Carole Stuart McIver

Carole, thank you so much for joining us today. We really, really appreciate you giving up your time to talk about your Greenham stories. Could I, could I start by asking you, what brought you to Greenham? So how did you become involved in Greenham in the first place?

It's a long time ago. I mean, it's a really long time ago. I'd just come out of care. I was in care. And I got a job at the Fabian Society, in their bookshop. And I was sitting in Servers Square having my lunch. And I saw a newspaper I think, must be an Evening Standard. And it said something about a rainbow bomb. And I remember thinking that is really obscene, you know - the rainbows, you know, make a rainbow bomb. And I rang up CND and asked what was going on. And they said, 'Oh, there's a coach going to Greenham on Saturday.' So I was 16. I didn't know anybody. And I said, 'Okay, book me on the coach', which they did. And I went to Greenham - told my Mum I'd be back that night. And then the, the police came along, said 'Time to clear the..', you know, 'the gate now.' And some of the guys there said, 'Well, we're not going.' And I said, 'Why aren't you going?' They told me why they weren't going so I thought I'm not going either. So I stayed overnight. And, and then - the cuddling down in a sleeping bag with a guy called Tim, I think. And he ended up editing a radical newspaper in a couple of years - I can't remember it's name. And the next morning, a furniture van arrived and the police said 'You either move or we're going to arrest you.' And I remember thinking that's a bit pushy and it's quite important. So I just sat there and was taken to Reading jail - I'd read Oscar Wilde it wasn't quite how I'd imagined Reading jail to be. And then we, I think we came yes, we came up into the magistrates, Newbury magistrates on Monday. And they said that they were going to, I had to be bound over to keep peace. And I refused to give my name and my date of birth, and I refused to be bound over. And there was nothing they could do. I mean, they obviously knew I was a bit on the young side. So that's how I spent my first week in Holloway.

And spent a week in holiday, Holloway at the age of 16?

Yeah, which is really unusual. I remember looking over the balcony with a Vicar's daughter called Alison. I was saying 'I didn't know they had men in Holloway.' She said, 'Oh, they're not men they're lesbians.' And I didn't like to ask, because it seemed a bit stupid, because everybody nodded wise, I didn't know what they were talking about. I think Helen Allegranza was down there. And Pat Arrowsmith, people I met years later. And then when they came back in court, after a week, my Mum had sent my sort of, then sort of boyfriend who worked at The Economist with her. And he paid the fine and I was furious. So that was, yeah, that was my first first encounter with Greenham. And then years - and then I married my barrister from, from that action at Greenham, and had three children. And I was at Tenby on holiday, and must be 19, beginning of the 1980s. And we'd been out on the beach all day. And I was looking out the window at night. And there was nobody on the beach. There

was no kids. There was no laughter there was no dogs, there was no sound of anything. And I was doing a postgraduate teaching degree. And I thought what the fuck is the point of teaching history when there might not be any history? And I sat down that night and wrote to the university and said, 'I'm leaving.' So I'm going to leave college, but I'm going to go to Greenham. And I did.

So the first time you were at Greenham, because you talked about Helen Allegranza being in Holloway so what year was that?

Must be in 1960, '61 or '62? Yeah, really early '60s.

Really really early. Yeah.

Yeah.

Wow. Okay. So I don't know if I'd realised it, but I mean, I knew there were the actual, you know, the big walk and the action, at Trafalgar square but I don't know if I'd realised that actions actually took place at Greenham that early.

I don't know how many there were or whether that was just a random sort of action but yeah, it was certainly an issue already. Yeah. The Committee of 100 were concerned about it so.

So what brought you back to Greenham? What - so you were talking, you were talking about being - talking about there not being any history, so kind of ending your teaching degree?

Yeah.

Then, did you go straight back to Greenham then?

No, I sort of rang up, found out what was going on and it was Embrace the Base.

Yes.

And I knew that in - some of the women have gone from Wales, but I didn't, I didn't know them. I hadn't gone, hadn't gone on the walk. But when I saw Embrace the Base I thought, right I'll go again. Rang up, got the coach, and went on Embrace the Base and sort of what you described, really, you suddenly found yourself holding hands with 1000s, literally 1000s of women. And it was - you just knew it was a moment and that if we didn't… And we all - people had pictures of their kids and their grandchildren up on the… And it was, it was wonderful. It was also heartbreaking. Because it, we knew that it was really serious. It was at the height of the Cold War, and it could happen. And then we, you know, we went into the Cuba crisis, you know, the following year, and we knew it really could happen. And people were talking, sorry.

No, no, go on.

People were talking about a big action in, on New Year's Day. And I thought Yeah, I could that. No, there's no good just sort of turning up. If I'm really serious about this, I need to be really serious about it. So I went back, and it was, it was a big decision. And I, you know, I have tremendous guilt about it, because I left my kids. And my Mum, you know, I left my kids with my Mum, but I left them all on Christmas Eve. And my Professor Gwen Williams, drove me up. Looked terrified at all the women, dropped me and drove off. And it was it was an odd experience because the women were all sitting around the fire, but they were quite cool. Not in a cool way, but in a little bit frosty way. Nobody said hello or anything. And months later, one of the women said to me, 'Oh, if I'd have known you were a friend of my,' I won't name her, 'my friend, we'd have you know, we'd have come up and talked to you.' And I thought, well fuck that, that shouldn't be…

Yeah.

You know, that's it. Listen, it was very white, very middle class. And I didn't think you should have to be a friend of a friend really. So I wasn't,

What gate was that? Do you know?

Main Gate? Yeah. Green Gate, yeah. Yeah. Yellow Gate, I can't remember, the Main Gate.

Yeah, yellow was Main Gate. Yeah.

Yeah. But it you know, it was Christmas Eve, it was. But then, you know, it was okay. And that's I started to talk to people and heard about the silo action. I thought, yeah that sounds like a really good idea.

And then, so you took part in the silo action? Do you want to talk us through what happened?

So I went home, still feeling guilty about leaving, I went home to tell them I was going to leave them again. So I obviously didn't feel that much guilt. But I thought the idea of actually trying to prevent work on the silos themselves, I thought it was a really good idea. So I went back. And we planned it. And I remember thinking at the time we went to - was it Basingstoke? Somewhere quite near, and we brought aluminium ladders. We bought old secondhand carpet. Rebecca contacted, you know, did a wonderful job contacting the press, every single hotel and every breakfast you know it was full of journalists and film crews. I just thought they - we're never going to get away with this. You know, gangs of women buying ladders and journalists you know, we're just never ever going to get away with it. I think one of the things I learned then - never over estimate the intelligence in the British state. Be-

cause we turned up just before dawn on New Year's Day, with ladders and old carpets and as many journalists and film crews as you could have fitted in Manchester. And there was no police. There was nobody there, I couldn't believe it. Kate Aidy was standing behind me and I heard her say 'I think we we're breaking the Official Secrets Act.' I thought, yeah, I think you're dead right I think we are breaking the Official Secrets Act. And one of the women who went over the fence before me was called Nell Logan, who became a close friend and she was, I, I thought she was older than god in those days. She was 75. And she'd stuffed her, you know, all her clothes and stuff with newspapers to prevent the dogs biting her. And over she went and over I went and over we all went. And then we just ran and then suddenly we saw the lights from a police car. But it was inside the base. It was just amazing that nobody had sussed it really. And we sort of ran up the hill to the top of the silo. And just as - it all sounds so very romantic. Just as the sun started to come up, the dawn started to break, we were on top of the silo holding hands dancing against, anti-clockwise and singing. Then we sat down and then we got wet and then we got arrested.

Such an iconic image, that picture of you all on the silos and with the police cars in the foreground.

Yes, yeah. We got, can't remember what happened to us - did we get taken? Maybe we were kept in the cells overnight. Do you know I can't remember but eventually we were released. And then we had a big court case I think in Newbury, where Liz Woodcraft was an incredible barrister, wonderful woman. And, you know, lots of people from all over the world gave - I think, Professor Alice Stewart gave evidence. People gave incredible evidence, it was really powerful. And we got found guilty. Packed into a riot van and everybody, lots of people complained about being put in a riot van. And I just could never see the reason for the complaint. Because if you threaten the, you know, the biggest financial deals in history, then you're a fucking terrorist and you should be treated like a terrorist. You know, what would they have done? 'Okay, girls, you've made your point you know go home.' That would be much more insulting than the riot van I think. But I'm quite, I'm quite small. And I couldn't see out the window properly. So I balanced up on the seat, and then they slammed the brakes on. And I must have hit the wall. And then I don't really remember anything until we got to Hollaway. But when I got into Hollaway, I started being really sick. One of the the prisoners who were already there sort of said 'She needs to see a doctor.' I think the doctor came and gave me a great dollop of phenobarbitone. But I was clearly concussed. And somebody wrote, a journalist wrote a piece in the New Statesman. So I then saw the doctor. They stopped giving me phenobarbitone. But going to prison hospital in those days was a real - I mean, it was horrific it was just, women who lost their babies there. And doctors who really were not being nice. No, it was - the old Hollaway was horrific. But the new Hollaway it was more horrific in a different way. It was less human. It was, it was unkinder, I think.

Yeah.

So I think we got two weeks I think.

That's interesting. You seeing the prison in the early '60s and in the early '80s.

Yeah.

Seeing the difference between the two stays.

I think the second time was worse. Because everybody said it must have been awful in the old one. I mean, it was it was more gothic. They gave you a bath and you know the bath was the size of the Thames, but it was I didn't think it was as unkind as the new Hollaway, you know to women.

That's very interesting. Erm so, what when you came out of Holloway, what made you decide to stay, so how long did you stay at Greenham for?

Well, once I'd done the. These things, gather their own momentum don't they. I mean we came out of that, I mean, those funny things in Holloway. I remember the women protested outside trying to climb in - which of course the other prisoners thought was hilarious. They were used to people breaking out but breaking in was a bit different. And we were taken to, I think it was the Old Bailey for something about evictions and bailiffs to - and instead we formed a circle in the Old Bailey and we tried the judge and found the judge guilty. So that was, you know, quite busy in there.

What did that look like? You tried it - you say you tried the judge? How - can you just talk us through exactly what that looks like?

It was it was outside the main courtroom. I think we all sat down in a big circle, block, blocked the corridor. And I can't remember what we found guilty for, but I gather we did. But when we came out of Hollaway after the fortnight, there was, we had no idea what an impact the silo action had had. And the images have gone all around the world we had, you know, we had no idea. And there were loads of, you know, camera crews and reporters and stuff outside, and that sort of gathered it's own momentum - what are you going to do next? So we had to, you know, we had to think what we were going to do next. I can't know what we did next immediately. But it sort of led to the American court case, you know?

Yeah.

Supreme Court, so and people used to say well why don't you

So you went over to America to New York for that?

Yeah. And people used to say, why don't you try the, you know, the law use the law. So we thought, okay, we will try the law. Which we did, I think, I don't

know how many plaintiffs or - and when I went, I said to my kids, and my Mum, 'This one's okay, we're the plaintiffs. We won't get locked up', you know, 'I promise you, there's', you know, 'there'll be no prison involved.' And I really believed that. But there was an interesting - I won't call it a split I'll call it a dichotomy - in the thinking of the group that went over there, both the lawyers and the plaintiffs. And one of the things that we were offered was money to buy proper clothes, you know, a set of clothes, so we could meet Senators. And some of us, you know particularly the Welsh contingent, reckoned that we, you know, we really didn't want to dress up to meet Senators. So, they needed to meet us as who we were. That was the first split. And then there was a sort of, we were divided, and we were sent on. Sorry, we were sent on lecture tours. And mine was sort of, I think, I gave a lecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard, you know, places like that. But one of my fellow speakers was Weinberger. And he looked as though he'd been dead for years, his hair was all blue. It was weird. And that was that there was a weird thing as well, it was almost the kings touch, you know, that Greenham Women are sort of, somehow that special that people would touch you in the street. And that was, that was kind of weird. And I remember seeing the Tom Paine Memorial Centre. And in one, at one level, you, you know one could see that you were in the, in the line of radical protesters, but it was. I don't know. I didn't like the celebrity stuff, I guess. And then - I understand it's very useful. And I do understand that, but it depends what you do with it, because you shouldn't let it go to your head, I guess. So some of us felt that - I mean, we had the first part of the court case, and one of the Welsh women was thrown out for breastfeeding her baby in court. And outside there was sort of shops and sort of porn shots of pictures of women with their tits hanging out or, you know, but she got thrown out for breastfeeding her baby. So it was sort of split up then, and went on these lecture tours, that those of us who felt a bit strongly about it, decided that if they did site Cruise Missiles while in the adjournment, we'd go back to the United Nations and chain ourselves to the United Nations. And the buggers did site Cruise Missiles while we were in that adjournment week. So we went, we went back, met at the UN and met some American women, and we all chained ourselves together and got arrested. And my son, my eldest son was at London School of Economics at the time. And I promised them all that we wouldn't get arrested and he was watching the news in the common room. He saw these red boots with yellow laces going into the back of a van. Seemingly he turned to his friends, 'That's my Mum.' And it was. So we, we drove into, into New York in this police van. And I don't know what it is about their use of the break, but they slammed the brake on. The door flew open, we all jumped out all chained together. We were dancing through the rush hour traffic all chained together. And they caught us again. But yeah that was good fun. And we went into the central holding centre. And the police women were really apologetic about having to sort of strip search us. And they understood what, you know, why we were doing what we were doing. And we were in this sort of hamster cage overnight with loads of other women. And, you know, that was, god that was an education itself. Because a lot of the women had been in there because they'd had sex with guys. And the guys had paid them for sex. And they ar-

rested them because the guys they'd had sex with were police men. And I think I must have been a bit naive at the time because I was really shocked by that. But there was a woman who taught us how to play backgammon or something so gambled through the night. And got chucked out the next day, sent back to Britain to deal with the fact that you know Cruise Missiles were actually now sited in Britain.

So you had, you had, you, your family that - did you keep then going to Greenham for long stays or for weekends? Or what did it look like, the rest of your time with Greenham?

I think it depended on what was going on. Because I had, you know, I had sort of, well I was supposed to have had domestic responsibilities you wouldn't guess actually. I think when, when there was an action, that we'd go up, you know, the, the Welsh women would go up in their, in a group. And they, they wanted somebody to go - there was going to be a summit, Reagan went to a summit in Geneva. And they wanted women to go to that. So it's again, the Welsh women we went over to Geneva. I think Julie Christie paid for it. I don't know if that's just a myth. But we went over to Geneva and stayed in John Berger's flat in Geneva. Sadly, John Berger wasn't there. But, it's, it all went well. And we just did the usual talks and protests and stuff like that. But then we put the sort of iconic flower clock in the middle of Geneva. And we got a big sheet and we made a clock to fit over it that said five minutes to midnight. And the police didn't like that. So they arrested us, took us to the airport. And my experience of the police in Britain on the whole if you talk to them you know, they're pretty good. They will listen to you, but the police, the - especially the airport police in Geneva, we were taken into the chief of police's room. And he had a big calendar up on the wall with a woman with no bra on and it was, it was really offensive, you know, even by pornographic calendar standard. And so he left us in there and there was a large black marker pen on his desk, and I thought I'd leave a message about it. But he came in as I was doing it and grabbed me by the neck and held me down on the… And he, I really thought he was gonna, to… the other women sort of jumped up, but. Yeah, he had my head in the crux of his arm and he just closed his arm on my neck. But that's the only time really I've had any real violence from the police. And they drove us in a blue flashing light van to the aircraft. And the aircraft was waiting. It was one of those really posh ones where people pay a fortune, it was full of businessmen. They put us right in the back. And when we were up in the air, the - one of the guys with the trolley comes down the back. And he said 'Oh this is from our friend.' Looked at the trolley and it had champagne. And smoked salmon and sort of crusty bread. We thought god that looks good for somebody. And it was a present from the pilots and the crew. If you're going to get deported get deported from Switzerland! We got back. It was, it was we could hear the news of us coming back over the tannoy so you know, obviously made - and you sort of realise then that you don't have you know, if you do things they do get reported, mostly. Unless you're Boris Johnson, of course and then they don't.

Yes.

We sort of went, we went on from there we did… We did lots of stuff. We did lots of stuff in Wales. And I remember, I should have written all the notes down at least I'd have remembered what we'd done.

So are you from Wales?

I'm from Scotland.

From Scotland, originally?

I've lived in Wales most of my adult life. Yeah.

When, because you talked early on about leaving care. So were you in care in Scotland or in Wales?

No in London

Oh, right.

East Finchley, I was in the commons in Good Shepherds, for girls who had to be taken into care for their own safety. I lived rough on the streets of London for a week when I was 12 or 13. And managed perfectly well, to be honest. But the convent, the Good Shepherd Convent, was a very different, different place. I remember one of the, well the only teacher, Mother Francesca, looking at us all in the class and saying, 'You're all tarred with the same brush.' As though we were the ones, you know, it was our fault that we were there. Yes it was, and it was it was my first introduction to women being punished for being women. We were in St. Joseph's half of the care centre. It was a boarding school. And if you went into the chapel, you could hear the girls in Our Ladies side. We never met them. We never saw them. But you could hear them. Mostly they were unmarried mothers. And babies were taken away from them. And you could hear them. Sometimes they turn the water hoses on. And you could hear them. I've never quite, I don't know what to call it. It was when I moved to next door to a dairy farm in Wales. When they shoot the male calves, the cows make this terrible wailing noise. And that's what those girls made. You could hear when they'd taken the babies away from them. And that's not not something you ever forget - or you should ever forget. But I was made, actually made deputy head girl for a week. But then I refused to stand up for God's Save the Queen on the Queen's birthday. So I lost my badge. But the Mother Superior said we could go and meet our MP. You and the head girl can go and meet your MP. But you'll have to give an undertaking that you won't behave badly. And I couldn't give the undertaking so I wasn't allowed to go. But our MP was Maggie Thatcher. Yeah, but when I was - I came back from being in Holloway when I was 16. I went back to the Fabian Society. My boss called me and and she, she actually said to me, it's very good that you're taking politics seriously. But you must never let it interfere with your work. Years

later, I was on a platform with - she was Shirley Williams who has just died. And I reminded her that she told me politics shouldn't interfere with my work. Yeah, it was - how people think that vulnerable kids need to be cared for. I'm not sure, I hope it's changed a lot but I'm not sure it has.

I think to a certain extent, but still a lot of work to do I think.

Yeah.

So how did you end up in Wales from East Finchley?

Well, I got, I got married to my - the guy who was my barrister when I was in Holloway when I was 16, I married him, he was a lawyer. He became a law lecturer. And he got offered a job in Cardiff. So that's why we moved to Cardiff.

And so you've talked a little bit about your son. What was the impact on your children of your activism, both positive and negative?

Well, I've got two sons and a daughter, my daughter has started nursery schools that, that they're sort of taking, taking it one step further, you know, sort of outdoor schools and stuff. But she's, she's taking it one step further with children based, libertarian in open air, nursery schools, they don't go indoors at all.

Amazing.

My eldest son is a researcher in the law on disability. My youngest son is one of the lawyers for Grenfell tower. So, you know they've grown up to be people I really respect.

Absolutely.

But what it was like at the time is you know, a different question. And my youngest son actually went, made me promise not to listen to it, which I didn't do for years. But I mean, he used to get a hell of a lot of shit at school. Because, you know, I remember doing a radio programme on Peak Welsh Radio, with - what's his name? Chris, somebody. And he said to me, asked me a question about… can't remember how he phrased it? I, my answer, was it - it was about lesbianism, and he hadn't told me he was going to ask me - at the camp, and I said, 'Well, it's better to, isn't it better to love other women than to kill other people?' or something like that. But then, of course, the kids got a lot of stick for that, because you know, 'Your Mum's a dike.' Which was true by that time anyhow. But, yeah, you know, they're, I think they - I can't answer for them, really.

Yeah. But they're turned into amazing people so obviously take an influence from you. Massively impressive.

I like to think about this when I'm feeling really guilty. Because I do feel guilty because I did get sort of so swept up in it. And I thought if I didn't do it, they'd die.

Exactly.

You know, it's, we weren't, I don't think we were overreacting at all.

No not at all.

And I, you know, the odd thing is I didn't, the last actually, the last demonstration I went on was about two weeks ago the Kill the Bill. But I went on an Extinction Rebellion one before that. And I've been on a couple of those and nothing's changed. The world is still, really, really in danger. If it's not nuclear weapons, then it's climate change. But it's time we behaved ourselves as a species.

Absolutely. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about the art at Greenham. So do you have memories like - you've spoken briefly about singing, about singing and banners and artwork and poetry? How does that all link in to Greenham?

I think, what was extraordinary is that it became so integral to everyday life, you know, you fried eggs you made a curry, you fried another egg you, you helped with the artwork, or a banner. It was, I think it's how ordinary life should be where art and politics and cooking dinner you know washing, maybe, are all integrated, you know that they're, they're not separate things at all. And as a species, we've, we've handed over so much control to other people. You know and people say, 'Oh, you're a socialist.' I'm not socialist, actually. I've always been an Anarchist. I think being brought up as a Catholic actually helps that because it's about taking responsibility yourself. You know, there's no good waiting for somebody else to do something. You can do it with them. That's, that's excellent. But waiting for other people to do it if you can do it yourself, if you know, if you can't then it's up to other people who can to do it. But yeah, it's interesting because I think if you needed a huge banner or a piece of artwork, it just got done by who wasn't cooking dinner that night. Since there was an assumption that anybody could do anything, and on the whole, anybody could do anything, and probably can do anyhow, you know.

And where did your, so you had a poem published, didn't you?

I didn't know that. Some friend of mine sent it off. I didn't know she'd sent it off. And she just said, 'Oh, it's going to be in the Raving Beauties book.' But no, I didn't send the poem off. It just arrived in the book. But I think I'm incredibly shy. And I think lots of people have got big mouths and much to say, are often actually very shy. Because you take on a persona.

Yeah you're not being yourself.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. As a kid, I wanted to be a dancer, ballet dancer. And I used to - my mother was a cleaner in Collin Gardens, We lived in a basement flat and it was, the house was - what was it called? A Refuge for Retired Gentlewoman. So she used to get up at six in the morning and start cleaning, she used to go into the Red Cross at 6 at night and clean till 10 in the evening. So there was a church nearby. I think it was St Lukes. I don't remember. And I, you couldn't go in unless, you were a rich person. And you know, all the people who worked for the rich people weren't allowed into the gardens. You weren't allowed the key. So from an early age, I'd learned how to climb over the fence. I knew where the gardener hid the key to the church hall. I thought what I'll do is I'll give a show. So I wrote out all these invitations to this free show. And I knew where they kept, you know an old wind up gramophone. And we'd got lots of classical and ballet, you know, 78. So I put all these notices through the door and opened the church hall one Thursday night, and loads of people came. And it was lovely. And then the Vicar came, somebody must have told the Vicar so, but it was only after about two hours. And we all got thrown out and I got banned from the gardens. An old bloke who lived in the Mews, who was a Colonel came up to me and said, 'You are a very good dancer. I want you to go and see somebody I know. Do you have ballet lessons?' And I used to buy Girl Comic and School Friend, you know, you, and you went to ballet lessons if you were rich, which was, you know, was true. So he gave me this link. Her name was Miss Bumble, Bunbury, Miss Bunbury, and she lived in Cheney Walk. I went to see her and she asked me to dance. And she had a ballet studio upstairs. And the ballet studio had a bar but it had mirrors and the mirrors reflected the light from the Thames - so that you know the whole room shimmered when you were dancing. Yeah and she she said that she'd teach me for free with the, you know, the rich kids, which she did. And then she put me in for a scholarship. I think it was called a Cuchetti Scholarship. I remember going home and telling my Mum and Dad and I was so thrilled. They said, 'Oh, you can't do it. We're going to move.' And we did and I didn't do it. But I always wanted to act or dance. And when my first two kids were at school, I went to an audition at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill and got a part. And then I worked in the theatre for about three years, I think. But then you know my husband said, 'It's either the theatre or the family.' So I gave it up.

There seems to be a lot of other people making decisions about your life.

I think so you could say, well, 'Why are you so stupid to allow them to do that?'

No, not at all.

But I think when there's children involved, and you know, I did feel I did feel guilty about it. Although they were looked after during out of school time if I wasn't there by a woman who had a parrot, and the person opposite in Richmond had a monkey. So that's quite a good place to be kids.

Amazing place to be. What were the relationships like with the local residents of Newbury when you were at Greenham? What was your experience of them?

I think, I think they were terribly mixed, actually. I mean, there are people who really hated us being there. I think, was the - was it Trusthouse 40 or somebody? They banned us, actually banned us going into the coffee shops and stuff. But I don't want to sound like an old fashioned liberal but I think when, when you stop and you actually talk to people, it really helps a lot. You know whether it's the police or the US army. The only time I've been thrown down by a US Army person, she was a woman. She threw us down on the concrete. I mean, there was, you know, the worst, some real violent moments. But the local people I think, thought we were a bloody nuisance. And they said we smelt funny, which is almost certainly true. Because if you sit around the fire a lot you smell of the fire and you know. It would be interesting to know what they think of us now - as opposed to what they thought of us then. I think people, I mean we looked scruffy, we probably were scruffy. I still look scruffy I look just as scruffy as I did then. I think we were a nuisance. Then as the police, new police bill goes through, you'll be arrested for being an annoyance. So let's, let's make sure that we all carry on being annoyed. I can't really, I can't give you an impression of what local people thought. I mean, sometimes they'd come and they'd really shout at you. It would be - and I think we were an inconvenience as well.

What about the military and the police? There were some violent moments, but some you could talk to and they'd listen?

Well, I think there were violent moments, as I say when we got in once and the US were in there, the woman in charge got me and threw me down onto the concrete. But that was, that was really unusual. It's funny, because the other day somebody was asking me about the declaration I'd made when I went to America. And she'd said to said to me, was there any violence? No, not that I can remember. She said, 'Well why don't you read your declaration?' So I read it. And listen, there's an incident described where the US army said, 'If you put your hands near that fence,' you know 'we'll have you.' And this woman puts just puts her fingers through the fence, and just pushes the fence about two centimetres. And he sort of karate chops her hand and there's blood everywhere. And, it was me. I really, you know you've got a selective memory haven't you, because I didn't remember. As soon as I read it because I had to read it out. So when I read it out I thought yes, I do remember this and I had to go to the hospital and stuff. But I also think, you know, he said, don't touch that fence. And I thought bugger you. I mean, I was winding him up as much as I was winding, he was winding me up.

But you weren't hurting anyone.

That wasn't - no he certainly, he really did hurt me actually, he did. But it's amazing what you choose not to remember. But on the whole I've found. And

I used to have, I had quite serious disagreements with other women about this. Because I do think if you, if you talk to people and explain it does help. I was just thinking about you know, my children. I remember my youngest son letting the police car tyres down as an action in in Wales, and my oldest son, it was it was an anti National Front march in Cardiff, and I was on that and I don't know where he was. Anyhow, that night we were watching television. And there were some teenagers lobbing lumps of just mud at the protesters. And I remember saying in a very self righteous way, 'That isn't the way to deal with things.' And I realised it was my eldest son. And my daughter and I, after Chernobyl, decided we needed to do something. We went together in to - I had already been banned from the House of Commons, because I'd got arrested there with the Greenham Women in the crypt. So I said to my daughter, I mustn't give my right name. So they came along, and I said 'Carole', but they didn't do anything. We were dressed up as tourists and we had sort of, you know, diamond earrings and mascara and, you know. Big, really big sort of designer bags. And they were going to have this debate on Chernobyl. But there was another debate first. So we got in, right into the centre of the stranger's galley - still open in those days. And gradually from there - we weren't supposed to be there, because we only booked for the one to be - it started to fill up, like Greenpeace protesters and Friends of the Earth. And so we were right in the centre. And when they started the debate, what we got in our bag - and they'd searched our bags, but we'd got it in the lining - was flour, you know, just self raising flour and spring blossoms, and leaflets. And we had to decide which, which one of us was going to stand up and give the speech and which one was going to empty the flour and the leaflets over the MPs, so we tossed for it. And I don't know if I won or lost, I think I probably lost. So she said that she wanted to go to the loo and sort of got out, got down to the very front. And nobody - I mean, she looked so posh, nobody bothered. And she opened her bag, and she just emptied the flour and the flower petals and the leaflets over the MPs. And it was an incredible moment because the flour, because it's been compacted, as she shook it over the MPs it rose in the sort of, you know, nuclear cloud you know above them, and they came to drag her off. So I had to stand up and start to make a speech, which I did. And I thought, well, it'll only be two seconds, you know, because they'll drag me out. Bloody hell the, you know, the Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace all put their feet across the benches, so nobody could get through. So I had to keep on and I was praying, 'Please take me away. Grab me.' So I gave my maiden speech in the House of Commons. And it seemed to go on for 20 minutes. I think it was about 5 minutes. It was a long time. So yeah, they, they grew up to be good kids.

Do you see any of these tactics being used anywhere now? These kind of non-violent direct action?

Yeah, I see it with the Extinction Rebellion sit ins. But I didn't think, I mean, I went on the Kill the Bill demonstration. Which was you know the March it was good. And we went to Parliament Square, and we sat down and that was good. But you could also see and this was two years ago, you could also see

that there were elements that really wanted a punch up with the police. I don't know if I'd say it was stronger now than it was then. You know, because you're in danger of looking at the good old days, you know, when we all behaved much better. No, no, I don't think we did really. But in the last 18 months - it's been so weird.

Yeah.

So you can save the planet but infect your neighbour. I've got a great granddaughter and then the song with Extinction Rebellion, you know, about 18 months ago - and one of the lines of, you know, about your great granddaughter and I thought, god what must it be like to have a great granddaughter? I've now got a great granddaughter. So I'd quite like the world to continue and get better for her and for everybody.

Absolutely. What did it mean to you - why do you think the decision was made to make Greenham Women only, a women only camp?

Because men are dicks. I mean that, they are so - they cannot help but think that they should be in control because they think they know better and I think fuck all has changed really. I mean, you have a, have another layer of oppression to scramble through before you get to the government, you know. I know its a huge generalisation. In, I was, I was uncertain about the decision, well for about three minutes. And the fact that you know Greenham was women only, I think was incredibly important. I don't think it would have done half the things that we'd have done if men had been involved. That's not to say that, you know, we were all nice and kind to each other and there was no conflict. There was a hell of a lot of conflict. There was the issues that nobody, or a lot of people didn't want to address, you know let alone, do something about I mean. Diversity was a real issue at Greenham. It was essentially white, it was often essentially middle class. And to raise those sort of issues often caused - I'm trying to think of a polite way of saying this… Caused battles actually it caused battles.

And how were they resolved? So how was conflict managed?

Yeah, I don't know the answer to that really. It was, it used to be resolved because it had to be and if you have to be sort of out, doing something deeply illegal, you're gonna have to do it anyhow so you just have to stop arguing about stuff.

Yeah, and you say it was quite white middle class, but there were I mean, you yourself? Would, you know, you were from care. And I know we've interviewed at least one of the woman who who came from care and people from, from different backgrounds, do you think that different people from different backgrounds tended to group together or what did people?

I think they would have done this, they could have done, but there often weren't enough, you know, which was the issue in the first place. And sometimes you had really sort of odd moments talking about diversity. I remember meeting a black woman at Greenham. I think it's on Christmas Eve and she was Michael Foot's chauffeur. And he'd brought down a stilton cheese and some good wine. I mean, I was very fond of Michael Foot. You know, for fucks sake you know. That's a sort of, you know, that's the sort of amusing one because it sort of mirrors the balance of power, I think.

Yeah, absolutely. How did the kind of collective decision making work? Apparently no leaders, how what did that look like?

I'm an Anarchist and I believe in no leaders. I've very rarely seen anything be organised that didn't have leaders. And, you know - I say this as one of the plaintiffs who went to America - you know, as one of the people who went and lectured at Harvard, you know, who the fuck am I to say about you know, to say about these issues? I don't, people, excuse me, people with ideas and ideas about how to organise carrying out those ideas. They're not called leaders but because somebody is not called a leader doesn't mean that they're not a leader. Depends what you, how you define leadership.

Were everyone's opinions listened to to form a plan of direct actions and things?

I think people really did try actually to be fair. I think people did try to listen to, I remember the, I think she was an Italian woman who wanted us to do the silo naked, naked. And I think we all, we all listened, but we all knew bloody well, we were not taking our knickers off to go over the barbed wire. You know people were, you know, I hope that people were listened to. But you know one of the things about leadership is you have to - you know, you've got, you've got a round table of equality, but who lets those equals in in the first place? You know, it's some, in some things, self defined, you know, so that people with ideas and the ability to organise those ideas - they won't call themselves leaders, but they probably will be. I think it's complex. Yeah. But I think it's something to be careful of, very careful of.

What do you think the legacy is of Greenham within the peace movement?

You see. You talked, we were in the pub the other day. And one of the young guys said, oh, we were talking about Greenham, and he knew about Greenham and he must have been, no, he wasn't 12 otherwise he wouldn't be working in the pub. But he was really young, and he knew about Greenham. And that really surprised me. And I remember when Emma and I actually got locked up in the tower, you know, the clocktower, Big Ben, when we done the action in the in parliament for Chernobyl. And loads of MPs and stuff came up and bought us tea and biscuits and things. But one of the people who were looking after us said, 'Oh, we had an exhibition about you, you sort of ladies the other week.' And we said, 'Well, what was that?' He said, 'Oh the Suffragettes.' And we glowed and we sort of tingled, and we thought, that's great.

So, that you are in a tradition, I think, if you've been really involved in something, you perhaps lose sight of its separate impacts, you know, just something you did. But I think the, I think it has made a huge imprint really. I mean, I think the non-violence was incredibly important. But also the numbers, the mass numbers, and you're talking about 1000s and 1000s. Yeah, you'd - it would be interesting to ask people, you know, what… Do they even know what Greenham Common was?

Yeah, our experience has been that on the whole, no. People under 40 or, you know, even around that age. There's either, 'Sorry,' you get, 'You're gonna have to tell me I've kind of heard of it but don't completely, sorry.' 'I don't know what you're talking about.' So it's nice to hear the the young man in the pub did know about it.

And what you're doing, will actually have a huge impact too.

Hopefully.

I think it will, I think it really well. You know.

Why do you think it's important for Greenham to be remembered, you know, for future generations,?

Because Mr. Gorbachev said it should be remembered. I mean, he actually said didn't he that, you know, Greenham Women made, you know, made the test ban treaty possible. Michael Heseltine said he thought we ought to be shot. Well, that's two good reasons for remembering Greenham really. And also that the positive stuff that you can change things, you can change things, you know, we're hurtling towards a climate crisis. But you can change it, you can intervene, you can say 'Stop.' You know, you can redirect the traffic, you can do that, you can do it literally and you can do it metaphorically. But you have to- and knowing that people have done it before. Yeah, I think it's really important. I think what you're doing is really important, because it, also you're doing it for the right reasons.

Yeah, we want yeah, we want people to learn from you all and continue to make a difference.

I'll drink to that.

Thank you so much for speaking to us this morning Carole we appreciate it so much.

I really appreciate it too. Thank you for the work you're doing.