

Clayre Gribben

Right, can we start off just by establishing how you became involved with Greenham, and how you became aware of the movement?

I was at university in Southampton between 1982 and 1985. So my first awareness of Greenham was getting in a bus with lots of other people from our university women's group and going up to Embrace the Base. And joining in Greenham from there, and spent one summer living at the camp, and also got involved in organisation called Cruise Watch, which used to chase around the country chasing after convoys of lorries carrying cruise missiles.

Right. Right. So was that at the specific, you were actually put in a bus and went up for the specific Embrace the the Base movement, that particular event?

Yes. So there was a whole group of us who hired a bus and went up. I think we got one of the university mini buses and drove up. And I remember being quite kind of apprehensive and not really knowing what it was going to be like, and because obviously they've been various bits in the media and it sounded exciting, but also it was a bit trepidatious, and coming from a very middle class background, and not having done anything like protesting or anything before. But it was quite joyful when we got there, and just saw all of these waves and waves of women arriving, and just walking around, walking around the, the fence and the perimeter, and just seeing the fence festooned with ribbons, with teddy bears, people had put little messages, on little tiny baby clothes all attached, and then just talking to people as well, and just coming across such a wide range of different people...(phone rings) oh sorry - let me just grab the phone.

Don't worry, don't worry. Right. Okay, so you mentioned that you spent a summer there. So what roles and activities were you part of - you mentioned Embrace the Base, what else?

So I spent one summer there with some of my housemates, and fellow university students.

Which year was that?

I can't - I think it was 1984, or it might have been 1983.

Yes.

I just cannot remember which year it was.

Doesn't matter.

Um, so there was a whole group of us there, and we had our own sort of camp within the camp, really. So we had lots of our own tents, and then we had one big tent, which was kind of like a food tent. So we would put little bits of money, and somebody would go off and do the supply run. And I think once every two weeks someone would drive us into Newbury and we'd have a bath in somebody's house. But there were six of us and we all had to share one bath! So I'm not sure if we actually got very clean. I remember getting to this bath - like the third person in, and the whole surface of this bath was floating with debris, but you know, at least you felt like that you'd had a bath. And we had, we did all sorts of activities there, in terms of you know, just sort of establishing a community, and doing crafting activities, and cooking and sharing out those basic things. And then some of us broke into the base, so that again was quite exciting. I remember this great big huge pair of bolt clippers, but nobody could actually, but you had to hide the bolt clippers because if anyone saw them, they'd take them off you and arrest you. So my friend who's called Helen Joyce had this huge pair of dungarees, and so she stuffed them down the front of her dungarees, and then so one night we clipped back the wire, and then we all just went under the fence. I think we kind of crawled under the fence, and then just like ran out on onto the runway, pitch black. And then I remember being really, really scared but also quite exhilarated as well. And then eventually the

airmen came out and dragged us off and of course you had to lie down and just go limp, and they dragged you off. And then they just put you on the bus and threw you out the base. They just took us out - they didn't arrest us. So we did that a few times. That was quite fun!

So having obviously got outside base - you say they threw you out, they just let you all out and then you just walk back to wherever you started.

Exactly.

Right, right.

And did it again. I mean, I think that was quite early days. Obviously sort of later on they got much more violent with people, and then they started arresting people. So one of my housemates - a lady called Helen Joyce, she, I think by our second year at university, she was pretty much living there at Greenham, and so she was being arrested all the time and, and she went to prison a few times. Sometimes people would pay the fine, even though you say you didn't want to, but she went to prison several times. And one time she was arrested and put on like a big lorry. And then the police just literally threw her out the lorry as it was speeding along and she came back, she was just covered in cuts and bruises.

Good heavens. There's obviously no repercussions for that?

No, I mean, that's just what they did.

Yeah, interesting. When you say, so was that our police or the military police?

I don't remember me because there were military police on the base, plus there was civilian police as well. So every time you drove around the base, someone would follow you in your car, but sometimes it's military police, sometimes it was civilian police.

Right, right. And you just said earlier that you sort of set up camp. Did you set it up at one of these gates? One of the gates.

Yes, and I can't remember whether we were Orange or Blue gate. I think we used to go between the two different gates, actually. But we had kind of like a little field that was just away from one of the gates - sort of back towards the woods a little bit.

So did you sort of feel that you had integrated at the gates?

Yeah, yeah, I think I think just because we all, we know like the Southampton women. And so you know, the Southampton women were there, but that didn't mean that you know, you were complete, you know, isolated communities. You would integrate with all everybody as well.

Okay, so was there any significance to Orange or Blue - as far as you were aware?

There was a whole, there was a whole load of different communities who all lived at different gates. And there was one gate where there was just loads and loads of artists, and another gate where there were loads of musicians. And there was one gate that didn't talk to the other gate because somebody had done something and they all hated each other. There was lots of factionalism. So yeah, so you know, some people wouldn't live in one particular place or wouldn't go to another particular place. And I, my memory has gone and I just cannot remember enough about who lived at what gate.

Strikes me you're remembering an awful lot, so don't worry at all. So yes, you said that you spent about six months or just the summer...

That was just the summer break in between uni terms.

Right, right.

And obviously being the summer was very nice and we had good weather. We didn't have to cope with the mud and the wind and the rain which everybody else had to cope with.

Absolutely, you mentioned the fact that on a number of occasions you broke in to the camp - sorry not the camp, into the base, and any other activities, what other activities did you take part in?

I mean, I think that kind of the bigger memory for me was doing the Cruise Watch and chasing around the countryside.

Right. And so from your point you what was the setup there?

So basically how it worked was there was - this was pre digital days, so we only had landline telephones, being a poor student I didn't even have a phone in my house. So there was a whole network, a telephone tree network. And what would happen was as soon as the cruise missiles left the base, somebody - one of the gates would get on the phone and then this whole like alert system would just cascade down, and that would go all over the neighboring counties. So people from Oxford, you know, people from Reading, Southampton and some people London came as well. So it was, you know, there was a huge group of people. So personally, my friend would get the call, she'd get on her bike, come on tap on my window. I'd be like, (adopts confused voice) 'Ohhhh, Cruise missiles', so then I'd get my bike, and we'd all cycle up to the uni, and somebody would come around with a bus, and we'd all pile into the bus. So I remember one one day being in this um, mini bus, which has been by a lady called Di Macdonald, who was one of the big people in Cruise Watch. I think there was about six of us in this mini bus. We were just chasing after this lorry. I don't know what happened to everybody else, but we seemed to be on our own and we just kept driving and driving...

So is this one of these huge...

Yes, huge big, they're huge, huge, enormous lorries, and these again, this again was quite early days and yeah, so we're in this little white minivan chasing after it, and everyone was like 'Where are we? Where are we going?' And we just say 'We'll just keep going, just keep going.' So we were driving all around the middle of Salisbury Plain, by this stage we'd lost the cruise lorry, and we were going 'It's over there in the woods or everything - oh, let's just go have a look to see'. And yes just driving around completely lost on Salisbury Plain, and then all of a sudden, like about five big huge army tanks came up and pulled in front of us and pulled to the side. And then a police car came up and made us all get out and carted us all off to Salisbury police station.

I was going to say was that because you're up on the Plain? Because that's military defense.

Yeah, exactly. They charged us with trespass, but they never prosecuted us. They let us go. Yeah. And so that again, was quite an experience! And but at other times, you know, you would just literally be there just chasing after them all over the country. And yeah, you just used to meet all sorts of very different people. Just hear some amazing stories. So I mean I think, you know, in a pre digital age, as a resistance network, it was really well organised.

Absolutely. Just going back on something, I just can't quite get the logistics off. So the phone call used to go out from when the gates had they actually got a landline?

They used to go to a phone box.

Oh really! As basic as that!

Yeah. And sometimes the phone boxes weren't working, or people would drive to the nearest phone box and set off the telephone tree.

Okay!

I think we used to have code words for some reason I remember somebody going 'The penguins are flying tonight', but I don't know - whether that's a false memory or not! But there were all sorts of code words that used to have as well.

Fascinating!

But you, when they set off, you had no idea where they were going to go - sometimes would go to Salisbury Plain, sometimes you know to other places, sometimes they would just drive around the roads. I mean, just the idea was just to be disruptive, really - just just to say we know that you're here. We know what you're doing. And you know, we're not letting you get away with it.

So, as far as the time you spent in the camp, what was the set up sort of day to day? I mean, what's sort of what was the routine?

I don't think there was really any routine. I think you've just made your own routine, really. People would do, I guess you'd describe them as workshops, really. Lots of people doing craft things. So spinning massive big webs, there was lots of singing went on.

Oh you mentioned, actually.

I can't remember the song, because I remember going home to my parents home, and singing the song. But my brother actually tried to kill me if I sang the song - oh, 'Kill the Spirit' - 'You Can't Kill the Spirit'. Yeah. And I would just like sing that on repeat. So yeah, so we did lots and lots of singing. But I think it was just talking really, just talking with lots of other women and hearing different people's different stories and you know, where people had come from, and there was all sorts of women from all sorts of backgrounds.

Yeah.

And it's, you know, just, especially, being a very young women, and it's fascinating to hear all of the different experiences of people. And then and then there are all sorts of factions. So, you know, they would like, god I can't even remember all the factions. I just remember now there were lots and lots of factions. And so yeah, different people didn't talk to each other.

I was going to say was that because of different views about what was going on or different politics?

Yeah, it was different - some of it was personal, but a lot of it was political as well. But also, especially in the summer, lots of people there had their kids as well, which was great. You know, so, and there was sort of crèches set up for people to look after the kids, and taking turns to look after kids, which you know it was just like a fantastic community, really, you know, and like, with all communities, people come together, and people fall out and disagree.

Yeah, I've got no idea of numbers. So for instance....

So in our little camp, there was probably about 100 people or so living, you know, in our little bit. But you know that that was just people, you know that I knew who were there.

That was just a small part of it?

Yeah, that was just a small part of it at that time.

Interesting. What's, I mean, in terms of catering - did you all cook together? Or did you all take responsibility yourselves?

Yeah, so we had like, it was a bit like Girl Guides, really - we had this massive big food tent. And so people, so people would donate food. So if food got dropped off at the Main Gate, that would get shared out, and then we all clubbed together - people who could afford it and we'd go and buy stuff in town.

Yeah.

And then someone would make a big vat of porridge in the morning. That was really disgusting. (Laughs).

Making a job of eating it!

Yeah, and then we had a rota, and people would take turns to make food in the evenings, and you know, you could have some if you wanted to, or if you didn't. I mean, quite often we used to go round and chat with people at other gates, and if they were cooking, you know, eat with them. It was all very communal.

What was the sanitation like?

I've been trying to remember this, and I cannot remember.

What did you do when you wanted to go to the loo?

We must have just gone behind the behind a tree somewhere.

Really?

Yeah, but I just I just cannot remember.

No pits dug?

I mean, there must have been, but it's really weird. I don't, my brain is just remembering.

You're the first person I've thought to ask!

No, my brain has only remembered the really exciting bits, and it's forgotten all the bits like, you know, where did you go to the loo? I mean, I remember taking a wash, which was just bizarre, because I don't

even remember where we got the water from. You know, there were no standpipes. So we must have got water from somewhere. And again, I just don't remember that. But we must have just gone behind a tree.

Yeah, yeah. And what about the education of the children that were there or the - well, first of all the age of the children?

So it's mostly just young children, because I think that, I can't remember what the rule was for boys - there were some young boys there, but I can't remember if it was 10 that they don't want any boys there from. I think they did some sort of makeshift schools and things. But again, I just don't remember that. I wasn't really part of it. So I don't remember it.

Was there a particular gate that you're aware of that families congregated at?

Again, there was, but again it's something I don't remember, sorry.

Doesn't matter, there's no point in making it up! (Laughs). Yeah. What about sort of relationship and influence from other women?

In terms of leadership do you mean?

Yes. Or I was thinking, particularly yourself - in terms of did you feel, you were obviously a student, and you've mentioned Helen Joyce, various, couple of other people. I mean, did they have any influence on you? Did you have a relationship?

I think I think there was kind of an awe of the women who'd set it up originally, and, and the people who had become sort of spokeswomen for the camp, I guess, and that was that kind of awe, you know, of the legacy of those people. But equally, it was also a space for anybody. So there wasn't really any sort of hierarchy. It was really kind of up to you to do what you wanted to do, and to join in whatever you wanted to join

in. I didn't ever feel any pressure to do anything, or I um, think, you know, it was just a kind of that sort of collective space really.

Right. Did you see how decision making operated?

Again, it was very collective. So you know, people would sit and talk about things, and argue, and discuss and come to a consensus mostly. I think that you know, there were one or two people who said, who tried to be quite bossy. But if you're in a collective space, it doesn't really work. You have to sit and listen. And I think it's probably quite frustrating for people at times if you're used to very traditional models of leadership, where you're told what to do, and you follow them. But again, it's you know, if you're doing something and you're doing something on a voluntary basis, and you're giving up your time when you're not being paid for it, then you know, you are all equal. You are all equal stakeholders are all equal parts of the collective.

Yes. I mean, did you encounter conflict at any point within those discussions, and was there a way in which it was managed?

I mean, there was there was a lot of political decisions. So a lot of my friends became involved in the Wages for Housework campaign. And I think, so yeah, so a lot of the Greenham people joined that.

Was that at that time?

So yes, that was at that time. And so I think, you know, and again, it was just because you were in a space where you were sort of being made aware of lots and lots of different political views, and all the different campaigns that were going on. I think possibly, some people had more influence than others. But again, it was really up to you, you know, it was up to you to decide what you wanted to do now, you know, no one would force you to break into the base, if you didn't want to. No-one would force you to lie on the road if you didn't want to, and so everybody kind of did what they wanted to, or what they were able to. Some people were able to do those sort of things.

Did you, did you feel that your whole approach to conflict, resolving disputes changed at all as a result? And did you learn something from that approach?

I think I mean, it was quite interesting because I was a politics student at the time. And one of the trips that we did was a trip to NATO. And we sat in a room with all of these generals and you know again, this was in the mid 1980s, when America believed that you could have contained war in Europe with new European theatre, and it was very interesting just like talking to these people saying ‘Do you not have any, you know, moral responsibility?’ And just this kind of very cold and very analytical responses that they gave where, you know, they would talk about, you know, being able to manage this amount of loss of lives and everything. And then contrasting that with, you know, an experience like Greenham where you had, you know, possibly a much more - to the military mind, a very chaotic, not organised, no discernible leadership, no discernible structures, but out of that, just this, you know, sort of tremendous will, and this feeling of being part of very, you know, of a collective, and being part of a very powerful movement, you know, just founded on, you know, morality, and belief, and passion. And I think, you know, that was sort of one of the things I've always taken away from that from Greenham - just that feeling of strength, and strength of being with people who think like you and are prepared to act.

And how did that, how do you feel that strength came about - by sheer numbers from belief?

I think probably both. So, again, you know, sort of in the early 80s, just this terrible fear, I kind of contrast that now with the young people who are doing climate change protests, you know, they've only got 12 years left to save the Earth. And it was that same kind of feeling, you know, this, this feeling that these men in charge are going to destroy the world, and what can you do about it? And so, you know, just being able to join Greenham and also because it was a, you know, women only protest and just women being powerful and acting together, again, was so

powerful. And so that just again, reinforced properly my beliefs, but also made me feel that I wasn't powerless because there was strength, as you say, in numbers, and there is strength in continuing to act, and even if you know, you're not getting your message across in the mainstream media, you're getting your message across by talking to people, by acting, and these again were the days before social media - it would have been a lot easier with social media now. But you know, so people would come and visit and you would talk to them, and have discussions with people. And even when you went away, you still took that message. So, and then people would need to write their own stuff or perform stuff or do singing or whatever. And so again, that was another way of just sort of spreading the message.

When they were writing, performing - do you feel that they were taking that out to a wider audience?

So, yes, exactly. So I mean, you know, one of the themes of Greenham was all about web and reweaving the web and taking this non violence, and weaving a web of connections. And I think that's what it did, you know that was the centre of the web, but all of these threads went out, you know, all over the UK and all over the world. And I think it was quite powerful as well, sort of seeing the peace movement happening in Germany, especially in Eastern Germany as well. And sort of making those connections with different European capitals who were all protesting. And again, you know, they say that Greenham didn't achieve anything, but then you look at you know, Gorbachev, who specifically said that the peace movement was one of the reasons why he started talking to the west.

Come back to that.

Okay. Sorry.

No, only because it's, it's... it would help if I could spell Gorbachev anyway, never mind, I'll know what it is.

Gorby!

Absolutely. Just, you've alluded to it - the lack of presence at the camp. Do you feel that men could have been there, or did, did men have a role at all within Greenham?

So I think what was really exciting was that the men were doing the support. So the men were doing the, the looking after the kids, the men were bringing, you know, the food, they were donating and you know, they were helping in other ways as well. So again, especially in Cruise Watch, a lot of men were part of that, because they felt that that was something they could do. And often they'd get quite into sort of driving around and showing off! (Laughs). And being sort of boys in cars, because they kind of thought 'The women are at the camp, this is our bit, this is what we can do.' And we're like, 'No, no, you still have to do it non violently.' So I think again, that was quite powerful. I mean, a lot of men didn't get it. They just didn't understand what was women only.

Right. And did they resist that or did they try and overcome it?

I think it's just especially with the left, and it was true then and it's true now. I think the men in the left feel that they need to own everything. And so especially with the far left, they can't understand that it's not about them. And I think that was quite, that was quite difficult, but I don't...

What did they want to own?

So, I think I think it's about seeing something, about seeing something that's successful, and it's happening without them. And so actually, you know, this isn't about you, your role is to stand back and to support. And, you know, I mean, the feeling was, you know, that the men the patriarchy have made this mess, you know, it's up to the women now to take action. And all of the kind of, 'Yeah, but I'm not like that', well, that's fine, but do this and support. And there was, you know, there

would people who would just come and, you know, throw things and throw packages of excrement, and spit at you,...

And did that tend to be male?

Yeah. Yeah. That was - so they would come up to the camp, and then they would, you know, there would just be like a posse of women who would just eventually scare them off. But you know, everyone was always happy to have debate, and to discuss and you know, there was never any violence. I mean, eventually they would go. But you know, and people would come visit, especially people who had kids as well, so guys who come up and visit, but they wouldn't stay.

Yeah. With people coming to visit did you get media coming to visit?

Yeah, so you would - on the days of the big actions, of course, you would get lots and lots of media attention. But day to day...

That was a daily basis. Rather than coming to understand and to be able to take a story away?

Again, depending on which media it was really. So, you know, if it's mainstream news media, it would just be about the event. People like Sparerib, Peace News, Guardian would spend time there, and you know, sort of discuss. But yeah, mostly mainstream media wasn't really. I think there were a few people, but again, I think I don't really think I was long enough, there long enough really to have any of those kind of relationships with journalists.

Yeah. Um, you mentioned that you were part of - or joined in the Embrace the Base, you, from time to time went on to the base. Were there any other events, or means of protest that you were part of? That you can recall?

I remember going to a massive big demonstration, but this was in London outside Grosvenor square. But I cannot remember what it was

for. But I remember us all lying in the road, and again, getting dragged off by the police.

And that was the time of Greenham?

Yes, but it must have been - it must have been around that time. I think it must have been a massive big CND demonstration. Yeah. And that was in London. Yeah. We were all blockading the road, and I remember getting dragged off by the police. And the police officer said, 'Right, you're arrested and then you stay there'. And she wandered off. And I went right, I'm not staying here to be arrested and wandered off myself! Lots of other people were getting put in the van. So that again was just quite a bizarre experience. But yeah, so yeah, you got used to just sort of lying in the road and going limp and being dragged off.

Yeah. Yeah. So this business of going limp, was that something that was at was part of the tools that you were given?

Yes. So, I think, yeah, so we so we did some mini training. So people would tell you, say, 'Right, okay, well, this is what you do'. And I'm sure we did some practicing - just sort of lying down on the ground and being dragged off by people. And yeah, and people who'd done it before come and tell you how to do it. That's about the extent of the training that I remember we had. Wasn't really training - was just really sharing knowledge.

What - did you have any, obviously, being arrested and the thing with the police, but did you have any other interaction with the police?

Only when we used to drive up to Greenham and they used to come and drive past you, and they would always just stop you and take all your details, of your car things, and the house I lived in, they used to come outside with their police car. I'm not quite sure what they were trying to do apart from intimidate us. But that pretty much was it really. Again, you know, we weren't core people. We were in the peripheral.

Did you have any interaction with bailiffs - anything like that?

No, no.

No. What about local residents? You mentioned that you went down and had a bath in Newbury, was that somebody who was supportive?

So that was a supportive person. Yeah. Yeah. And again, I wasn't sort of part of any of that discussions -

Did you go shopping in Newbury?

No, I didn't, no.

Were of any political infiltration or sabotage going on at all?

Um, I know in hindsight that there was, and I'm sure there was. I don't think I met anybody that I would recollect.

No and so even with the benefit of hindsight you can't hand on heart say that you...

No, no.

Yeah, interesting.

No, no, I mean and you met so many different people there.

Yeah. What about how would you represent Greenham artistically?

Possibly as a patchwork quilt, and just a joining together of lots of different very diverse experiences, women from all over the UK, all over the world, different races, different classes, different sexualities. But just this kind of idea of everyone being part of this greater whole - so pictorially, yes, I guess, a quilt. And then possibly a web as well, just interconnecting threads of um, and you know, very vibrant, very all

different colours, and all the different colours of spectrum, and that pictorially, I think, would sort of represent everyone's sort of different opinions as well.

Oh, yeah. Yes. Very graphic. Yeah. During this period, how did you, well you were student, how did you interact with your family?

So yeah, so this was...

What was their feeling about it?

So my family were like, you know, nice middle class. Well, I mean, my parents both came from very, very poor working class backgrounds. And, you know, were probably quite very traditional. And then sort of, you know, having had this experience and then going back and talking to my parents and they're like, 'Oh yeah, okay, fine, she's just doing the rebelling phase or whatever'. But talking with my mother, and I think that was really exciting, because she finally managed to go to it - so the second big demonstration we had, she got all of her friends to come on the bus and to join in as well. Which was just amazing, because she had never ever done anything like that before. So that was really exciting. And yeah, and I managed to meet her, and I don't know how we managed to do it without mobile phones! (Laughs). And all of her friends so, it was great.

She had done it off her own back?

Yes. So I...

You were helping her at home?

No, so I said, 'The next one is here. Why don't you come?' and she'd organised all her friends to get a little mini bus and come up. So yeah, all of her neighbours.

Wonderful. How fabulous. Did she continue the support?

No, no, no, she, uh, well, I mean, you know, she would support me, and I think we managed to get her on one demonstration in London, but that was about it. (Laughs). But you know, that that in itself was like a, you know, a small victory really just to get her to do that. So that was quite nice.

It's wonderful.

My brother just hated me singing the songs. I just kept singing more and more and more!

What was his attitude towards the whole Greenham protests? Do you think he...

It wasn't that he disagreed.

No, I wasn't suggesting...

He just hated my singing!

It was your signing, I realise.

You know, I think they just thought 'Oh, yeah, just going through that kind of rebel phase'. Really. My family - didn't try and stop me.

Yeah. So did the male members of your family say your father and your brother, id they have sympathy towards the Greenham movement?

No, not my father. But my two brothers. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. Um, did you have friends who were opposed to what you were doing?

No, because they wouldn't have been my friends! (Laughs).

Yeah, sorry!

I mean, I had, you know, again, being a politics students, so you would sit and discuss in seminars, and of course there were people there who were opposed. And you would try and debate. And it was very, it was very interesting. And I don't think it's something that you have now because society has changed so much. But I think when you were trying to make an emotional argument, especially in academia, it was, you know, it was, it was really dismissed. People wouldn't accept that as a valid argument.

Because of the emotion?

Yeah, because women - it was really interesting - women were seen as being emotional. And there, and remember this was in 1980s. So yeah, women we were seen as being you know, too emotional whereas you know, the men were the strategic and the analytical people and they should take the decisions, and you should never take decisions based on emotions. It was really interesting, and, and because you know, you're inspired to act because you, because you feel a connection, you know it is your feeling, it is your emotions that inspires you to act and get involved in things. I mean, you can do it on a rationale, and you can analyse the data as well. But most, but anybody who I talked to was involved because they felt so strongly, you know, this was, this was the cause that they needed to join.

Do you think that emotion has been more acceptable in terms of decision making? Or politics?

I think now, yeah, yes.

Yeah. Sorry that's 1980s.

That has changed an awful lot.

You think that has changed?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Can you give me an example of that? Just trying to think, where it has improved - the emotional aspect.

Well, I don't know if it's actually improved. But I mean, you can look at for example, Brexit, which has been an entire, mostly an emotional campaign, about you know, how people feel. Which you can say it's backed up by data, (laughs) - yeah, exactly, arguably. But you know, but it's mostly been around feeling. So I think, you know, the the thing that I would guess possibly is, you know, sort of after the Trump election 2017, when I got involved with Women's March, and again, that to me was like, the first time since Greenham I'd seen that massive emotional outpouring of people, that people just felt so angry that they had to step in to do something. I mean, we had, it was there with the Occupy Movement as well. But I think Yeah, 2017 again, is probably the closest I've seen.

Since that time, what course has your life taken?

So after I left uni, I got involved in the world of work, really. And then in the 90s, we were all, we were all lads and ladettes, weren't we, so we weren't feminists anymore. And then raising children. Interesting, really really because I have a son. And how do you raise a son?

What age is he now?

He's 21, now. He's in his last year at university. Yes. And how do you you know, raise a son and not give them tanks and not give them guns to play with them? And raise them as a non violent person which I hope I have done a good job. I don't know! And then yeah, so since he went to uni, I've had a bit more time, so I started becoming politically active again, as a great old age of in my 50s.

You think of the ages a lot of them were at Greenham at the time.

Yes, exactly.

Age has got no barriers. Actually just going back to your son. What is his, well, first of all, how aware of Greenham is he or was he? And what is his feeling about his mother having been part of Greenham?

I think he's proud, well he tells me he's proud. I think, I mean, he's, he's quite politically active now. But he's involved in the climate change movement, and he's studying international development. So he's involved in kind of, you know, limits to growth and global justice and things like that. So, I don't that's because of me. That's probably in spite of me!

But it was your background as well.

Yes. Yeah. So I didn't know anyway, but yeah, so I think he's proud of his mum. Somebody he did he did text me once going, 'You are really cool, mum' and that's nice!

Aww, how wonderful. Um, well, yes. So to what extent do you feel the that your experience at Greenham influenced your path?

In my life - I think I've just always been disruptive, post Greenham, always been an uppity woman, I've always someone who won't settle for injustice. Always been someone who speaks out. Far too aggressive, my mother said - 'You'll never find a man, you're far too aggressive.' Again, you wouldn't do that now. You know, that was in 1980s. You know, I think I've always lived life on my own terms. I haven't really settled for things except for when I've had to, no and I've had, probably had a very comfortable life really, you know? Yeah.

Interesting. You see, you're talking about the fact that earlier about nonviolent action. Have you sort of used that aspect since - in your tactics with people? Just interested.

Yes, in terms of conflict resolution, but again, that borders between people at work, and just trying to defuse situations and again, just getting people around and talking. They call it active listening these days. But it's the same principle really, which is, you know, just sitting around and letting people be heard, and by discussion and by debate coming to a resolution, rather than some kind of hierarchical, or obeying orders.

Right. And did you see any other areas in which nonviolent action tactics have been used?

I mean, when I was younger, as a reporter, covering the poll tax riots, and again, that was you know, a very kind of scary situation - sort of being in those crowds of people. And I remember just like being in this like, really big mob of people and trying to get everybody to calm down. God, I can't remember what happened. So that's probably not a great example for, you.

No it is. So for instance, the poll tax riots. And I know there was definitely pretty violent at times, but do you feel that there was an element of influence from Greenham's?

No, I don't think that's a good example. Sorry. I've gone - is there anything I've done? No, I can only think that really in the in the workplace, or in personal circumstances, but nothing kind of in a broader sense.

Oh, for instance the Women's March - do you feel that that...?

Oh, okay. So yes, so basically, so we kind of organise 2017 Women's March on kind of Greenham principles, which is, you know, sort of collectively, and collective decision making, and a small group of people. Um, I mean, that was really hard because it was a very short amount of time. There was an awful lot of work to do, and no one had any

experience at all in doing any of the jobs that had to be done. But that was all done collectively. There was no leadership at all in that.

And it was deliberately non-violent?

Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I don't think anyone would even, you know, sort of contemplated it other than organising on sort of, you know, Martin Luther King, and Gandhi and nonviolent principles.

Right. And so it, it didn't even have to be said?

No, no, didn't even have to be said. But again, I think that was because women were organising it.

Very interesting, yes.

And I, you know, just, and also the lead from the US was, you know, with the MLK principles of non-violence as well, which kind of, you know, disseminated around the world really.

What do you feel is the legacy of Greenham for future generations.

I think the legacy of Greenham is that if you believe in something, stand up and do it, and you can change the world. Because everybody has power, and everybody has power within themselves to make change, to make a difference. And it doesn't matter what you do, however big or however small, everybody can do something. And if you feel powerless, and remember that there is power in people coming together, whether it's 2 people, whether it's 200 people, 2000 or 2 million people, and so therefore you're not alone. That's what I think is the legacy. Those are kind of big grand statements.

No, I think...

I mean, I think, just on a personal level, it's taught me how to be possibly in you know, very difficult situations and deal with them. It's taught me

not to have any fear. It's taught me just to believe in something and go for it, even if people are telling you not to. And it's taught me the power of working together, however difficult that is, that you can achieve things, and you can make things happen you know, and you know, you can make the impossible happen.

What about feminism? Do you feel that it was in a landmark as far as feminism was concerned? Or? Obviously, it was there before, but do you feel that...?

Yes, I think it was, and you know, there is the kind of political legacy of women coming together and organising, you know. So that whole legacy again, of, you know, the kind of the, the Suffragettes, you know, the (inaudible) with People, you know, Bread and Roses protests, so many different organisations of women coming together and making change happen. I mean, you know, and with a lot of them with personal sacrifice . And so I would see Greenham very much in that kind of legacy - of women coming together, and making change happen.

Do you think it was a landmark in terms of for instance, lesbianism?

Gosh, possibly. I mean, again, it wasn't. I wasn't really aware of that. So...

Yeah. Even with benefit hindsight?

I mean, yes, possibly, yes. Because again, it was a safe space, and it was a safe space for women to be together.

Yes, I was thinking, yeah, okay, fine. Yeah, absolutely. Um, how well do you feel that what you did at Greenham has been relayed down through the generations?

I think I mean, the problem is that if you look at the mainstream media, especially because of the kind of way things were structured in the 1980s, and you know, the voices that were heard and the voices that were listened to, Greenham was seen as you know, a lot of mad women

who got together and lift in a wood with unkempt hair, and we're all a bit loony, and they're all lesbians, and they all hated men. And, you know, that is probably a narrative that still exists, but you know, and this is another narrative. Um, you know, where you know, these women came together at enormous personal cost and, you know, lived day to day, right up against the site where cruise missiles were situated, and they disrupted the military, they disrupted the American government. And in the end, they forced the Americans to get rid of the nuclear missiles and they forced the West and Russia to start talking to each other. So, you know, that's on a big picture, picture level. And I think people tell their own narratives, and people tell their own stories. And so you have lots of people, you know, who've written since about Greenham, and people who've, you know, written plays and you have artwork. And so, there are lots of different ways of spreading stories, and remembering history.

Yeah. You said earlier about Gorbachev saying that it was probably a factor in talking to the US. Can you elaborate on that?

So I think, I think it was just, you know, in the darkest of times, there were people organizing all over the West. And then I think, you know, brave people in Eastern Germany, joining up as well with people in Western Germany, and then this massive peace movement that spread across Eastern Europe, and it was, you know, all underground, and people, you know, organised at great risk to themselves, but you know, they kept organising, and people kept coming, and they didn't give up. And you know, and if you see that amount of dissent, and you know, that anger from the people, public protests in the end makes governments change, because the more people who come and the more people don't go away, at some stage there is a tipping point, and governments have to act. And I think that's what happened.

Gorbachev, for instance, has a very different personality to Putin, for instance.

Of-course, yeah.

Supposing Putin had been there at the time, do you think that kind of movement would have had any impact on somebody of that personality?

See, but, but it's different, isn't it? Because Putin is about disinformation. And he's about disrupting, but he's about disrupting to his own agenda. So Putin, possibly would welcome you know, the peace movement in the, in the West, because he would might have seen it as destabilising Western governments. So I think we live in different times, don't we? And I don't know, I think you know, if you had that kind of similar thing, now, social media would have made everything so different. I mean, because because now people can organise that quickly. You know, it's a tweet, it's a Facebook event. It's, you know, it's a WhatsApp group, you know, and you get people out in the streets very quickly.

How different do you I think it would be have been, or in what ways do you think it might have been different with social media? Would it have been "better" - in quotes? But I mean, it would have brought a different dynamic to it?

I think if you'd had social media, I - if you had the same thing happening with social media, I do not think that the government would have been able to guarantee to the US the safety of having cruise missiles on a base. Because the ability of social media to mobilise so many people, you wouldn't have been able to get cruise missiles out on the road, because you could have had cars at every exit blocking them. And if you've had that scale of mass civil disobedience, it's not manageable. So I don't know. I mean, who knows?

It's very valid.

But I think I think you know, it would not be possible.

Yeah. Yeah.

You. I mean, we've just seen you know, in the last 2 years how easy it is to mobilise. To get people out on the streets, you know to disrupt, to block, to block traffic. And it doesn't take a lot of people.

No, no, it's interesting. What - is there a moment, an emotion, a picture that for you actually sums up Greenham? I know you mentioned, I asked you artistically, but is there a moment or emotion?

I think the famous picture of the women dancing, on top of the silos, because that is just amazing. I think for me just being part of that huge, huge, huge wall of women holding hands around the base. And just the power of that. It's amazing. I don't know if you saw the pictures recently of the women's wall in India and Kerala?

Yeah.

And you know, and again, it's just that feeling just all of these women standing together, and that's really powerful.

That image of Surround the Base - Embrace the Base, sorry. The power of that, could you feel it at the time, or is that something that you now realise was so powerful?

No, I think we knew at that time, it was something extraordinary.

Yeah.

It's something that hadn't happened before. And just, just this idea of just occupying the space, and just being part of this massive chain of people was really exciting. Very empowering.

Yeah.

And that, you know, I think that for me is probably one of the memories, and I think the other memory is the clipping the wire and rolling it back and sneaking under and sort of dancing on the runway. (Laughs). Is a

personal memory just again, because you know, it's disrupting the establishment.

Yes. Yeah. Finally, can I just ask you, can you explain why you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

Because we have to stop reinventing causes and issues every time. We have to learn from each other's experiences, and we have to say to each other, 'You're not the first people to do this, you are part of a huge chain of experiences and things that happen'. And I think what happens is that, you know, people get involved in something and then it all just goes quiet, and then something else happens. And then people feel that they're doing it for the first time. And see, there's so much you know, that people could learn from each other and from each other's experiences. And also, you know, if it's like this, you know, this idea this wave, even if this wave just keeps on going and going and grows and grows and grows and grows, eventually change will happen because it becomes unstoppable. And if you, but if you take part in something and you don't keep going, then you have to keep, you know, restarting it and rekindling it each time and then it dies. So, you know, it's just really important. I mean, not just to kind of press articles, but just through art, through you know, performance just to keep that legacy alive. And, and first hand accounts from people who were there are so important. And, you know, just think what happened? And how did they achieve that? And just been learning those lessons and, you know, moving it on. Because where we are now is because of, you know, it's where we were in 1980s were, because of all the struggles that came before and now you know, all the struggles, you know, that they've benefited from, I feel so inspired by generation Z. I think the young women of generation Z are amazing. And all the ones I've met, are just, they're just so powerful, and you know, they're just not taking any crap anymore. And it's really exciting.

Do you think they're individually powerful? Or is that a result of being in a collective?

I think just because they have, they have the freedom to express their opinions. And they, you know, they, they don't keep quiet, they don't feel they should, and you know, they don't put up with, they don't put up with crap, really. You know, if they're in abusive relationships, they call them out. And they support each other as well, which is good. And the whole body, body positive movement, I think is amazing as well. So you know, you do see all of those signs of change happening. And, of course, we've had #metoo, and #time'sup as well, which just keeps on empowering people. And you have really positive role models now, people just - your Emma Watsons and oh my god, I've forgotten her name - the woman from 'The Good Place'. Brain's gone. But you have, you have so many amazing positive role models as well. And I think you know, the good thing now is that, I think Greenham felt like it was quite a white movement. And it was possibly quite middle class. And I think what's happened now in the women's movement is you know, because intersectionality is just so important. And just seeing lots of new, new voices coming through as well. It's really exciting. And so you know, and that is so important as well.