**Lisa Halse**

So, Lisa how did you come to be part of the peace movement?

**I was, I guess in Plymouth in 1982 when there was the Falklands War - 1982, so the Falklands War. I was in Plymouth and obviously Plymouth is a naval town, and I was a peace activist, so that was kind of interesting, and prior to that um, I was unlucky enough to see the pictures of the Vietnam War, so I was aware of that when I was a little kid. So the peace activism or whatever was there was a strand, so when I started working in the library services as an assistant - a Saturday assistant, they had a whole load of periodicals including Peace News, which I read avidly for the 3 years that I was there.**

And how old were you at that point?

**I started when I was 15.**

Was that in Portsmouth?

**No that was in London. So I read Peace News and I thought that was marvelous, and my politics were kind of fairly, getting honed by that time, so when the Falklands War was on it was a bit challenging being in Plymouth at that time, and doing peace vigils. So yeah, got used to being shouted at quite a lot.**

And how did you hear about Greenham?

**I heard about Greenham, I think, because - I was trying to this, thinking how did I hear about it? So I was in Plymouth, I was doing community theatre with a bunch of women, and it was all very political, it was on an honors course, so half the year we were in Rotherhithe, and half the year we were in Plymouth. Some of the women that were in Rotherhithe started going to Greenham and making theatre pieces, and so I heard about that. And also I heard about it because of the Falklands War and the peace groups that were then starting to affiliate all the way through that, there was this thing going on, so you kind of go 'Oh wow, this is all kicking off, this is marvelous, we're going to have the revolution, patriarchy is going to die - yes!' Yeah. Well that was a while ago - still waiting, still waiting.**

And when you went, was it what you were expected?

**I don't remember.**

Okay.

**Because I have a really poor memory, and everything's er, merged together. So I really don't know when I first went - I was thinking when did I first go, did I go when Tania had her piece? Did I go when Babs had her piece, or was it before that? Or was the first time for Surround the Base - was that when I went? We had five coaches of us, or did I go before that? Really don't remember, so I don't remember when I first went, but I know that once I started going, and we carried on going, and I was living in Devon, so there were quite a number of us who were going up being supportive, staying overnight - that kind of stuff.**

And what were the theatre pieces that your friends were making?

**Babs Schmidt was making a piece called City of Joy which was a re-working of Lysistrata, and, but based at Greenham. So she made that piece as part of her final year project. Tania Myers did quite a few theatre pieces there that were site specific pieces, so there was an early woman show, I remember that one, and there was a Dragon Festival, dragon piece - they all seemed to be a combination of procession, dressing up, ritual, coming together, celebration, so it was more that kind of thing than a story with a beginning, middle and end. Um, yeah. That was what I remember.**

Um, and how did you travel there, who did you go with, do you remember?

**God. So there was a group of women in Totnes, which was the next town up, who were fairly um, motivated, there was an amazing woman called Ursula Blah - no idea what her name was, who, I think she was pretty old, I mean I know I'm old now, but she was probably in her middle 70s and she had a daughter called Di, who er, was I guess 40-ish, and they had a little 2CV, which is these tiny little French cars, and we'd go up together and hang out and stuff like that. They were the kind of like, they'd go, and then we'd organise things for events, that kind of stuff, back home. And then when I lived with Tania, we used to go up quite a lot - hitching, because you know, no money. Yeah, it was kind of fun.**

And how often, how long did you stay there when you went up?

**I never stayed more than two nights, I don't think I ever managed more than two nights. Partly because I had my life to lead, and that was important, and partly it was bloody hard. You know. It was bloody hard. I mean particularly - it wasn't so bad in the summer, obviously because the weather's easier, but it was quite grim in the winter.**

Yeah, I can imagine.

**But you, know it was fun as well.**

I think looking at pictures of it, especially, I was really shocked by the wool that people were wearing, and how damp that would get in the winter and the mud, and how damp people would stay in the winter.

**Yeah, I mean you just had loads and loads and loads of layers. Mostly there was a camp vehicle by the gates, and you know some about it, obviously you've seen the images, so you know there were camp vehicles at the different gates that you could go and take a bit of respite in, and obviously if you've gone in a car, you can get in the car and have a bit of drying out time, or even sleep in the car sometimes. And you know about benders?**

Yeah.

**So there were the nice benders - early on there was quite a bit of good infrastructure, but as the time progressed and the challenge of the bailiffs and the trashing of everybody's stuff. We had a washing line with a piece of Polythene over, which was - it was great because it was shelter, but it was bloody cold! So it was that thing of just trying to keep rotating your arse to the fire, to get warm enough, and have as many hot water bottles as you could carry, to keep warm. Yeah.**

And what camps did you stay at, which gate?

**Mostly - I stayed quite a bit at Orange and Green. I did Main Gate once before it became Yellow, you probably know about the whole…**

Rainbow gates.

**Yeah, the change in the rainbow gates and the difference in politics?**

Yeah.

**Yeah, so that was - I mean there was a lot of, there was so much going on because of the politics of the time, so there was women coming from very um, diverse and conflictual politics, so it wasn't always happy camping at all.**

Yes. And why did you choose those particular gates?

**Mates. Mates.**

And was the politics quite obvious, when you got to different gates as well?

**Yeah. Yeah. Yeah yeah. So, um, it was Blue Gate that was vegan, and they were mostly really young and punky, I mean I was pretty young, but I wasn't punky. Um, left that behind, so that was always quite a like full on, noisy kind of gate. Green Gate was lovely because it was so much space around it and places where you could um, get a respite from the um, battling. Because the ones that are right on the road are quite challenging, so Orange was semi-challenging in that it was on the road, so you got a certain amount of traffic. Um but there was a little side bit that you could go down and get in a vehicle and stay out of trouble for a bit.**

And what were the politics of those particular gates?

**I don't remember, I mean the politics of Green Gate was always seen as the more laid back, um, healing, er, resting, you know, gate - that's what I remember. And it just depended on what was um, what was coming in and out as to whether, so Orange sometimes - couple of times I was there it was quite challenging - quite a lot of traffic trying to get in, and us trying not to let the traffic in and stuff like that. Obviously Yellow Gate/Main Gate was the big one, but that's not to say that we didn't do blockades at other gates, so that's what I remember.**

And what made you decide to stay, or leave? Like you said previously, you had a life to get back to.

**Yeah, well what made me stay was because sometimes you knew that there was only six women going to be there for the next two days, so you thought 'Okay I can manage an extra day', just because that helps out. Small numbers, that would make you feel, not obliged, but there was a good thing, if you could - to stay. But I would always leave because I'd have work to go to, or other things to go to, because I wasn't prepared to go '(inhales quickly) This is my life now'. Yeah.**

Did you have friends that did stay for a lot longer?

**I had, I mean Tania went up loads and loads and loads - loads more than me, when I was living with her. And then I lived with another woman who, we both went up quite a lot, she stayed up probably more than me, um, yeah she was she liked Blue Gate and Violet Gate. Yeah, I don't know, don't know.**

And you said previously you went with friends - did you make friends while you were there as well?

**Yes. Yeah, yeah. I mean it's that thing of where you, um, you have these extraordinary conversations and connections with all sorts of people, and because Greenham wasn't just about going to camp and being at Greenham, it was also about Carry Greenham Home. So for most of my stuff, I would say was the Carry Greenham Home, or maybe it was split both ways - I don't know. So there was that thing of going building alliances, locally, and when you went to camp, yeah you'd sit down and have a conversation with whoever was there or whoever would turn up, and so you got to know loads and loads of people, loads and loads of women, and um, you know because of going back and forwards, back and forwards, you would see some of the same people over and over again, and yeah. It's one of those things where you know, friendships form, some of them didn't last very long beyond the kind of active time of Greenham, and some of them are still my mates now. Yeah.**

And in terms of Carry Greenham Home, how did you find doing that in the local area?

**Mostly really well received, I was really surprised um, because there was that thing of - obviously there was er, many other campaigns going on at the same time, you know, because, there were mixed camps going on - Molesworth and Faslane and lots of other, um, events all happening at the same time, plus the start of the miners' strike, so there's lots and lots of politics, which in Devon the politics were very little. In Devon it's true-blue Tory through and through, with pockets of hippies and pockets of liberals, so and I was going to village halls to support a couple of people who were peace activists, or were in CND - that's another um, that's another peace group organisation who also had members, so you'd go off with the video and one or two of you, and show the video and talk about what it was like there - ask questions, answer questions, try and you know, get some activation, and do things locally. So it was that thing of going 'What is the plan for Devon in the event of..?' 'Oh, interesting.' So it started to spill out into much more of a diverse thing - it's that thing where you go 'Right, okay, there's this um, secret bunker - okay let's go and protest at the secret bunker. Let's make the secret bunker not secret, let's make it more obvious!' So there were things like that. It's hard to separate the strands sometimes, because yes we were also doing Reclaim the Night marches, and we were also graffitiing the courts, and various other things that were - would be deemed criminal damage, because that's what it was. But great fun! So whenever there was any kind of court case going on with Greenham women, we would be outside the courts in Totnes - which was where I was living at the time, and you know, making a fuss and making noise and stuff. And we had, in Totnes we had - Carry Greenham Home is great, its a great movie, you've seen it?**

Yeah yeah.

**You know. So, mostly people were just like 'Oh wow', and some people were truly horrified that there was this piece of common land that had been given to the Americans, and that upset - that was the way to get in the door of some of the more right wing people was to say 'They're over here, they're taking our women, they're selling us nylons, they're giving us chocolate in exchange' - trying to dig into that prejudice.**

But it works!

**It works. You use whatever tactics seems to make some kind of sense, if that's - obviously the politics is around here's your morality, where's your ethics, how do you live an ethical life given what the government is deciding to do with our land? So yeah.**

And what did it mean to you that Greenham was a women only space?

**A lot. 'Cause um, okay where to start? Um, so when I was in Plymouth doing my third year, there were a couple of colleagues - students, who were lesbian separatists, and so there was a lot of challenge to - I was bisexual, so you know, I'd think 'I'm half way there'! So there was a lot of er, endless discussions about why women only? Why is women only important? Why is women safety important? Why, you know, given the state of the world and the state of patriarchy, you know, political lesbianism is the only way forward. And so this 'love for your enemy', 'scum manifesto', you know. Lots of writing, lots of books from the States. A lot of pretty heavy duty soul searching, and um, so at one point the two women said 'We're not going to work with any of you unless you join us on the picket line', and so I thought okay actually right, if this is a call to arms, then I'm with you. So um, that seemed to be the most logical thing. It was partly the idea that women involved together can create havoc and harmony. But that you didn't have the institutionalisation of how it always was - that was the ideal, that and like now - you go into a room, the men speak more, the men speak for longer. It's changing, but it's still incredibly slow, so um, it seemed to be a really good idea to organise as women. And then there was the whole um, talking about morals and ethics of, er er, like um, Susan Griffin's book Women and Ecology, was that sensation of like 'The Earth is a mother, the Earth is us, we are women and this is what is happening to us, and this is happening to the Earth', so there was a real connection with Women for Life on Earth - that was the other group, um, god - it's coming back slowly, my brain! So there was a connection between ecology that seemed, okay we are the only ones that can safeguard the land and safeguards people, because we're not going to be creating the conditions for aggression and violence and stuff - that was the ideal. Of-course the reality is different.**

We're still people?

**Well, we are still conditioned by the external conditions we've come under, and if you are - you know, you've got privilege in education, you've probably got more use of language, so therefore you are more articulate so therefore you become more - the go to person to speak out, so there's those sort of lines that's will exist, because that's life. And also, you know just because women are wanting to be peaceful, we are still products of our environment, and can still be aggressive - by just being, use of language, use of body, that kind of stuff, without actually attacking anybody. And you know, one of the things, yeah, yeah.**

And in terms of non-violent direct action, did it work, do you think, at Greenham, and wee you part of anything to do with that?

**I think it was a really, really useful tool, because it meant that there was a, a cohesiveness within the group, because you formed a support group, so you learnt the skills, you learnt the techniques - you had your affinity group - your little support group, you had a legal observer who was part of it, but not part of the action, so there was a way of being observed and recorded for both sides, so it felt like it made it much more of a safer way of being confrontational. I that it's the way to speak truth to power in that sense, because if you go there and say 'I've got a gun, I'm going to shoot you', it's not going to achieve anything. So I think it's a really useful tool. And it's not the only tool, because if you're - as we know from many other peace activists throughout the world now, as much as the last 40 years is that peace activists get mown down, because unless it's recognised by both sides that this is an acceptable form of protest, and a manageable form of protest, then you end up getting killed or maimed because your government is not interested in democracy or in having a say, or whatever. Whereas here, in England, at-least there's um, that's institutionalised - that's not institutionalised, it's set in stone, but how it's practiced is obviously different because when you're being dragged off from sitting down, you can be dragged off very nicely and with consideration and care, and yes you've got a right to protest, and you've got a point, and that's fine. Or you can be dragged off because you're a complete nuisance, and actually if I can disable you for a couple of days, fantastic.**

And did you see any non-violent direct action tactics used elsewhere kind of after Greenham and think that's been influenced by what we did?

**I think, I mean it's part of a much broader movement isn't it, because we got it from like Seneca Women's Camp - lots of other places had used non-violent direct action. Gandhi was obviously the first one to go, 'Right, we're just going to keep walking for salt, and that's what we're going to do.' So you know, there's a history of different ways of doing it, from - I don't know what happened before Gandhi, my politics, should have studied peace studies and then I would have known! But you know, it's**

**certainly still being used today. Okay, you know, locking-on, which is the latest thing - yes I'm being passive, but I'm locking on to your machinery or your gates or whatever, um still seems like you know, a reasonably same thing to do.**

And in terms of relationships that you had with the men around the base, not only around the base - but like you've been talking about Carry Greenham Home, what was their reaction to Greenham and the work that you were doing?

**Varied.**

Okay.

**Varied between broadly kind, supportive, curious, interested, to er, quite challenged, antagonistic and violent. So you know there was a range of attitudes. Mostly, certainly within the kind of CND mixed peace groups there was quite a lot of respect, and a sort of vague understanding that this seemed to be working even though it was a bit weird. That's what I remember and most of the er, poor reaction to Greenham was er on the street.**

Okay.

**That's much more, yeah - so we used to have a peace vigil every Friday during the market, and er…**

In Totnes?

**In Totnes. And we made - I can't remember who made it, but we made this beautiful cloak, so we'd stand there with the cloak on in rotation, and you'd stand there silently meditating, and we had a peace tree - we bought a peace tree, and we wanted to plant this tree for peace and of-course the council didn't want to have us plant a tree for peace. So we had this tree in a pram with soil in it, so there was a pram with a tree in it and a peace vigil and a little group of us giving out leaflets, talking to people, protecting the person who was standing doing the peace vigil, because it's great of little kinds - well youths wanted to 'Oh, I'll go and push them over' and stuff - or throw stuff at you which you know, was kind of yeah. But there you go. That was fairly mild, fairly contained, quite nice - to being at Orange Gate or Blue Gate and having stuff thrown at you from cars, which isn't very pleasant at all. Verbal abuse is one thing, but having stuff thrown at you and you're not quite sure what it's going to be! Oh nice - yeah, horrid, scary.**

I can imagine.

**But mostly I didn't think they - I guess at the time my attitude towards men was very different to my attitude now. So I didn't really want to waste a load of time and energy in making them understand. It was like 'Isn't it fucking obvious?' Um, 'What're you doing about it?'. Rather than try to make them do something different.**

And do you find that attitude softened over time or got harder? Or just changed?

**Attitude towards men, or?**

That attitude of 'I don't want to explain this to you, you should understand'?

**Um, I think, I think it's quite an arrogant place, because I'm just thinking the amount of times I have to examine my life to people - women as much as men, um, that don't get it, and you just go 'Right, okay, where do you start?' So you have to start from something where you've got some shared understanding, and then moving on from that. Yeah, I don't know whether - I mean I hope, you hope that things have changed somewhat, because you go 'Wow, women are driving trains, planes, running the country' - well I know Margaret Thatcher was running the country then - fucking bastard! God! Arrgh! Yeah, but it's that thing of - sorry, I'm waffling!**

No, not at all. And what was your relationship like, if you had any at all with the local residents at Greenham?

**I was really, really lucky that, there was the vigilantes who were deeply unpleasant, and retrospectively I can say - at the time I was there it was really, really scary because you felt like, you know, any minute now they were going to fire bomb you. Never did while I was there, so I was really lucky. But there was that sense of that. But they never got out the cars and came over. So actually, they were quite scared, but I didn't recognise that so much at the time. And there was quite a few people locally who were really supportive and would take stuff home to watch, help people have baths, stuff like that, so I didn't experience much animosity. Er, the few times you get kind of, what's the word - into discussions with people locally, you just have to agree to disagree, because I was not interested in having a long, drawn out ding-dong with someone who just wants to chew my head off. Pointless.**

Yeah. And you've talked about your friends doing theatre pieces - was there any other artistic activity that you saw going on at the camps as well?

**There was always somebody doing something! Because um, er, I can dig those out, so there was always somebody doing something. So constantly the fence was being decorated, redecorated with you know, people's memorabilia, or weaving webs, that kind of stuff. Quite a lot of women were doing little drawings and that kind of stuff, so**

**they were doing labyrinths on the ground and creative rituals, so quite a lot of creative arts / spiritual practice and, its what it felt like. So that was part of how the whole thing seemed to be - was er, making it beautiful as well, as much as you could do - because there was big phases when it was basic survival - then it was much more difficult to do anything other than basically survive. That was quite challenging.**

Yeah. And this is going on later, um, how much do you think the camp was politically infiltrated or sabotaged towards the end?

**Ah well, that's a really interesting question. That's a really interesting question, because it was one of those questions that came up over and over again as to whether we should be paranoid, whether we should trust everybody.**

And did that gradually happen over time?

**I think, well for me it was a thing of like, well I could either be really, really paranoid and not trust anybody, or I just go well, I'm going to trust them as much as I can trust them, and if I don't feel that I can trust them, then I'm not going to share with them, and I mean it's the same now. And there was always a joke of yeah, you know police informers - that kind of stuff. And I think to some degree there's that naivety of going 'They can't be bothered with us, were not that much of a threat, really.'**

Which you kind of hear now, when you hear about the state of people's calls or Facebook and data - it's like 'They can't be concerned with me' - that's not the point though.

**The fact that we're in a surveillance um, society is a different kind of thing. I mean back then it was word of mouth and snail mail, so you'd get a - you'd make a flyer and you'd do ten copies and send them to ten friends, and they would do ten copies and send to ten friends, so that was the way of getting information out. And obviously some of that information would go to people you'd rather didn't know about it, but I don't - it's hard to know, um, certainly the Wages for Housework stuff, which is the thing that - obviously for me that was the thing that made me upset above anything else - not being able to be all women together because of having that decision.**

And what was that - Wages for Housework.

**Wages for Housework, that was at Main Gate, so um, so this is - dishing back old politics, so there was English Collection of Prostitutes, which I think is now what it's called, but it used to be er, Kings Cross Women's Centre, and you know the first time I heard about Wages for Housework I thought 'Oh my god, what a fantastic idea, how radical! How marvellous - yes what a great idea!' And you know, that sort of idea**

**about going how do you empower all women, and how do you, you know, make all women's work count? Whatever the work is, seemed like a really good idea, and I was quite keen on that - until I met some of the women who were there, and went 'Ooh, yeah, it doesn't quite feel comfortable'. And because I'm coming from a sort of ecology, spiritual practice, it wasn't really um very, er, easy to communicate in that kind of way. That's what it felt like. So um. And there was always the question, of because they were our enemy - so if you have any enemy, taking things in a particular direction.**

What was the direction?

**So it just felt like they wanted to talk about um, the broader peace movement, um than our particular issue - that's what it felt like me me. And it always felt like, you know, because they wanted to be Main Gate, that 'We are the spokespeople for, er, and that was completely not the understanding of how it had been set up or involved or whatever, so I think it's that sort of thing of taking something off and having a slightly different slant on it.**

Yeah.

**And not quite trusting that. I'm not being very articulate here.**

No no. Were they always there or did they come later?

**I think they came later, because when I first stated going, and I went to Main Gate quite a few times, I wasn't really aware of that. I think it was after, maybe a year or so - I think it was when the rest of the gates started getting going all around the perimeter. That's what I remember, but my memory is so appallingly bad, but I seem to think they came later, they didn't come immediately, but that was just my memory which is pretty poor. But they seemed to be around the whole time that I was there, they didn't seem to come and go. Um, but then I did avoidance - going 'I'm not going to Yellow', or I'd pass through Yellow on a route.**

And was there anyone else around the sabotage or infiltration question?

**Not for me. Not for me at that point. Not at Greenham.**

Okay. And what do you feel is the legacy of Greenham within the peace movement, or the feminist movement, or the lesbian - lgbtq movement?

**Um, I think that's a really hard question, because I thought it was the most amazing thing that had ever happened, because I was there and there were so many other**

**things going on at the time, and it was rippling out in a way that was so different from my life previously. So it was fundamentally for me a complete life changer. And I felt that it put women's politics on the map and certainly the sense of having women only spaces and women only actions as a way to deal with male violence seemed like that's the only - not the only way, but the most effective way of doing that, so in some ways I think that spilled out, into a wider place. But I think that spilling out has diluted the memory, so I can talk to people, and they say 'Oh yes, I think my Mum went to Greenham.' 'Oh, so what do you remember about it?' 'Um, oh I don't remember, just something…'. That thing of they don't remember anything about 'Oh it was common land the MOD had taken, we got the common land back - wow'. Well she also had to get rid of the nuclear missiles as well, which was pretty important as well. So, you know the victors, we were the victorious in terms of winning that war, if that's a war, um, but in terms of being able to have a sea change in society, it's not enough.**

And do you feel that maybe because of the way the media treated the Greenham women, or the whole project?

**It's that whole thing of dirty women squatting in the mud, 'they're all 'lezzos', they've all got mental health problems' - all that stuff, all of which are true, you know, don't get me wrong. You know, I think for many, many women it continued to percolate through their lives - it's that idea of when you've got an idea for something, it changes your life, and it might change it in a big way and very visible way, or quite a small way. So I do think that legacy has gone out in that sense, but in a bigger sense I'm not sure. I went to see a piece, a theatre piece locally - there's this local organisation, and these three women came from Derby University and er did a, they'd done a university course in theatre and they came to do a piece about How To Be An Armchair Activist was the title of it, so I went to see it, and it was appalling. I was just completely shocked, and I thought 'Oh, oh my god - they don't know anything, oh and these are meant to be' - they were saying 'We're political activists, we're women being political activists, we're taking…' So it went from Suffragettes to Pussy Riot - because nothing happened between Suffragettes and Pussy Riot at all! And so in the interval we had these luggage labels on our chair on which we had to write something abut what made us an activist, and er, they came round to collect them, and I said 'I can't write on a luggage label, you know it would take a side of A4 of what I've done today as a political activist, because what is your definition of political activist? Because you're not really saying it in your piece'. I said 'I can't believe that you've not mentioned Greenham common', and they said 'What's Greenham common?'**

Gosh.

**And you go 'Fuck, you know they don't even know that and they've been researching women's activism, and that hasn't come up', which is kind of scary really.**

It's sad.

**It's scary and sad, because you think how quickly it is to erase, I mean I know I've got a terrible memory, I've got a really bad memory and I don't remember half the things that would be good to remember, but it was one of those things of going 'Oh my god, this is, er yeah, seriously bad'.**

That's why I asked the question about media, because kind of in terms of source materials for historians to look at, if this is the only version of Greenham they're being presented with - I feel oral testimony is so important for people to be able to talk about their experience of Greenham and what it actually meant to people. It's a cliche that the first draft of history is what is in the newspaper, but those are primary sources for people. And if those sources are wholly negative then, how how can it not be erased unless people talk about it in that way? And that testimony that people are giving, like we're doing now, is spread - so that people can hear it? It's off topic, but as I did history as my undergraduate degree, and definitely what I found was it's still a male preserve, it's male history and women's history or gender studies is still a side project for people - it's not a way that we do history. That's why I said it's really sad, because it's not unpicking the fundamental of how the world works to look at activism and say it goes from the Suffragettes to Pussy Riots - of-course it doesn't, of-course there are millions of women doing everyday activism in their homes, in their domestic lives, and maybe it's the way history is documented and talked about that prevents people from finding out about that.

**We know that. You know, I mean I can't say that I'm particularly au-fait with mainstream media, I mean I hear the radio news, I sometimes see things on the telly - I don't watch the television news, and mostly what I hear and see I'm fairly appalled by, because I go 'Right, what is it the government wants us to understand now? What do they want us to not look at?' Because that's how I see the media very much reports so, on the other hand, what I see is journalism, which I think is an amazing craft, so there are fantastic journalists doing fantastic stuff, but getting their stuff into mainstream is really difficult, so there's still that power structure which needs dismantling.**

And what was the piece called that you saw?

**I can't - I think it was called How To Be An Armchair Activist or something like that, but in my comments I said quite a lot, but I said this is a surprising Arts Council funded project, because I really thought it was poor. And that's really hard - am I**

**harder on women than on other people? Maybe. Maybe I am. Because I wouldn't choose to go and see some straight piece of theatre about something I'm not interested in, which might be just as appallingly badly researched as and you know not particularly interestingly put together, but yeah - it wasn't all bad.**

Um, you've kind of answered this question, but in-case you want to say anything else. What do you think the reason is that the movement - the Suffrage movement has been celebrated while this movement has been ignored? We've kind of talked about that, but in-case you wanted to say anything else?

**Well. Guess it's the thing of something's very concrete - the Suffrage movement is a very concrete thing, it's you know 100 years, you can't really - I mean I'm really pleased that there has been such a good focus on it with the First World War and stuff, but I still feel they're telling the same old story. Which I find really difficult, because you go okay women were really struggling, struggling, fighting fighting, getting abused, force fed blah blah, and then suddenly the war starts, the movement gets split - oh well we'll kowtow until the end of the war, oh well it's only for the 30 year olds who are privileged and blah blah blah, so it wasn't really - it's fed to us that women have had the vote, and that's bollocks because it's not true, and so the history gets rewritten in the same way. It's frustrating.**

Do you also think maybe it's because - this is my theory that the Suffrage movement had a leader, it's easier to tell the story of a person...

**Or leaders, because there were more than one leader in the Suffrage movement because the choice of different tactics - whether they wanted to be part of the peace movement, or whether they wanted to be part of the war effort, so there was a big split anyway, as you know. Yes of-course it's much easier if you've got a hierarchical organisation. To be able to er, catalogue it and to some degree research it, whereas something that is a little more nebulous - like Greenham - that's not to say there weren't leaders, um because obviously there were some women who chose to, and were very good at public speaking, and there was also that, I mean you know - so there's the non-violent action support group and there was consensus decision making which I'm presuming you've heard loads about. And that was um varyingly different depending on who was sitting in the room, because - and I said earlier, if you're articulate and educated then you tend to take the platform more than other people and sometimes that can be - could be quite challenging. And because you know, there were a certain amount of women who gravitated towards Greenham because they, um, being on the margins of society because of mental health problems, which also was a dynamic in the mix, so the could be leaders in a different way, and you know - I never thought of them as plants, but they were very very good**

**plants if you were going to - not sabotage, but throw things up and make things really sticky - that was a good way to do it.**

So how did it work, the consensus decision making?

**Sometimes it worked really, really well. So an example of it working really well is having a clear intention of what you're trying to thrash out, um, having a talking stick, which is a technique used in Native American people - those things worked really, really well. Um, we tried doing a timer, which just was horrible - that really didn't work - to try to speed things up, because it was a very drawn out process, and sometimes women, you know, needed to talk a lot, and bring in a lot of er - to them issues that were very important, but for some of us it was hard to be respectful for that because it felt very peripheral, which I guess is the same with any conversation. So yes, consensus decision making is a great, great thing and I still practice it to some degree, um, but that's how I work, how we work in the workplaces that we work in, so you know, it is useful, but it has to be boundaried by you know, what is your intention, and the time needs to be respected because otherwise, yeah! (Laughs).**

And the consensus decision making - was it organised by gate, or camp or camp wide, or was it just fractions - how would it be, the administration of it is what I'm trying to...

**I'm trying to remember, there were - some of it was centrally administered, if that's right? Because when we were getting ready to do an action or something, there would be er, so we would get our affinity group and support group in Devon and go up the night before, or the day before, or two days before, and there would be then you know, something organised in at the gate, which maybe happening at the same time as other gates, because then there'd be runners going on bicycles between gates, passing messages, so that we all had a coordinated plan at the end of the day. You've heard about the Black Cardigans?**

No, tell me, tell us about...

**Black Cardigans, so I can't remember where - because it evolved over time. There was a point where um, we weren't doing criminal damage because it was violence, to 'Okay let's do a bit of criminal damage, but we wont call it that, we'll just call it - oh there's a hole in the fence', to 'Let's take the fence down', and so 'Let's take the fence down' was the Black Cardigans. So the call went out that we were going to take down the fence, and it was like 'What the fuck! Shit!' And er, so we were all told to bring a black cardigan, which was code name for bolt cutter, so we all duly - I've got photographs - we all duly turned up, I'm pretty sure it must have been around Halloween, because we're all dressed up as you know, typical witches, um and so we**

**had a practice at home with bolt cutters, and you know - being able to get on top of somebody's shoulders and being able to clip away, because that's how you managed to do it, but it was quite fun, quite exciting, bloody scary, and completely you know - because the men on the other side were just - didn't know what to do, just could not figure out what on earth we were doing and why we were doing it, because we were just taking the fence down - we didn't want to come in, we just wanted to take the fence down, which made them feel terribly exposed and some of them were like 'No, no, don't take the fence down!' - trying to hold the fence up, and you know, it was kind of interesting. Yeah.**

So how was that decision made to do that?

**How was that decision made? I guess somebody, or a group of women, somebody had an idea, and said 'Oh, what about this?', so you know - it would catch on, like somebody would say to somebody else 'Oh yeah, we could do this we could do that, we could do t'other.' I remember the teddy bear's picnic which we kind of misinterpreted! (Laughs) We decided that yeah, this was going to be the teddy bear's picnic, so it was a massive invasion of the base, that was kind of later on - let's - 'They can't arrest us all, they can't press us all, because there's not enough room in the jails and you know blah blah blah, so alright we're going to do that', and for some reason we'd decided because it was near Easter we were all going to go as Easter eggs and chickens! (Laughs). So that's what we did, so there were interpretations within interpretations because there was no - so there were some things that were very clear, like the Black Cardigans that needed to be done very, er, clearly, and er, altogether, and you know, because we didn't want to get picked off, and you've heard about the silos action, that was also quite er, you know the right timing and stuff like that. So I guess it's that thing you have to agree together that this is a good idea, and then you have to trust people, well trust women, that they're going to carry it out roughly in the right way and it's all going to work out fine.**

Um, this is more about children which you, because there were children at camp obviously. Did you see any particular challenges around having children at the camp or, and how were they educated, medical treatment for them, and if any - what do you think was a lasting impact for them? Though you might not be able to answer it.

**So um, so, what comes is that for a lot of us at the time there was no way we were going to become mothers in this word, so that was the thing around children, that we were being denied the right to have children because you're making the world unsafe for us, so it was a big strand for a lot of us. There were children there that visited, I mean obviously there were children born there because that's been documented and stuff like that. And I don't remember the kids being particularly difficult, that seemed - you know, yes there were kids there, there weren't a lot of kids there, er, they**

**seemed to be relatively okay - you know - I didn't seem to see them being miserable, or miserable and not comforted, because everybody gets miserable, but there was usually somebody would give them a cuddle or say 'Let's go and get some wood for the fire', or 'Lets go and do something or you know, whatever', so I didn't really see children being miserable. Whether or not they were being educated - they were surely getting educated, because life is an education, and being in an environment like that where they've got to try and make sense of what the fuck is going on, and try and integrate that into some kind of meaning, I'd be really dead curious to talk about what they remember and what sense they make of it really (laughs)! But yeah, I mean I don't remember anybody - any child being unwell and not taken care of or anything like that. The same with, sometimes women would get injured and you'd take care of them as best as you could, or if they needed hospital treatment then yeah, that's you know - we're still living in a civilized world, and obviously paid our taxes and you know.**

And you've talked about this throughout the interview, but how would you say being an activist and campaigner has affected or continues to affect your personal life, and how are the two intertwined? You said previously of-course they do.

**It's that thing of you have an experience or you get an idea - the experience gives you the idea or whatever, of how the world works, and whether you feel comfortable with that or not comfortable with that from day dot. What do you mean by activism? You know, is it saying 'I don't want to wear skirts, I don't want pink'. That's activism - if you're expected to wear skirts and like pink, or whatever it is, it's not having your individuality respected, so that's your own personal kind of thing. And then there's the seeing how people are treated around you and modeling that behaviour, so if you think it's okay that the mother does everything then that's what you expect, or you might jettison that and say 'Well that doesn't seem fair', or all those kinds of things that when you're growing up you notice those kinds of things, and then you get socialized into the wider society and go 'Hang on, why is that the way it is?' You question your experiences and you make the best sense you can of it, and if you still retain some of that - I'd say connectedness, you're more likely to come out of it being a socialist, because you go 'I am part of the planet, I am part of the Earth, I am part of everything, and therefore what I do makes a difference', so you're more likely to be an activist, because you don't want to see - like trashing the world is trashing my body. Obviously there's a grey area, I like to eat things that I shouldn't do and drink things thats I shouldn't do - hey hoh. Haven't started on the cookies yet! And it's the same with like yeah, I go 'Yes I drink cow's milk'. Yes I will go and buy organic milk when I can but you know, I haven't given up the cow's milk even though my food politics started fairly early on. I did try and be vegan for some time, but you know, I like what I like, so there is that grey fudgey area where none of us can be totally ethically right-on, … (inaudible). Does that answer your question?**

Yeah absolutely it does. And I think, I like you kept saying earlier in the interview about a moral and principled life, or a moral and ethical life, and I think that - it's a tangent, I was watching this TV show called The Good Place and it's about how it's kind of harder to do it in a contemporary society, like you were saying about cow's milk, but also that you know - to drink oat milk for example, is expensive. Soya milk disrupts the developing world.

**Yeah yeah.**

So of-course it's much more complicated. I'm vegetarian, and tried to be vegan on and off, and like you tried to make decisions that I feel are more ethical and moral, but then there's other things that come with making those decisions.

**I can't remember which Native American or First Nation people said 'We will not make a decision about anything that's going to affect our tribe unless we can be clear that for seven generations it'll be okay.' I think wow that's quite, that's very long-sighted to go 'Okay if we move towards growing more oats in this country, which grow really, really well here, fantastic', yes we should all eat more oats, but oat milk is er, a nutritionally poor food, so that's fine because we're in a developed world and we're all relatively affluent, so we can get our nutrients from other places, but it's not going to, it's not part of a whole - yeah - I could go on a right trajectory here! But it is that thing of it's very very complex, and having a moral or ethical stamp out where you go 'What I do and say, and how I act, and what I choose makes a difference. It makes a difference in my world, but it makes a difference in everybody else's world.' We are all interconnected, and that is absolutely true, and it is very complex - that idea that not that I want to bang on about vegan - becoming vegan is as if you've got a personal solution, like all you've got to do is become vegan and you can stop the descent into global chaos, I'm sorry - that ain't going to work, because it's way more complex than that.**

And I think as well…

**It's a good step to be going 'What am I eating, why am I eating it, is this good for my body, is this good for my community, is this good for my planet?' That's great because then you go 'Oh actually, maybe I should eat that knocked down pheasant that I saw not the side of the road - it wasn't there the day before so it's probably alright.'**

And I think putting so much responsibility on the individual to change their habits absolves things that we as individuals…

**Have no power over.**

Exactly, we could try to protest and things like that, but ultimately power is held by businesses and…

**Trans global corporations. And right-wing fascist organisations, and aren't they doing a great job!**

Oh, the world's great!

**Yesterday's news was just really what we wanted to hear. One of my patients came in and I said 'How are you doing?' And they said 'Oh god I've just head the news' and I said 'So do you want to tell me?' And er, I said 'Oh, great, that's brought the right-wing coup jus a little closer, divide and rule'. Fuck! Anyway. Yes! (Laughs)**

Um, we've sort of talked about this. This is a question that is difficult to answer, and I really do appreciate that. Could you talk me through a typical day, or one of your typical days at Greenham with the day to day administration of how your day worked, essentially? Which I know is a kind of hard question. It's to drill down into the administration and domestic things of the camp, essentially.

**So, let's think, so when you emerge, okay, it's I guess it's assess the situation so you emerge and you assess the situation, which means if you need a pee - go and have a pee, then have a look and check that the fire's still going - not going, if it's pissing with rain is the firewood covered? That kind of stuff, go back to bed - unless you want to get up, because obviously the first thing you do when you're up is to get the fire going, get the water going, or get the water because er, sometimes that was a whole trip in itself to get the water.**

And where would you get it from? There was a tap?

**There was a stand pipe - a couple of stand pipes. We'd usually stop at a petrol station and fill jerry cans of water, to use, and then you know, usually some people would drift out and it was like oh alright, you know. Next thing would be go off and find somewhere to have a wash, which is usually the hot water bottle water, because that's still hopefully vaguely warm - kind of nice. Get dressed. Go and eat something which would be either a 20 minute experience or a 2.5 hour experience - depending on what was happening. So you could go there and go 'Oh alright, I'll just make a bit of porridge and then I'll make a bit more porridge', or 'I'm just going to make porridge for who's here now and then they can make their own porridge'. So it was, the administrative stuff would depend on if there's six of you at a gate then you're going to make more decisions for the collective because there's a small group. If there's**

**thirty of you, then it's a bit more chaotic and takes a longer process. So cooking seemed to be quite a big sort of thing. Lots and lots of making tea, lots and lots of talking, lots and lots of um 'Oh right, let's go for a walk and check out what's happening at somewhere else'. If you were there because there was an action happening, you'd usually - if I was with my group you'd get together and check out how we're doing and have we got everything we needed, and does anybody need something different, and then there'd be - if there was a camp vehicle, shopping runs or fetching people runs, or delivering people or that kind of stuff, so, and that just seemed to be how the day went. Walks, food, tea, talking, doing an action if an action is taking place, clearing up, cleaning up, um, yeah.**

And did you ever experience the bailiffs?

**Yes. Yes.**

You don't have to talk about it.

**Not nice. Not nice. No that was, I mean it was really early on when they first started, so before they got really, really, really unpleasant, but it was still pretty damn unpleasant. So yeah.**

And what was the mood like after they'd been?

**Well just thinking about it now is, it's like that sort of, er, pulling yourself together and going 'In the bigger scheme of things, in the bigger planet, this is just one of those things', and that would get you through, and that's what most - it's like the bigger picture, keep the bigger picture in mind, because if you let yourself go into the smaller place then it just reminded you of all the other times that you'd been abused, and that's a really unpleasant feeling. So, um, yeah. I think that was, what - yeah it seemed to be there were some women who were very good at doing the 'Yeah alright', they'd go on, pull it together, blah blah. There were some women who just needed quite a bit of time to get themselves together before they could come, and there was quite a bit of kindness. And there were quite a lot of women who would sometimes get very, very, very angry. (Laughs). Um, you know, and that was quite hard sometimes because it's not that I'm, because women angry can be really scary - it's true. I didn't feel like there was any direct threat to me or whatever, but there was certainly like you know, how far on the edge does it make somebody go?**

And could you explain why you think it's important Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

Well I think the most important thing is that it reminds people of the interconnectivity, so that's what I would say is the most important thing. Because it's that thing of going 'Oh women organising together - that's not the first time this has happened, when else has it happened?' Which will eventually lead you back to Matriarchal Study and Crete and you know, back and back and go 'Oh, gosh how interesting - women have organised together and have created societies and that's not been written about'. So that's one thing that's really important. The other thing that is really important is being able to say that one of the legacies of Greenham is that non-violent direct action is very useful, and probably much more difficult to do with mixed groups - has always been much more difficult to do with mixed groups. Um, and I just think it's really inspirational for young women, in particular, to feel like 'Oh, we could get together and do something. We could make a difference to something that feels er, really big, like that.' Yeah. And not to be scared.