

Joanna Mattingly

So, we've just been having a brief chat about your involvement with Greenham. So let's start with how you first came to hearing about the Greenham common and being a Greenham Woman.

Joanna

Well, really, it was my mother who came to Greenham and I think she visited at least once. My mother was a refugee from Nazi Germany, she - or actually Austria. She was very much pro the underdog, hated nuclear war. My father was a Quaker, and she came with a friend who was a Quaker called Diana. Rachel was another Quaker friend of hers, and another lady whose name I don't recall and if I ever knew it. And they decided to stay in the guesthouse. My mother would have camped, she always camped. She went camping on her own with Quaker groups and things like that. And I've got a set of photographs, which show the four of them by the barbed wire with Rachel holding a walkie talkie and my mother lying on a camp bed with a big grin on her face. And they, when they got to the guest house, in their anoraks and, you know, in an old banger, the guesthouse owners looked extremely worried and they said, 'I wonder if you could make yourself scarce on Saturday night, because we've got all the big wakes, all the officers and people on Greenham coming for a meal.' So they did make themselves scarce. And I just guess that might be a sort of story you haven't got, you know, it's something slightly different. But the other bit I've got is from a book called *The Chief as Grain* by Diana's husband, Morris Barley. And I think it's sort of quite telling, because there's a paragraph on page one four four, 'When an anti-nuclear camp was set up at Greenham Common in 1981, Diana's pacifist convictions came to the surface again. On one occasion, a mass demonstration there included Diana, Karen, Susanna, three generations of Barleys. Eventually she found the militant feminism at Greenham not to her liking. But a Quaker led demonstration at Molesworth represented her feelings. She and friends stood silently outside a barbed wire fence with police and their dogs on the other side. It may have seemed only a gesture dictated by contents, but since then the missiles have gone.' So I think that possibly reflects people who went in good faith, found it too militant and she clearly went more than once, Diana Barley, who's long dead and erm, you know, found other places to protest. And my friend who had come from Bury St. Edmunds also said she went to Lakenheath. So, very often, there were spin offs into protesting at other camps.

So how, how old were you when your mother was doing ...

Joanna

Old enough to have gone to Greenham, erm, but I was living in London and beyond university working, I think, and erm, probably I would have gone if I'd been at university still because there was a group who were sort of friends. But it was, it was, it was beyond that for me. But actually Alex went.

Oh really? This is Joanna's husband. (Laughs).

Joanna
Do you want to swap?

Alex
I went twice.

Joanna
You'll have to come here.

Alex
We had visitors and I lived in London and visitors, we went to Cambridge, which is not too far away from Greenham. And on both occasions we went to see the site of the camp. Nothing was happening. But I remember the fences, which often had things tied to them, attached to them. I can't remember in great detail, but I remember that. And I remember quite a lot of debris on the inside of the fence as well, but not much else. One thing I did remember because I took photographs of this and gave them to a friend who put them away, of very well done graffiti on a bus shelter. And that's another visual memory of what went on there. But effectively, that's all I know. There were no guards there at that stage and no protesters.

Joanna
So it was after the protest?

Alex
Or between protests, I don't know. I think, I think it probably after the protests.

Joanna
I think Greenham's not in Cambridge - not near Cambridge.

No it's Newbury.

Joanna
Yes.

Joanna
Yeah, but it was on the tour that we used to do to Cambridge. IIAnd then you sort of circled round?

Alex
(Inaudible). One of the people I took there was, was a Brazilian journalist, A TV journalist who knew about the Greenham Women and was very keen to erm, to see, see anything that was happening. Nothing was happening. (Laughs). That's it.

So Joanna your - how long was your mother at Greenham for?

Joanna

I think it was, it was probably a long weekend. And erm, she may have gone another time, but I just remember her telling us this story.

Yeah.

Joanna

And she died - how many years ago? It's got to be about ten, ten or eleven.

Alex

Yeah.

Joanna

So er, and I think the friends have also died. So it's sort of ...

Yeah.

Joanna

At least that's the older generation.

Sure. Being around, you know, obviously, a young working woman at the time of Greenham, how do you think Greenham was portrayed in the news and the media?

Joanna

I think incredibly negatively. And my friend Heather was saying that, you know, it was all hairy lesbians and, you know, anti-men brigade. And, you know, I think if friends of mine had been going, I might well have joined them. But I, you know, as I say, my mother did her own thing with her mates. And I wasn't particularly involved with the Quakers at that point. So again, I think Quaker groups from London would have been going.

Is there anything else you'd like to say? I mean, any other - did you, did you know anybody else who was at Greenham other than your, than your mother?

Friend

I've got a work colleague in Cornwall who went as a fifteen year old with her mother. And I think I'm finding if I talk to people, almost, you know, variably people will say oh I went or, you know, my friend went or something like that. So I think, I think it was erm, you know, widely supported. I think, I think, I supported the aims but I didn't feel I needed to be there.

Friend

Yeah, sure.

Joanna

I think that's probably probably the sort of thing.

Unknown Speaker

And there were several people at Quakers actually touring meeting, who you would never have imagined that they would go to Greenham. But they went for that particular event Encircling the Base. Yeah, somebody else had actually offered hospitality, I think it might actually have been a Quaker meeting, in what's the name -Newport in South Wales, offered hospitality to the women when they were walking to Greenham. So there was, and you would never know, unless you talked about peace in particular and looking back on our lives, that there were quite a few round here who, in some way or other, had had some link with Greenham. Of which they're really, really proud. Actually, whenever women who've had anything to do with Greenham talk about it, there's a real pride.

Yeah, I was gonna ask like, how do you think Greenham has influenced protest today and the peace movement today?

Unknown Speaker

Well, I could speak for ages about that. (Laughs). Yeah, my turn will come. This is your interview Jo.

Sorry. (Inaudible).

Joanna

I think the problem with a lot of protests is that they're, although they were peaceful, the reaction was quite violent. And I think that to my mind that still goes on. I'm probably someone who actually talks to individuals rather than - actually I was put off group activity at a very early age, I was bullied at school, because I stuck with a friend who was being bullied. And that's marked me for life. And I think that's tended to mean that if there's a group activity, I, I walk away from it, I'd rather do things as an individual. And that's possibly a bit different from my mother. But that's me being honest. That's where I think I'm coming from.

And the decision to make Greenham, you know, a women only camp, how do you think that impacted?

Joanna

Um, I was sort of comparing it with Suffragettes where I think actually making the Suffragette movement women then was actually a mistake, because there were a lot of supportive men and I think Greenham was slightly different thing. There were other camps where men could go and obviously my husband went and took friends. But I think possibly the comment Diana made about it being too militant, was that it became rather polarised. And a bit more extreme because of that, you know, it wasn't then just women. It was militant women, it was, you know, and probably partly in reaction to the sort of reaction they got that things tend to get more extreme the longer they go on.

And yeah, any any other, I suppose, observations around the time of Greenham regarding, yeah, just the impact it was having at the time?

Joanna

I remember conversations with friends in London, in my London bedsit, and it was probably Greenham or soon after. And my friends were convinced there was going to be a nuclear attack. So I did, and I don't know if it was related to Greenham or what. But they were absolutely convinced that we were in imminent danger. And it wasn't just one or two, it was about three or four of us. I kind of went common sense will prevail. I don't quite - so I don't know whether things were being hyped up at that point in time. And there were news stories that people were, you know, sort of taking on board and take it at face value. But I do remember this sort of very intense fear among my friends in the 19, it would have been the 1980s. It was probably, thinking about it, it was probably post Greenham, it was it was probably about '87 or eight. But you know, I think that was sort of legacy.

Yeah. I mean, compared to, I suppose what we hear about the Suffragette movement, do you, can you sort of see a difference - I mean, obviously, there's a difference. I mean, I've put my hands up and admit that I had hardly heard of the Greenham Movement. But,

Joanna

Yeah.

Obviously we have been taught about the suffragette movement. And this -

Joanna

Yeah.

The suffragette movement is more, you know, taught.

Joanna

I suppose my comparison would be the Suffragettes got all the glory, good and bad. They got the publicity. They got the the really unpleasant force feeding side of things. They were middle class. The Suffragists who were there from, well, really 1870 onwards, maybe even earlier were working class in the main and they were pacifists. So it's a sort of - Greenham's quite an interesting mixture of that because it's pacifist, whereas the suffragettes definitely weren't. A certain amount of working class, certain amount of middle class and probably uneasy juxtaposition, but you know, I, I think there are similarities and very great differences. But I think what I'd probably say is that where the Suffragettes got the publicity in the good and bad, Greenham probably detracted from other protests. It became the major one that everybody was focused on. But there were plenty of other you know, Lakenheath was an American base, Molesworth. You know, there were plenty of other places where protests were going on, perhaps in a quieter way. And, you know, perhaps the spin offs.

Yeah. So going back to the fear that you, that your friends had at the time and I suppose the fear of nuclear weapons, how, how do you think that compares to that fear now?

Joanna

I've never had that same conversation again. And as I say, my, my sense is it was probably about '86, '87 something like that, and may even have been - but it would certainly have been for 1990. No, I think it was it was quite visceral. It was a very bizarre evening. And I'd heard the same programmes but my take was completely different.

Yeah.

Joanna

But I think I think, you know, Greenham probably raised awareness and made people aware that, you know, a nuclear attack could happen and you know, I think it was a much more discussed issue.

Yeah. Do you think that had anything to do with the fact that it was an all women camp perhaps?

Joanna

Erm, the people I remember talking to were women that, you know, that may be, may be significant. But as I say, I think, you know, the negative side was that the women were slagged off.

Yeah.

Joanna

Really, pretty badly. And, and I think I don't, I mean, Helena can probably say more, I think that one got a sense there were factions. And it wasn't, you know, there were different groups, all, you know, wanting to control things. But, yeah.

And have you had, or have you seen any representations of Greenham? You know, in I think there was a film, you know, any stories, or what have you sort of heard?

Joanna

I think the main thing I heard is what we were talking about earlier, which was an archaeological dig that happened about five years ago, and nobody I've talked to remembers that. And it was on the radio, and probably on an afternoon and they were treating it like a serious archaeological dig. And they, because they had the oral history to some degree, they could sort of relate that to patterns of fires. And they hoped that that might also inform prehistoric societies with campfires because they found a lot of objects around the campfires, (Inaudible) laughing, they found a lot of objects close to the fires, and the further you got from the fire, the less objects. And so that

was one pattern, socialising around the campfires. The other pattern they found was when people were being evicted from the camps, then there was a scatter of dropped items, because they were being moved so quickly. And that again, you know, related to this, you know, sort of that behaviour, and I don't know if the results were ever published, but they ought to be somewhere on Google or whatever.

Yeah. We can dig that out.

Joanna

Quite literally. Yeah.

And the photographs you mentioned earlier ...

Joanna

The photographs I was saying are colour but that, you know, it's sort of everybody seems to be wearing really muddy colours, greens, and browns and dull, you know, oranges and things. There's no bright colours. They basically look like scruffs, a pack of scruffs my mother and her friends. You know, I can just imagine the guesthouse people going, 'Oh my God, we've got another lot. What are we gonna do with them?' You know. And they dressed down, because they, you know, all of them could be quite glamorous if they wanted to, but they were definitely dressing down for the occasion. And they came to light because I had, if I ever knew, I think at the time, I think my mother retold the story about the guesthouse, but I didn't see them as far as I know, until my mother's memorial, which is about ten years ago. And they came out, my sister found them and we went, 'This has to be Greenham.'