Judith Baron

How did you come to be part of the peace movement?

I originally started, I joined CND because I was quite sort of anxious and depressed about what was going on um, with you know - nuclear weapons, and I sort of went on demonstrations, and then one day we had a trip to Greenham, a day trip with the CND group. And then I was just sort of hooked, really.

Yeah. So what year was that, that you went?

So I first went, it was about '84/'85. And so it wasn't - I wasn't there at the beginning. And but yeah, I went originally for quite a few weekends. I just went with a friend of mine - Maggie, we used to go down there for quite a lot of weekends. And then I, I went back to college to do a degree when I was in my late 20s. And um, I took a year off and spend that year, well 9 months of living at Greenham. So I was there sort of, you know, towards the middle, the end.

Yeah. And how did you hear about Greenham?

I think through CND and through the.., and also there was loads of stuff in the media - you couldn't really miss it. (Laughs). It was, it was always on the news, 'These dirty smelly women', that I became one of!

And how did you feel about how it was represented?

It was, well, it was very negative.

Yeah.

As if, you know, there was such a variety of different women from different backgrounds and, you know, they made it sound like everyone,

you know, they had a real sort of stereotype. Even one of my close friends said to me, 'I didn't think you were that type'! (Laughs).

Oh really?

It's just like - shows the power of the media.

Yeah, definitely. And when you got there, was it what you expected?

I'm not sure I really knew well, actually, I did go once earlier on with my sister and my mum, because my sister had been a few times. And I can't even remember when that was, but it was early. And it was one of the really big demos. And the women were blockading the van, and I'm not very good in crowds anyway, and it just sort of totally freaked me out, really. Because, you know, the police were dragging women, and it was just a bit overwhelming. And I didn't go for a while, but then when we went with the CND group, and it wasn't, you know, a huge event, um, I just, yeah, it was sort of - it was different. And I really, it was just nice being around the people that felt the same. I mean, that's why I joined the peace movement really, because it was really scary, and all the like the protect and survive stuff was going on when the government were like sticking things through your door about what to do in the event of a nuclear attack, which was just a joke, and sort of just you know, it was the first time I'd done an all women thing, and that was really quite powerful as well. Yeah, I, I don't think I really knew what to expect.

Yeah.

You know, 'cause you hear all this negative stuff - I didn't take any notice, I just went! (Laughs).

And and you mentioned before you were there for nine months, is that right?

Yeah.

What made the, what was the decision process for you to stay?

Well I was actually doing quite an unusual course I was doing a degree by independent study where you wrote your own program, and it sort of evolved - it started off as a diploma, and then I took the year to go to Greenham, and then went back and did the degree. And I started off just doing - it was going to be about the peace movement in general, but then it sort of evolved into low level radiation, and its effects on people's health and the environment. So it just seemed like a sort of natural thing to do - to go to Greenham.

And what camp did you stay out? Did you stay at numerous different ones?

Um, yeah. When I used to visit with my friend, we'd usually used to go to Orange Gate, and then when I moved there I went to Orange Gate, but I was only there for a short time and there were only a couple of us, and we had - there was quite - well I think they'd closed the gate because there weren't that many women, and then me and someone else went to open it and we didn't have a car, and we had quite a nasty vigilante attack. The other woman that was there had her tent slashed and it was quite scary. So that we then went round to Blue Gate. And then I spent quite a long time at Woad Gate, so I was sort of between Woad and Blue, but I probably felt that Woad was my gate.

And like previously people have talked about the different personalities, or the different kind of ethos's of the gates - did you find that as well when you were there?

I think because I was there later on, um I wasn't there at the beginning - there was sort of less women, but yeah, I think Woad was sort of small and calmer.

And how was Blue?

Quite young! (Laughs). I mean, I was, I was in my, in my late 20s, but a lot of the Blue Gate women were very young, and quite immature. (Laughs). Funny, a few of them live in Hebdon, and just like, you know, they were like children at the time, so we're all adults...

Do you still like talk to them about Greenham and stuff like that, or is it...?

Not that much. One of the cafes in Hebden - we had last year, an exhibition of - it's only a tiny little cafe. And I had some pictures done, I've got some pictures, and then more and more women were bringing stuff in - someone from CND sort of set it - it was her idea and we're trying to find somewhere like the town hall, but they're like, fully booked for over a year. So we were trying to find somewhere to, because more and more women were like bringing books newsletters, you know, all sorts of, you know, and I'm sort of more of a visual person, and one of the women that I knew quite well from Greenham that lives in Hebden was saying 'We all need to sort of write down now our memories a bit,' but I'm not so good at sort of writing descriptive things. So for me at the time, I just always had a camera and I just took loads of pictures. Just had a book of some of those done, because at the time, it was just oh well, I'll just take a few pictures. And it was only sort of recently that I started actually realizing how you know, historic they are.

I was talking to another woman and she's part of an LGBT choir. And I said to her, why don't you start a Greenham and women's choir? Because the thing that she loved about it so much was the music that came out of it, she still gets really emotional talking about it. And there's so much like, stuff like artistic stuff around it, which just. Anyway!

I'm - singing's not my forte! I have got the Greenham songbook someone produced - that was at the time. Yeah.

And, and what made you decide to leave?

That was because I went back to college. I still visited a bit, actually, when I was at Greenham I got quite involved in the Aldermaston camp, which is still going - which is once a month and we used to go there for the weekend. And I carried on going there for about 11 years.

Oh gosh. Yeah.

So um, but yeah, it was just, you know, I had that sort of time off and went back to college. (Laughs).

And did you make friends or me any partners there and are you still friends? Like you mentioned you have a little community of Greenham. Women.

Yeah, the women here - I don't see them all regularly, in-fact I've been in Hebden - I'm originally from London - I've been in Hebden 11 years, and some of the women - I'd heard from other women they were living here, and it's, you know, some of them I've only seen in the last couple of years. So it's not many I see regularly - I see them occasionally. But I have kept in touch with, with other women. There's someone in Brighton - there was a group of Brighten women used to come to Greenham, and one of them - Jenny, I still, in-fact I'm going down to Brighton in March. So I live there, so I'm going to see her, and I've got another friend - Jackie, who moved from London to Norfolk, I'm still - I see her probably, I don't know - once a year, once every other year or something. And my friend, Maggie, I don't see her that often, but we do sort of speak a couple of times a year. And so, you know, there's a few people that I've met. Well, actually, Maggie I met at CND, but she was the person I used to go to Greenham with, originally.

Yes. And how important was it to you that Greenham was a women only camp?

Um, I think before I went, I wasn't - I'd never even sort of thought about it. But when I, when I was there, I think it was, you know, quite an important. And just because it sort of felt like a sort of safe space and

also, you know, you felt more - I don't, I think it was more creative, and also because it was totally non-violent. I mean, you know, I know there's a lot of men, you know, that are non violent, but there are some, you know, and I just think it had a different dynamic. The police never quite knew how to handle us! (Laughs). Because we were, you know, we might be singing - well not me personally, but, you know, I think it was, you know, it was quite important because, you know, there were plenty of other mixed things going on, and I think, you know, when I was in CND obviously that was mixed, but I just felt like there was more chance to, you know, to talk out and express yourself. Sort of a different dynamic.

Yeah. And did you - have you taken that forward in your life after Greenham - that you kind of championed women only spaces or is it just something that you - that it's useful to know about?

I consider myself a feminist. I've got my partner trained, he's got me - he gets me a Suffragette (inaudible) (laughs). Yeah, I think it has made me a lot more aware of, you know, the way that women, you know, are treated in places and even, you know, even here, they talk about equality, but, you know, like a lot of women - we were involved in the women's movement and feminism. And I know there's more equality in some ways, but then in other ways you feel like, sometimes I feel like we've gone backwards from the '80s.

Yeah. And in terms of nonviolent direct action, did that work for you? And how did you see it at Greenham, and were you involved in it?

Yeah, I don't think violence solves anything. So doing things non-violently was, you know, that was, you know, really important. And as I said it was, the MOD and the American servicemen - you know they just found it quite quite strange. But, you know, I don't see how you can say that you want peace if you're not acting peacefully yourself.

Yeah. And what, were you involved in any kind of non-violent actions

as well?

Yeah, yeah. And, you know, we'd talk it through, and it felt very supportive. I think that was another thing about working with women, you tend to sort of go through things and, you know, look out for each other. And they used to do sort of workshops, and things like that.

Yeah, I've heard a lot about when kind of consensual decision making as well, and having a talking stick, and things like that. How did you feel that worked in practice for you?

Um, mostly, it's (inaudible) dynamic sometimes. But yeah, yeah, I think it worked. Yeah, pretty well. And yeah, non-violent direct action, as I said, I think it's really - I remember going on, I think it was on a demonstration - of being in London, and I can't remember if it was for the Iraq War. Anyway, it was something, you know, some peace demonstration. And someone - one of the women saying 'Sit down', because she felt it, you know, and I, some of us sat down, and then there was there was some, you know, men that were just sort of going 'No', and sort of shouting and it just, it felt horrible because it went you know, totally against - what's the point of, you know, campaigning for peace and non violence, you know, when people are being, you know, there's a difference between being assertive and, you know, I don't have a problem with, you know, attacking machines and things like that! (Laughs). But, you know, being violent, you know, goes totally against, you know, anything being peaceful and I think, you know, I think that was a strong point of the camp - being totally non-violent.

And you've mentioned this a little bit previously, but in terms of the relationship with the men around you - kind of like the police or the squaddies, or the men on the base, how did you feel they reacted to you? Could you talk a little bit about it?

It varied, I mean, some of them got quite, you know, because their normal reaction to anyone - as they see causing trouble - they expect aggression back to them, so they can be quite aggressive. They were

the odd one or two. They were quite good humoured and took it, on but a lot of them were quite - and especially the Americans, they were like very sort of protective of their base and used to get quite angry. Um, and a lot of like the men locally or going by would be not, you know, there was some that were supportive, and men could come during the day as long as I didn't stay over. So occasionally there would be like a group would come out - like, I think when I first went with the CND group, there were a couple of men. But you'd get other men from the area who would come around who would be quite abusive. When I was a camp at Aldermaston, that was, we were - originally the camp was at Falcongate, and there was a pub there. And that was, you know, the men would come out when they had, when they'd had a few drinks and be quite, quite aggressive. But as I said, at the time when I was at Orange Gate, with one other woman and we'd gone to bed, and some men came round, and they actually - they were sort of shouting, and they actually slashed her tent and she screamed. And I'm a bit of a coward. I just froze. And then they went off and then I got out of the tent. I was really shaking. But you know, there were quite a lot of sort of negativity. Well, a lot of local people didn't really didn't like, didn't like us being there. But um, you'd just get some men that - it's fine if people want to disagree, but you know, when they're being aggressive, it wasn't good.

And did you have any bailiffs come when you were there?

Yeah. When I was first there, and especially when I was visiting, they'd be there quite a lot, and they just sort of grabbed things and it wasn't very nice. But then over you know, I think by the time I was actually living there, they didn't really bother much, they'd just come and take the rubbish. I think there weren't as many women and I think they'd just sort of given up a bit by then.

What year was this?

‘80…I'm trying to remember when I was there. I’ve got my book with my photos. I started visiting in ‘85. It was, I think it was either ‘86 or ‘87 that I lived there.

Yeah. And by that time the bailiffs were sort of like a bit like…

A bit lower key. Yeah, when I first used to visit in the mid ‘80s they were sort of you know, full on - if you went, you know, if you went out for the day, or you went away you’d have to take your tent and put it in someone's, you know, in a vehicle or somewhere safe that someone couldn’t get it, because you didn't know when they would turn up. I mean, you know, there was quite a good network of women you know - when they turned up, letting the next gate know that they were on on their rounds. So you’d sometimes have a bit of notice. But I you know, I know pulling women out their tents to get hold of them. And I know when I used to visit you know, obviously I didn't have much stuff with me so I’d be helping, and you’d be walking up the road with whatever you could grab - so like a tent over your shoulder, walking up the road to get out of the way.

Yeah. And did you ever used to go into Newbury?

Yeah, I, because I because I don't have a car - so when I was, when I was living there, when I was at Blue and Woad I used to get the bus from - because I lived in London, so I’d get a National Express coach to Newbury and walk up. But we used to, I used to go in probably about once a week - we used to go to the Friends’ Meeting House.

The Quakers?

The Quakers. Yeah, because they were quite supportive, and we could have a shower, and there was a washing machine, so you'd go in there and have a shower and wash your clothes, and then there was a cafe in there, so we’d sort of treat ourselves and have egg and chips or something! So not a huge amount - I seem to remember there was a market there and you know, we would go in there you know, sometimes.

And interactions with the residents when you were in Newbury - did you ever see them? And would they recognise you as a Greenham woman - as somebody who was living at the camp?

Probably because you smelt quite smokey! (Laughs). Yeah, probably because, you know, we'd be wearing Dr. Martens, which weren't trendy at that time. They weren't like now, you know?

Yeah.

So, yeah, I think we would be.

Yeah. And we talked a little bit about this, but the collective nature of decisions - would you be able to talk us through how it would happen? So what it would kind of look like? You talked a bit about it before, but what was your experience of it - how did it look?

Well, we, yeah, we had a meeting - we'd sort of go around and let everyone, you know, all the women have a say. As I said, you know, when you're living together, and sometimes, you know, there's sort of tensions going on, and there will be disagreements. But it was always trying to let everyone have their say, and you know, some sort of consensus decision. I guess when I was actually living there, that the numbers weren't as huge, so it was probably a bit, a bit easier. But I can imagine when, you know, early on when there were a lot of women it would have been sort of more difficult.

And we talked earlier as well about representing Greenham and artistically, and you mentioned you took photographs and things like, and the songs, and did you see other things going on around you as well?

Well, that was a lot of like tying things on the base, and you know, sort of rainbows, and people putting stories and yeah, it was quite creative. I

remember that, you know, once not feeling - well I had my period and I had a bit of a stomach ache, and I'd gone to bed and my tent was quite near the fire, and it was just really lovely, and just have that memory of laying there and just drifting off to women's singing. Yeah, it was quite creative as, as I said, you know, I took pictures, but at the time, they were just snapshots. I didn't even think, you know, I quite liked taking pictures and you know, people you know, and the place you know, you just sort of take pictures and at the time, I didn't think anything of it, and I probably got a couple of hundred pictures - or probably more of like, because I took some at CND, so I've got quite a lot at Aldermaston. And as I was showing you, I've just had a book done - only because one of the women in Hebden was saying 'Oh, a couple of women that lived at Greenham have, you know, recently written books and we're all getting on a bit so, you know, put down your memories', but I'm not, you know, I'm not really very good at sort of, I don't feel comfortable doing written stuff, really. But um, so I scanned all my Greenham pictures, and I've made a book and as I was saying earlier we had an exhibition at one of the cafes here, and there's amazing what stuff - like even the newsletters, I don't know if any - if you've seen the newsletters, you know, they're quite creative.

Yeah, they're lovely.

And I, I only, I was only, um I only found out 6 years ago that I'm dyslexic. And, and if I, if I read a newsletter or even anything, I always like, flick through and look at the pictures and I'm more likely to read something that's just a small bit with lots - I'm quite a visual person. And so to me, I've also got some drawings I did. I'm not you know, um - some my mum was really creative and artistic, and my sister is, but I just did some pencil drawings from around the camp. Only probably about nine or ten or something, but, um, yeah, I'd sort of enjoy doing it and, you know, to me, there's no way I'd do a written book. But as I said, I've just sort of had a - just done a book of some of my Greenham pictures. And my idea is to just do maybe one of all of them for an archive, sort of archive them because as I said, it was only that someone else said, we should be, you know, recording our memories, because otherwise, you

know, people only read what the press thought Greenham was going to be.

Yeah, exactly. There's an interesting thing about dyslexia, and picking up from what you're saying about the newsletters - what I noticed is they're so colourful. And, I'm sure you know this, it's like dyslexic - people with dyslexia, it's colours as well that help them read what's on the page, and I wonder if - I just think it's a much more inclusive way of doing stuff - is to make things colorful and accessible and yes, that's what I thought as well.

Lots of webs!

Yeah.

But really because the newsletters - it wasn't, you know, sometimes if you get something and it's just pages and pages of writing I think, oh I'll do it later, or I don't take it all in. But when there's lots of visual stuff, you just want to read it.

Mine's sound. I like listening to stuff I much more pick up information by listening, than talking, or by reading. Yeah, pick it up by listening to people. A lot of people have theories about this question, but not any solid answers, which is absolutely fine. How much do you think the camp was politically infiltrated or sabotage towards the end? And was there a feeling of paranoia? A lot of people have talked about that.

Um, I mean, that there, there were - because it's come out that there were a couple of - some undercover police there. Um, I don't know about towards the end, I mean, there were - we talked about consensus, and there were divisions - I'm sure women have talked about Yellow Gate and the rest of the camp and things like that, which was quite sad and quite unfortunate.

How did that work for you - with the Yellow Gate division? How did you see that?

When I when I first used to visit, I used to go to different gates and I did go to Yellow Gate once, and they had written an article or something complaining about the other gate, and I really didn't know what was going on, and I think I actually signed something thinking, Oh, it's Greenham, you know, it must be okay. Then at Yellow Gate, they were like, they didn't want people women to go to other gates, whereas other gates they'd say, 'Well go to the Yellow Gate and see', and I actually experienced their hostility once - we went around there, I can't - there was a meeting about the sanctuary - the bit of land that was, that was bought. And one woman in particular, she was just screaming at other women 'Oh, you're well off. You've got a big house' - or something. It was to a woman that lived locally who was, she was one of a couple of local women who were really supportive - and she'd have, when it got too much for women you could stay there, and she used to grow her own veg and she was always bringing food round, and she was, she was so nice and this woman was yelling at her, and then she was yelling at other people, and then she yelled at me 'You unknown person. You're not a Greenham woman. I've never seen you before'. And you know, it was just like it's just - I've forgotten what the question was!

We were talking about your experience of the divisions.

Yeah, yes. That was the biggest...

What was the letter that you signed?

I can't - I don't even, I can't even remember. And then we got accused because we did some, some daft actions - we dressed up as schoolchildren and went on the base. I mean, we weren't wearing shorts, we were wearing our usual sort of scruffy trousers. Because we just had our hair in bunches, and they wrote that we were, Yellow Gate wrote that we were, you know, undermining, undermining the camp, but there was all this stuff - wages stuff, housework. And in fact, a few years later, after I left the camp - in London, I lived in a housing CoOp.

And after I left there - the stuff that some of those women were involved in, yeah, had sort of caused rifts and problems there.

And was there a feeling of paranoia? Like you mentioned, somebody was like, 'I don't know you're not a Greenham woman'. Was there feeling of paranoia around the camp at times?

I didn't feel in the gates, that I was in, in-fact I think a lot of women, you know, were quite welcoming, welcoming and quite, quite sort of trusting. And, you know, you know, there were women with mental health problems.

Yeah.

That might have been, you know, you know, it's sort of because it was the - because it was a safe place it attracted all sorts, you know, women including some that may not have been particularly political, or there for the - because of the weapons, but just because they just felt it was safe, you know, which is you know, fine, and you can sort of understand. You know, I tend to sort of try and get on with most people but yeah, there you know, there were - it was just so sad about Yellow Gate.

Yeah. Yeah. Wages for Housework - because a lot of people have mentioned them, as a kind of thing that...

Camden - because I lived in London, a Camden collective, yeah.

And what was it about them that caused so much opposition? Like a lot of people have talked about it, but have not really been able to articulate - not what it actually was, but what...

They seemed to sort of take over, and just sort of change the - they were quite dominant. Like Yellow Gate split, one of the women got accused of being racist, because she asked a black woman to let other women talk as well, you know, and it was just - I don't, I don't know why, I don't - I really don't understand what their motives, or whether it was

deliberate or whether they were just...they seemed quite sort of militant. I don't, I don't really know.

No, because everyone, like I said, at this question everyone's kind of like, Wages for Housework - I was talking to somebody yesterday, and I was like 'What was it about them?' And she said 'I don't even know! I can't think of what it was' like, and she was still trying to work it out all these years later - what it was that like, annoyed her so much about them. And I think it is that thing of like, she said it was that they were oppositional in a weird way.

Yeah.

And, and she still couldn't really work out why...

They were sort of quite aggressive. There's a sort of balance between being assertive and aggressive.

Yeah.

And they were sort of like, on the crest. You know? So, you know, there's times to be assertive, but, you know - I can be assertive when I want to, but then other times you sort of hold back and I don't. Yeah. I don't know either! (Laughs).

And you mentioned the action where you went into the base dressed as - or they said you were dressed as school girls. How did the decision come about to do that, and what was it like on base and were you scared? A lot of questions!

No, I wasn't - I wasn't scared, I think because I trusted women. I mean, the first time I got arrested and I got charged, but they all got dropped because it was the fence, interfering with the fence - because we were trying to unpick it. And it's funny because I get claustrophobic, so I don't like being locked in places. But then most of the time they used to lock us in - well, we were in a, they didn't even lock it, there'd just be you

know, MOD police officer was in the portacabin. And it was, it was fine, but we - I don't know, you're just young and you come up with these mad ideas.

Yes.

And one time that - my favourite action, and it was just a bit daft - I think we went in, it was somewhere near Green Gate. I can't remember exactly. But people, because the Blue Gate was on the road that led to to the, to the skip, people used to like often just stop off. And I think sometimes they wanted to give it to us, and sometimes they couldn't be bothered going any further, and they'd give us furniture. So we'd have arm chairs and sofas, and someone dropped off the sofa and we already had a sofa and we didn't want it. So we dragged it round - we went in, we had a box, we drew a television. And we took some sweets and stuff, and biscuits, and pretended, and we all sat there pretending we were watching television, and when the MOD came around, because at that time - I can't even remember when it was, after - during the court case when they found that the fence illegal, so all they could do was say we were just trespassing. Anyway, they came in and we said 'Please don't come into our living room without permission'. And actually they sort of went along with it. Anyway, so then I think they did - they did take a - I can't remember if they processed us or not. But anyway, they kept wanting someone to sign for the sofa, and none of us would sign for it. So they had to keep it! (Laughs). It was a bit daft. But other things we did were a bit more serious. And we actually, at one point they were talking about - because you know the runway, actually using it for flight - for domestic flights. And I've actually got a picture in here because we actually did post - this is outside the fence, but we did go in and we made these sort of posters - like holiday destination posters. That's outside, but we went in and we stuck through that, you know, some out saying, 'Your holiday!' So some of the things were fun, but they had a serious motive. One year I think we went in and it was, it was like the end of the year, you know, between Christmas and New Year, and we decided to try and get in like 100 times before the end of the year. But other times there were specific actions, and we also went to other

places for a few weeks, every week on a Friday. I don't know why some - just a small group of us would go to RAF Welford, which seems to have like chemicals. It was really bizarre because we'd, we'd climb in and I was never really good at climbing fences, so I'd sort of get stuck at the top, and you'd see a vehicle - anyway we'd get in. And we went a few weeks running, and it was just deserted, and they were all like these bomb cases, and chemical things, and we'd walk around and then in the end we've just go to the front, and just walk out, and they and they'd get all sort of 'Eeeurgh', and ring through to the control, and we'd just gone and it took them a few weeks to realise - we just did it a few times but we'd got to, it was quite scary. A lot of the just going in was because they kept saying it was a, you know, high security, top security fence, and a group of women with some bolt cutters - it was quite easy to get in, and I know one of the first things I did when I've not been there that long was we cut down something like 20 sections of fence. So what you do but you'd, you'd cut up and just keep a little bit on, so it wasn't obvious. And then you'd go around at the end and cut the last bits and it would just fall down, and then we'd just go back and sit by the fire. You know they never knew!

I always find like, when people talk about it, and yeah, high security but people were able to just get in, and like come straight out again.

Well, that, that picture on the front of my book, you know - that's me, we just cut holes, and sometimes you just temporarily tie them up so you could go back in again. But when - if we were going in the base usually either we'd hide the bolt cutters or someone would come back with the bolt cutters, obviously we didn't want them on us. But yeah, it was, you know, you just watch the patrol going past and then you knew you had plenty of time. And it was quite amusing, it just - for us it just highlighted the fact that if terrorists or someone with serious attempt intent wanted to go in, it was trying to make a mockery of the fact that they kept telling everyone - it was reported, you know, this high security base, they've got nuclear weapons - anyone can get in, you can do these skills or anything!

Yeah, that's what I found so eye opening like that it's not at all high security - it is so easy, and like the dancing on the silos and stuff, you can just get on them - it's fine! That's it. And, and you mentioned being arrested. How many times were you arrested?

Oh, I don't know, I have got my charge sheet somewhere - probably, maybe about a dozen.

Oh wow. And when you processed at anytime and did you end up in court? Or was it just...

Um the only time - I went to court a couple of times but then they delayed it because there was the case about the legality of the fence. So all the cases were dropped in the end. There was only one time I was taken to Newbury, and as I said, I get claustrophobic and I was put in a cell with some other women, and I was the last one to be processed. And I did say to the woman, before me 'I don't like being locked in'. So she said 'I won't mess around, I'd be really quick'.

And were you scared at any point when you were arrested?

Only that - it's the being locked in. I mean, I was never put in one of - it was sort of an open van. I know some of the women got put in those vans were like, like little cells in them and that would have - I don't like being in enclosed spaces, and I don't like being locked in. So it did put me off some things, if I knew I might end up in prison, because I don't think I could have could have coped it with it, you know. You know morally I wouldn't have had an issue because I felt like we were stopping, you know, or attempting to stop horrendous things happening, but emotionally I know I couldn't because I'm claustrophobic.

And what do you feel that legacy is of Greenham within the peace movement or any other movements - like the feminist movement or the LGBT movement?

Um, just showing the power of what you can, what you can do. But I just fed it's sad because we you know, got Greenham closed down but then they started doing Trident and things out at sea. Although it was, there was a lot of publicity about what was going on, and it was, you know, there were women from all over the world used to come, which was, was pretty amazing. Um, it shows what can be done. But I just find that now, I feel now like this, because of social media people get lots of information - might not all be accurate, but, but I don't know, just looking at things and liking them and, you know, I think it's harder to get women out, or generally get people out to actually do things. And like even when Greenham was going, there's a lot, you know, there's so much going on on so many issues that, you know, there's lots of people that are supportive that might not necessarily, you know, other priorities, or just trying to survive life. But I do feel it was, yeah, it just shows what, what you can do and that, that you don't need violence to change things.

And you mentioned you there at the end as well when they took the silos out...

Yeah, well not right at the end - I was there when the cruise missiles, or the first lot went, and as I said earlier, before we were on - I was actually on breakfast television with Joan Ruddock and Kirsty - can't remember her second name, and yeah, that was the day when they - when they went.

How did that feel?

It was, it felt like we you know, sort of achieved something. It sort of felt good, because they were just horrible. You know, when they used to take the convoys out, and it was just, I don't know - I just felt like now with the state of the NHS and things like that - there's always money, I feel there's always money for war or negative, or you know, Trident we can use - nuclear weapons, you can never use them, and they'll spend billions and billions, and there's always money for that. But then for things for you know keeping people alive, or keeping people healthy

there isn't money, and I feel it's just totally, you know, twisted. Well it's all about big business really, it's not... Yeah, I think, but it's funny - I don't know how, we had an LGBT session at work - awareness session at work, this was a few years ago. And our manager he was saying 'Oh were any of you at Greenham, or something?' But a lot of the younger women in their 20s had never heard of it. So I think it's good that you're doing this project. Because at the time, it was such a big thing whether people agreed with it, or didn't, you know, everyone knew Greenham common. And now it's just like, it's sort of disappeared. You know, there, there are the odd exhibition - I've seem bits - I know I've seen at the V&A, and even the Imperial War Museum does have a tiny little, little sort of snippet.

I think they've got a bit of the fence - or they recreated a bit of the fence at the protest exhibition - it was a couple years ago, I went to it, and yeah, had decorated it, and had the songs playing. But yeah, you're right - it was just one in a exhibition. Ironic!

But I think the whole thing is, it's just, yeah, I don't think people realise how massive it was at the time, even if it wasn't, even if it was negative- there was something in the paper virtually every day about, about Greenham. As I said, it's good you're doing this because things do get, and also if it's just written from the military, or the press side, it's quite different.

Exactly. And I found that, so when you mentioned the LGBT session at work and the trainer said 'Have any of you been at Greenham?', what was the reaction from the people who kind of knew about Greenham. Because what I found, when I've mentioned this project to people, like that are either my age or older. They have - older people, especially that probably remember it - like my parents, have a very like, 'Oh my god - that!', and they have an opinion on it even now. Like you said, like young people are kind of like, what's that? And I found that it's not even a divide. It's just like the reaction really interesting. And I wonder if you'd had that experience?

Well, one other woman said she, she went - not often but she had been. And some of the others - just thinking about it now, some of the other women that's same age as me - I don't think she responded. But, yeah, it was surprising, because, as I said, the younger women just sort of looked sort of blank!

It is bizarre. And, and till we talk about the last - when the missiles went and you were there, so can you talk me through the day, if possible?

Well, I actually wasn't at the base because I'd gone to London to go on breakfast television - they'd asked if someone would come on breakfast television. So I was on television. So I wasn't actually there when they left. I saw it on the news afterwards.

Yeah. Well, the build up to it. Could you talk about that?

Yeah, I think it was, you know, that we sort of felt like we'd achieved something and it was quite, quite exciting that they were going and, you know, I think I just saw the clip on television when they went, and it's just sort of horrible, you know, some of the planes taking off, you know? Yeah, so I think it was a mixture of so we have achieved something, but then it just feels like such a small tiny bit of, of what was going on. Because I had been - only for a couple of days - to Faslane, you know where Trident is. So it's like, you know, got rid of one lot, but it's still. Yeah. And that was horrible because you just saw where they dug a big, you know, they sort of just dug a big hole in the countryside really, where they'd put them. I suppose it, you know, it feels like it felt like, you know, if enough people get together, you can make little changes.

Yeah.

I know that, you know, there are some women that still, that are involved in Greenham that still go to Aldermaston and just keep going. But I think I just sort of got a bit sort of burnt out with it. And I sort of rather do sort of creative things. And also, I think, because I was originally in London, it was sort of easy to get to places if they were demos - getting

to Greenham wasn't that bad. After I left Greenham I went to the camp at Aldermaston for another 10/11 years, and it was it was quite nearby. I know there is, there are things going up and up in the north it just. And I'm getting older again, I haven't got the energy to you know.

Yeah. And I think what I, when I look at photos of it - like your photos, is what I'm struck by is like how damp everybody looks, as well! So like doing a stretch for nine months, my first thought is like your back must have been killing by the end of it?

No. I was in my 20s. Actually, I actually moved there in December. So it was, it was it was cold. But actually the next summer was a really hot summer. It was really, it was it was really hot. So in fact, I remember quite often just sleeping outside. But we did you know like someone donated loads of gore-tex sleeping bags. So in the winter, you you just - especially with the evictions, when the evictions were going on, you used to go to bed fully dressed, and I must admit getting into a tent, because at one point I had one of those little getaways, which were designed, you know they were that sort of like concertina fold up ones so that they were easy to take off during an eviction, but they were tiny, when you've got all your layers on, and trying to get in your sleeping bag! And I think I had like two sleeping bags - one inside the other and then a gore-tex. And in the summer it was, it was really warm, so you know, there was quite a while when you'd just sleep out. And like people used to say 'You're amazing doing it', but I enjoyed it because it was - you know, like, just being with the other women, and it was you know. It just it even though was horrendous, I think it for me it took the fear away, because I didn't feel like I was on my own - before because, you know, friends and people like just getting on with their lives, and you're thinking why can't they see what's going on? So when you're being with with other people, I mean, when I first got involved in CND It was like, you know, my life, you know, I was on committees, I socialised with people, you know, I'd be out nearly all the time doing, you know, I'd be out nearly all the time doing stores, going on, demos, going on actions. I mean, you know, I went from London to Faslane for a big demonstration. We got up in the early hours, you know, went there, got

back and I - you know, I was I was working at that point, but you spent you know, you'd be out all day, or 24 hours and still function. I couldn't do that now!

I've like also started noticing camps when - I think there's one in North Yorkshire.

Oh yeah, Menwith.

Yeah.

Well, they - I don't think that they're permanently.

I remember been driving past maybe last year in the summer, and there were tents up and I remember thinking, I wonder what they're doing? And then it's only dawned on me when I've been doing this project, it must be a peace camp and it must be a protest. And just stuff like that, that I've started noticing a lot more around me now that we've started doing this project, and I find that really interesting that the legacy is still there, but you're right, it's so hidden. And now I know, so much more about Greenham and having done the research, I feel like feel much more informed about why people are doing things that they're doing, and the legacy of Greenham carrying forward, and also like understanding people's motivations. And, yeah, it's been really interesting.

I think as I said, for me, it was just like sort of felt isolated and just going to my first CND meeting, and hearing people just sort of saying, 'Oh, you know, I feel like this and it scares me and everything' and it just sort of felt, okay, you know, you just felt like you were around other people that that felt the same, and cared, and you felt like you, you were doing something. So it sort of took that, sort of, you know, the edge of that sort of scary, scary feeling.

And this kind of leads on to this question as well. Do you think there's a reason why the Suffragette and Suffragist movement has kind of been

remembered in the way that has - like everybody kind of knows the people involved and things like that. And Greenham hasn't - in the same way? Time might be an obvious answer, but I just wanted to....

Yeah, well, I don't know. I don't know about time because people haven't heard about Greenham. Now, I don't know whether time is gonna make it any, any better. I don't know with the Suffragettes maybe because it was so sort of unusual and maybe I don't, I don't really know why some things just become, you know, known and, and I've noticed recently that like there's a lot more sort of Suffragette - it's more noticeable. There was an anniversary, but it's, and there's at work, a new manager who's, you know, younger than me, and I noticed she had some Suffragette badges on her person, and I was at work yesterday, I work in Halifax, and the Industrial Museum - I'd never been there and I knew it was open on a Saturday, and I just happened to notice it was open, I went to see if it was open any other days, but they said, because it was half term, and they had a Suffragette calendar on the, on the wall. And there's a shop in Howarth - I went to Howarth last week, and they've got children's books of women heroes.

Oh I've seen those, they're brilliant!

Yeah, and one of my friends, she's got twins, who are 12 and one of them said to me last summer 'Guess what society I'm in at school?' and I don't know and then she said, 'I'm in the feminist society' - either feminist or Suffragette, anyway so I bought her one of these books for her birthday. But I just thought it's really good they're for all ages of children and up, and as I said, my partner's brought me badges - he said he'd got them in that shop. And then the last couple of few, I think this is the third year I've got the Suffragette diary - they sell that in a bookshop in Hebden. So yeah, so it would be nice to see sort of Greenham stuff, but I don't - I don't know why there was, you know, so much stuff at the time, but then it just got brushed under the carpet almost.

Yeah. It's strange, isn't it?

Yeah.

I was talking - I've asked this question to everybody, and everybody comes up with different kind of theories as to why. And somebody said that maybe it's because with voting, it's women joining what men are already doing. Whereas with Greenham it was about forming something completely separate from men, essentially. And that's why it's kind of been ignored, and also because nuclear - like Trident is still a threat. So people opposing it is still a threat to how we live now. Or what the government, what government policy is. Yeah, I don't know. It's interesting though, and odd.

Yeah, it is odd. And I suppose like I said, it was easier to do it at the time because I, I'd worked, and I went back to college when I was in my late 20s. And then I took a year off. But I was still signing on so I'd go back to London every - and some women were signing on in Newbury. And it was it, it was sort of easier, but I always had this thought - men can get paid for going to war, and but - you can't get for, you know, wanting peace.

Oh yeah, that's a really good way of thinking about it.

And I remember when I was at a thing at Aldermaston once, and this drunk guy coming up and he was going, 'Why don't you get proper jobs?' and actually one of the MOD came over and said, 'As far as we know most of them do work' - because it was a weekend. He's going 'No, a proper job'. It's like what do you mean? And at that time I was working. And the majority were working, but, um, and they were so many women that, that supported - that didn't live at that the camp, but supported it in so many ways. And, you know, it wasn't these women that were dropouts or anything like that.

Yeah. This question is more about motherhood because a lot of people who we've spoken have documented have said that they felt like the

nuclear threat took away their choice to be a mother. And I just wondered if you had any thoughts on that?

Yeah. I, well, I felt like that - I haven't got any children. I just felt like I didn't want to bring any children into the world. And from quite a young age, I was always going to adopt. But you can't just - not having children - it never seemed the right time or something. So I never had - I've never had children because yeah, I felt like, you know even now you think, you know, with global warming and everything that's going on what's going to happen in the future? And, you know, it does sort of worry you, and that was a big - for me. You know, when I was, when I was, you know, a teenager or something I was 'When I'm older I can get married and have children'. (Laughs). But, um, yeah, and just with everything that was going on in the '80s and you know, the fears and everything, I just thought why would you want to bring children..? I'm not mocking because, you know, you know, my sisters and lots I know have got children, and that's your choice, but personally I just felt like...

Yeah. And was that a conversation that you were having with the women at Greenham as well? Was that kind of...or was it kind of...

Not really. That was just quite a personal thing.

Yeah, 'cause I found recently - I'm 30 - that a lot of my friends are thinking about having children. And something that I've been really concerned about is climate change, and how ethical is it to actually bringing a child into the world when you don't know what kind of world they're going to inherit, and a world that is, you know, if things get - it's going to end. And I find it really interesting, because it's a question that isn't kind of um - that wasn't on our original list. And as I've been talking to people, it's just kept coming up. And, yeah, I just find it really fascinating.

No, I did use to think about it. And that was the thing - there were women that came to Greenham and some of them brought their children with them. And then others got accused of abandoning them

by the negative press - got left behind with their dads! (Laughs). Poor men!

(Laughs). I know! And yeah, that was another question I was going to ask you, did you see any children at the camp? And were there any challenges around that? Because other people have been like, they thought it was an adventure playground. They had a great time!

Yeah, there were, there were, you know, some women were amazing, you know, that had, came with their children, and there were times when there were children there and, and it was quite poignant when you'd get children drawing pictures and putting them on the base. You know? It was like, you know, the future, and, you know, I'm sure lots of women that already had children must have felt really concerned about the future and what it held for them. And women with, on the other side women that did have children were there because they wanted a safer, better world for them.

Yeah, I found the conversation around women being accused of abandoning their children really quite hard to stomach, because um, especially Helen Johns - was it Helen Johns?

Yeah.

And she left her family - not left her family, she went to Greenham, and this kind of links into what we were talking about with with why it's not been remembered, is that it's such a disruption to like what society expects women to do.

Yeah.

And when you, but when you're presenting women with a world that is taking away the choice to have children, what do you expect? Like, and it's, I don't know where I'm going with this...

A lot of women were doing it for their children.

Yes.

They weren't abandoning them because they wanted to leave them, they were abandoning them because they wanted to make the world a safer place for them.

Yeah. And I also wonder if that's the reason why a lot of women haven't come forward with their stories - is because there were so many accusations at the time that they weren't fulfilling this role of a woman. So the history of it has kind of been hidden, because - I'm in no way blaming people, because I wouldn't want to do either if that's the response you're going to be met with, but I wouldn't also if that's why it hasn't been documented, because people are too - maybe too traumatized to talk about it, because of the reaction they had at the time, maybe?

Yeah.

But I do find it a really interesting conversation about motherhood and Greenham, and the role of a woman essentially in society.

Yeah. And why shouldn't the men - the fathers look after them for a while anyway? It's not like they abandoned them and just left them on their own! And you know, even women that lived there would go home for weekends, or a few days. It wasn't like you were tied there once you went - you didn't have to stay all the time.

Yeah, I read this really terrifying thing that was - so The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins - I can't remember the full name, said, and you know the book? It's about oppression and women and the kind of finding their consciousness.

No.

And it said this thing, which was terrifying, which children are part of their mother's 'Yellow Wallpaper', and how, if - I found it really terrifying, because children are part of their mother's oppression. And yeah, and thinking about the Greenham women and women that did leave their families, I just find that a really interesting thing to think about, like how...

But also it depends how you communicate with them, doesn't it?

Yeah.

If you tell them 'I'm going off' - you know, as I said, it's not like most of them, it was the other side of the world, or they couldn't, you know, go home, or they couldn't see them some of the time. You know, women came and went all the time. You know, no one was there full time, everyone would go off and have a break, or go and come back, you know.

Yeah. Also medical treatment at the came, how did that work? And really basic stuff like periods - how did that work? (Laughs)

Just got on with it, really! Yeah, I mean you - I don't know I didn't - the only issue I had was I used to have really, really heavy periods and a few times I flooded and I had a blue sleeping bag with - there was yellow inside, and then you sort of leak on it, but - um, you just gone with it. I mean, there was a local shop you could buy protection and you know, obviously women were understanding because everyone was going through the same thing, I didn't fine it a big you know - we had hot water bottles, so if you had a period you'd have a hot water bottle and go to bed early!

And this is more about broadly activism and campaigning. How do you - like you've talked about CND before as well. How do you feel that being a committed activist and campaigner affected your personal life, and do the two intertwine? Or are they just completely inseparable?

Well, as I said, when I, when I was involved in CND, it sort of became, it became my social life. And, and a lot of those friends I know, now dispersed, you know even people I keep in touch with. And as I said, I just, you know, I go to work and I come home, and I haven't sort of got the energy. I've recently started - there's a CND and peace group in Hebden Bridge. And I couldn't go - they used to meet on a Wednesday and I go to camera club, and that's like, sort of my creativity. I've been doing that almost since I moved up here. So I wasn't sort of willing to go, but they've started, they've changed the meetings and they're usually on a on a Monday. But they went to Menwith Hill for an evening, a couple of weeks ago, and I'd been feeling a bit from down, just getting home from work, and it was really cold and I just said I didn't want to go because I just didn't sort of feel up to - you know, when I was younger, I would just have gone. You know, if I was a bit tired the next day, so what! And often, I think, I'd really like to do that, when it comes to it, I just want to go out for a walk, or just something, something relaxing, but it has, it has, you know, like doing all this sort of scanning the pictures and looking them and everything because - as I said, maybe when I retire but, like everyone - retiring later.

Yeah. And, and could you explain why you think it's important for Greenham to be remembered by subsequent generations?

Because I think it was, it was a big thing, and I think historically it is important to know that you know, that happened. And I think it's good that, you know, that you're doing it - I was, I had a conversation with a woman from London that's doing, she's doing a project on, um, campaigning - it was sort of like to do with art, and campaigns and I think, well, movements - so she's she was doing about the peace movement. I think it was punks and someone else - I need, I think it was, anyway I haven't heard from her - it just made me think about it, and she sort of interviewed me, but I think, yeah, it's started, it's good, because it was such a big thing. And it, you know, it did sort of - it closed the base. And, and I just think it is, it was such a big thing at the time, but it would be sad if it if it wasn't remembered. And it's good that

you're doing this, and having it from women's point of view rather than just what the press said.

Yeah, exactly. And I think that with the press it's really difficult, because as historians going back, like this a cliche, but like the media is the rough draft of the full - or the the first draft of history. And if you've only got those stories about, like, they're muddy, and whatever they said, like, without, and like without kind of taking into account that certain papers are influenced by governments, then you've just got this really one sided horrible account of something that isn't taken seriously, when it really should be.

But the local paper - The Newbury Weekly News that we used to call The Newbury Weekly Lies, you know, they used to - but it was always very negative.

Yeah.

You know. And there was this thing that all the locals hated us, but they didn't because as I said, there were a couple of women that were very involved.

And the Quakers?

The Quakers, yeah. Yeah. And, and no, I think because, you know, it was such a big thing,I think it will be horrible to have it lost, and as I said, you know, you go there, you do it, you remember it. and it's only sort of other women saying 'We need to record it' that's actually made me think you know, that it will be all lost if, you know, people like you weren't doing this.

Have you been back?

No. I'd quite - there's a woman called Lynette Edwell who lives in Newbury, and she was very supportive the whole time. And she actually set up an archive - of Berkshire. And I'd totally forgotten, because it's

sad - you see people at funerals now. Because she said 'Who are you, should I know you?' and I said 'I'm Judith', and she said 'Oh, the photos!'. And I'd forgotten I'd given her some photos at the time, so I've sent her a book, and I'd really like - I'm going to do - I want to do an Aldermaston one as well, and I really want - my plan is to go down and you know, go down and see the archives but go to Greenham when I'm there, 'cause I know some women have been down.

Some women have said it's quite strange going back, because it's so different and yes, it might - I'm just interested in if people have been back, and how they feel about it.

Because I've not got good sense of direction, so I'm probably going to get there and - because when you're living there, because obviously we had a fire, I used to really enjoy going out 'wooding' - especially if it was sort of a bit hectic, and you just want to go out on your own, and I sort of got to know all the trees and everything. So it's going to be quite strange going back. But I understand the watchtower's now got an exhibition on it. So they're sort of gathering.

Yeah, yeah it's an arts centre I think it is. What was I going to say? Spirituality is something that's come up quite a lot for a lot of women that were there. Did you find that as well, that you kind of connected with nature or any..

I've always been quite an outdoor person. When I was a child I was in the Guides and I hated the Guides, but I loved the camp. That was the only reason - and I was always the first person to sign up, and I loved being in the tent and cooking outside, so I've always been quite an outdoor person. And I you know, yeah, I think that's why I moved from London. I moved from London to Brighton, and it was lovely being near the sea, and then both my sisters live up this way, so I moved up here. But I do love - like here I've got the lovely views and you know, even sort of because I work - though I'm based in Halifax, we actually cover Bradford, and like when I moved up here I only knew the centre of Bradford, but even Bradford you don't go far out, and you can see hills,

and you know I'm used to London where it's flat - that you don't see any countryside or anything, and that's what I love up here, and I've always been. So I don't feel particularly spiritual, but I've always been an outdoor person in that sort of way.

Was that part of the appeal of it - the camping, at Greenham?

Yeah - I don't - well I quite enjoyed it, and like some women, some women used to just come for the day 'I don't know how you - oh, you're amazing, you camp out there'. But I quite liked, and you know just - yeah seeing the seasons change and being outside. It's funny even now, in the winter, I wear a vest and I've still got thermal long johns, because when you were there you just wore loads of layers. I'd have tights with thermals, and then trousers on top, and then if it was raining waterproofs, and then sometimes on top you'd have like seven or eight layers. I tend to even now in the winter if it's cold you know, and then I'm at work going 'It's boiling in here!' 'It's cold!' 'You haven't got your vest on!' When I was a child your mum would say 'Put your vest on', 'Do I have to?' But living at Greenham, you sort of just...

Keep warm anyway.

Keep warm anyway.

And this is a kind of really broad question. But could you talk through a typical day at Greenham, which I know is probably not possible? But I'm more interested in the kind of - the day to day -what you would do when you got up and that sort of thing.

Yeah, you'd get up, and sometimes someone else had done the fire but if they hadn't, it was, you know, you'd make the fire, and then it involved - the day involved lots of tea, we were always making mugs of tea. And I just still have this vision of mud crusted mugs! Especially in the winter when it's muddy. And toast. And that's when I got into Marmite with tahini.

Oh, nice!

And also um, what was it? Garlic pickle. Sometimes would have that on toast. So there was a lot of you know, often women would just turn up - you never knew who was going to turn up. You'd go out 'wooding'.

What's wooding?

Going to collect wood - for the fire. We did, there was some a cricket bat factory - not far, you needed someone with the car - I didn't have a car - but sometimes we'd go, and they didn't mind you having the off cuts, which was like really good, dry wood. It burnt really quickly. So that was often good like for starting the fire off, and then you'd go out and get logs or you might be you know, if you'd found a big tree that was standing, you know, chopping it up. And it was just sort of day to day things like that - going for a walk around the base. Going in the base! Yeah, sometimes having meetings, and just - yeah a lot of it was sort of talking and, and, and tea and toast and cooking. In the evening we'd have a communal - that was the only time we'd have a communal meal. It was usually some sort of vegetable stew, you know. In the winter often there'd be a food round. So different local groups would have a different day, and they'd come round with food for everyone. Because sometimes - especially if it was wet and rainy, and you know, it would be really difficult to cook, because you couldn't get get the fire going, so that was that was really great. And there was some women - there's a woman called Juliet who's still involved in Aldermaston - her food was really yummy! That day we'd get really excited, but it was appreciated just anyone bringing some food around. And but in the summer, sometimes we just you know, start chopping vegetables, tins of tomatoes and just a big stew with pasta or, or rice or something. So a lot of it's just ordinary sort of day to day domestic things. You might go into town - there was a little, near Blue Gate, just a couple of streets down there was a little convenience store, so you might go there and get bits and pieces. I mean, you know, obviously it was in the '80s and it was cheaper, but we used to have - everyone used to put £2 a day into a kitty, and that would be sort of bread and a lot of vegans. I've got, I've

got a dairy intolerance, and had a dairy intolerance when I was there, so we'd have loads and loads of soya milk, so you sort of the basics. But then if people wanted chocolate, alcohol, you know - anything, then that you'd buy yourself, but there was always, you know, toast and vegetables for the main meal and that would come out, come out kitty. So a lot of it was just day to day things, or talking to people, or going you know, going for a walk around the base, or going for a walk somewhere because the woods there were lovely.

Yeah.