest of your life and your career?

**Erm, well, I carried on doing political work after that for a long time.**

Yes.

**And I think all of the political experiences I had when I was young - and they were many and varied, all - I mean, they give you a breadth of vision and understanding of how the system works and how society works, how the law works, how repression works, that is really enriching and enables you to do whatever it is you're doing better. Well, as it happened, I ended my career running a firm that effectively was a city firm and was, the fee targets by them**



were enormous. And that was what I'd set out to do. But at the same time, I know I did it better, because I had this huge overview of what makes everything and everyone tick. So I guess I just put it down to extremely valuable life experience.

Absolutely. Erm with protest now - I know there aren't protests on the scale of Greenham - but would, you know, how different would legal consequences be now, with some of the actions that Greenham Women were taking?

Well, you know, there are really powerful similarities between what XR are doing and what Greenham did. I just see them doing stuff and I think, yeah, that would have been worthy of Greenham. That's - I think, bringing the pink boats out and parking them at key intersections I got (Laughs). I had to, I was like, yeah, respect. (Laughs) I just think it was great. And XR has mobilised similar numbers. But I'd say it's a bigger feat to mobilise women in those numbers. But I think the law comes, comes down so much harder on people now. And not just that, but the police have been given a huge array of powers since 1982. If you look at how the criminal law changed from 1982, until erm today, that's the last thirty-eight years and you want to say how heavily is a citizen fettered today in trying to make an effective political protest compared to then, and there's just no comparison. And now they're trying to enact a bill that would just give the right to cancel your protests, hand it straight over to the police. You're making too much noise. You're upsetting people, stop it go away. And if you don't go away, you're under arrest. And I just think, I'm sorry, that is not compatible with the right of free assembly and freedom of speech. I can't conceive of how that could be possible. You know, at every stage along the last thirty-eight years, they've been making the criminal law tougher. The Labour government was in, they - how many new criminal offences did they create? It was three-thousand and something. Maybe four-thousand by the time they went. So they were both at it. I mean, what happened was they weaponised fear of crime as a political issue. And that was a terrible thing to do. Absolutely terrible. If you look back, I got the memoirs of a commissioner of Metropolitan Police called Harold Scott, I think he was the years immediately after the war. And it's really interesting reading his understanding of crime, which is it's not between the victim and the alleged perpetrator. It's between the state and the alleged perpetrator - the victim has no part in this. And yes, I can see why the demand grew for the victim to have a say in this, and for the whole notion of victim, the position of victim to become so central to the way we look at the law. But I think it's cheated people. I think it's created expectations the law can never match. And as it's done that it's taken away all the freedoms that we had. So I think it's a pretty grim picture now.

Yeah, I mean, that's - I don't think anyone can believe that they're trying to put the, you know, push this bill through. So many things politically, recently you think well, yeah, that's never going to actually go through but we can't ...

**I don't see how it gets - they push these things through. They push them through. They've got a huge majority.**

Crazy.

**It's shocking.**

Yeah, it really is terrifying. I know a lot of - we had an event, a couple of Saturday, the Easter Saturday of Greenham Women online. And several, there were several women who are going to be coming who were at Kill the Bill protests instead.

**Yeah, yeah, good for them.**

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. So finally, what do you think is the legacy of Greenham? Or you know, what is the legacy and what, why do you think it's important for future generations to know about it I suppose, if you do.

**Yes, no, I think it had a huge impact. And on so many different levels, it's hard to sort of list them all. But I think it made a huge difference to the women who participated. And over its existence, which I think continued for seventeen years the protests.**

Yeah. Yeah. 2000 ...

**A vast number of women went through it, I mean, comparable to a university probably.**

Yeah.

**And it just leavened a couple of generations with just that sense of the power that women have, and that women can operate really effectively on their own. And if you think about what it was like, I mean, in the early '70s, women couldn't even get a mortgage without a male guarantor. You know, it was almost, it was very, very difficult to enter into any contract, get a bank account. Until 1970, women were being sacked if they got pregnant. That happened to my Mum. So we weren't far out of that. And I, it takes such a long time for attitudes to follow an enlightened piece of reform, fully follow them. And I think Greenham was massively helpful. I think when the thirty-thousand women turned up, and the images of those women were - these are ordinary women, these aren't fancy, you know, they're not metro - well, we didn't talk about metropolitan elite back then. But they're not metropolitan elite, and they're not all actors dressed up in fancy clown clothes. It's just ordinary women, their shopping bags come from the day. So I think it was, it was, it will, it's operated at the level of how people imagine themselves, how they conceive of themselves and their capabilities. And for the women who actually live there, the effect of that will have been huge. I think it sparked similar camps and movements all around the world. So many countries had peace camps set up by women in the wake of Greenham. So it, you know, it**

**was all part of the great movement of women. Probably the end of the second wave of feminism, something like that. And the, er but you've got to remember that that was happening at the same time as the neo-conservative vision of finance, capital becoming a key motivator of everything. How we organise and live and acquire housing and provide services and so on. And which has so destroyed the humanity of so many projects, including the one you were talking about teaching - that they're almost unrecognisable. But through that, there are growing these buds of spring, which are things like XR, and now watching what young women are doing, which I don't necessarily agree with all of it - but I think good for you guys. I am not of that generation, I mean different generation, my heads organised differently. But yours is getting really kind of well together now. So I think that's great.**

Fantastic. Thank you so much, Jane. It's been such a pleasure talking to you.

**Thank you. Very interesting! Yeah, thought provoking.**

It's been lovely.