

## Elizabeth Woodcraft

And so can you start us off by sort of telling me what you, what got you involved in Greenham in the first place?

Well, probably like most people, I saw the, the women dancing on the silo that Christmas - or New Year's Eve wasn't it, and I was very impressed and just thought that that was rather wonderful publicity for their campaign. And then, and then the next thing I knew I was being instructed to represent them at their hearings in, in Newbury at the magistrate's court. Because Jane was the solicitor, the instructing solicitor and with my colleague er, in chambers, Wellington Street chambers, Isabella, we were instructed to meet the women and to represent them and, and so we went along to several meetings er, and at least one of them was at the Mary Ward centre, just to talk about what the women wanted to say what the issues were, er for us to give them advice about what the issues were. They were being um, they'd been arrested, and they were being brought before the court to show cause why they should not be bound over to keep the peace. So it wasn't an actual criminal charge, but they were going to a criminal court erm and - to see whether or not they should have, whether they should be bound over and - so there's various stages, so there would be a hearing, and the magistrates would have to decide whether the behaviour that they had engaged in was likely to cause a breach of the peace erm and then if the magistrates decided that, yes, dancing on top of silo would cause breach of the peace in the middle of the night, as you can imagine - unlike dancing anywhere else in the middle of town on new years eve - they could be required to be bound over to keep the peace. And if they refused to keep, to be bound over erm, then they, the only, the only possibility was to send them to prison. And so that's what the women were facing when we were doing the trials, the hearings, that if they would not agree to be bound over - because we've had, we knew, we knew that they were going to be found to have caused a breach of the peace and we knew they were going to be required to be bound over and we knew they would not accept it, and so then we knew that they would go to prison. So, what the women wanted to do was to use the hearings as another part of their, of their campaign. And of course, we could not be part of that. We were merely lawyers. Er, so we would, we would tell them, what was possible, what was not possible, what, if they did such and such what the, what the outcome would be. I mean, some of the things that they, they did, they did not even tell us what they were going to do. Like when they all came into court and and began singing every response they made to a magistrate as in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and we didn't know that was going to happen.

You couldn't have called that. That is an unusual thing to do. (Laughs).

Very, very unusual. And so erm, the magistrates - and this is Newbury, magistrates, you know, these are lay magistrates at first. I mean, as time went on, they, they brought down a stipendiary magistrate, a trained lawyer, but

**these were lay magistrates, you know, just the good and gentle folk of Newbury.**

(Laughs).

**And they didn't know what to do, they had a court clerk. He was, he was beside himself.**

(Laughs).

**Anyway, but he was forever having to swizzle around and tell them what they could or couldn't do because they had no idea and erm, and with this with this opera singing, so you know, so the magistrate would say, 'Is your name erm, you know, Joan Doobry Doo?' And Joan Doobry Doo would stand up and go (singing), 'Yes, Your Worship!' And would sing -**

(Laughs).

**So all the answers were being sung. And erm so they sent them down to the cells. And so there we were, the barristers, with with no clients, because they were all down in the cells. And so we carried on, and every now and again Mr English would advise the magistrates that they should check to see whether the women were ready to come back upstairs and, and the doors down to the cells would be open and (singing), you could hear them singing.**

(Laughs).

**And the door was closing and we carried on without them. But that, that was, that was later on. I mean, in the early days, the first I mean, the first big trial we did I mean, it was an extraordinary thing. They had all these witnesses that they wanted to call. Because what we had to do was find a defence for them.**

Yeah.

**That they could work around. And so the defence that we decided on was self defence that they were, they were acting in, as a sort of token way to, to try and defend themselves, their families, their children, and the rest of the world from this dreadful risk of cruise missiles, nuclear bombs. We all knew what had happened at the end of the Second World War with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And so that is what they wanted to prevent, because they knew what the effects of a nuclear bomb could be. And that was a - Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they were A-bombs, and we've now got the H-bomb so it was, it was going to be worse. So so that was our, our defence that we were going to they were acting in self defence.**

Very clever.

**And that is, that is a, that is a proper legal defence. Erm, and...**

Is that the first time that anyone had used that defence for this sort of action?

Yes, yes, yes.

**That's really remarkable.**

Yes, yes.

**(Both laugh).**

**Well, you know, we were talking to other people, and people were giving suggestions and in fact, a, a barrister, who, who we knew, I knew, and I spoke to him about the case. And he said something about, 'What about self defence?' Or something like that, I can't remember anyway. And so then we and when then we discovered the all the implications of the genocide act. And so we decided to use that as the basis of the, of the case, and then the women decided what witnesses they wanted to call. And because of the defence, the nature of the defence, they, they almost had carte blanche to, to, to show how awful a nuclear explosion would be. And so, so we did have - who did we have? We had, well, we had a Canadian nun, who came and gave evidence on how to make a nuclear bomb. We had a South African barrister in fact who gave condition erm, who gave evidence about conditions in the mines in South Africa, where they were mining uranium required to make bombs erm. And - oh, I can't remember we had some other good people, I have probably written it down somewhere. Erm.**

They were all outlining sort of all of the human rights abuses that go throughout the process, not just the end...

**Yes, exactly. Well, yes, because...**

Everything that goes into the creation.

**I mean, at a later, in a later case, we had we we, we get we had a case that took place in Highbury Magistrate's Court, after, after some women had been arrested for demonstrating on top of Holloway prison, women's prison, where some of the Greenham women were being kept. And we used that hearing to give evidence about prison conditions generally for women. And so you know, so it was a wonderful, it was an extraordinary thing. It wasn't just about nuclear bombs, it was just about women's position and women, you know, because it started off as women with children marching to Newbury and to the, to Greenham common, just talking about women's lives and what's important in women's lives and how women are treated and so and so it was a, I mean, it was an extraordinary thing to be involved in. Yes, it was wonderful.**

It sounds like a really strong reflection as well - what I understand from the camp is that as you say, women arrived, women arrived perhaps with one agenda - maybe it's peace or whatever - and then some have their minds laterally blown or expand, expanded really, by all the the ways in which the kind of, the different issues facing women and therefore humanity inter - sort of intersected. And it sounds the, the, the case does that as well. It's like they, they sort of you were saying that you, that there was more than one objective in that defending women is obviously one objective, but yes, giving press and status and strategy for other arguments was also part of the agenda.

**Yes!**

That's very interesting. And it shows that the Greenham women were getting quite smart by this time, about how to try and get messages (inaudible)...

**Oh, they were incredible. And so brave, I mean, so brave, because they knew they would be going to prison. They knew that, that would be the end result. And you know, some women went to prison time and time again. So, and that must take a tremendous toll on you. So yeah erm. So er - but they did all sorts of crazy things, you know, they gave themselves different names. So, I mean, and the only one I can remember, I must have blotted the other ones out, is one woman called herself Isaac Hunt.**

(Laughs).

**So if you say that very quickly, that kind of thing. And another woman came to give evidence wearing a beret with, you know, the little toggle in the middle of a beret tied to it was a tampon that, that she had dyed to make it look as if it had been used.**

(Laughs).

**And once they called as a witness, I think the, the commander of the, of the whole Greenham airbase to come and give evidence, and as he walked up to the witness box, one of the women leaped up and did a citizen's arrest on him for you know, for acts, leading to genocide. Yes, you know, conspiracy to commit genocide.**

That's that's very, that's very pleasing, isn't it? Because, of course, they stayed originally, because when they did the first walk to Greenham that guy who wouldn't see them (laughs), so they just didn't go. So that's lovely that they finally got to have him in court.

**Yes, yes. Yes. And, and, and they just used the court process in different ways. I mean, at first, I think, you know, the - the magistrates, the court system, just thought it was a bit of a joke. But as time went on, and they got the kind of coverage, press coverage that they did - particularly in The Guardian, and things like that - erm and people began to react very badly to**

seeing women go, you know, sh - sort of shoved into prison day after day, and it you know, and it reminded people of the Suffragettes and everyone knew how bad that had been. Erm, and so they had to sort of take it more seriously and think about it. Erm, so, so that was, so then, yes, as I say, after a time, a stipendiary magistrate came down, to hear the cases, a trained lawyer who, you know, wouldn't stand any nonsense.

How did that change the the feeling of how things went?

Well, I mean, it was different, it's true. I mean, he was much slicker, and he wasn't going to have any nonsense. But even so, even so the women were not deterred, and they would - some of the women didn't want to be represented, they wanted some lawyers to be there, just to sort of make sure that everything went well, but, but they wanted to represent themselves. And sometimes they would use us for the prosecution case, so that we would cross examine, you know, the guards and, and erm, and then, then they would do their own defence, they would sack us and then do their own defence, that sort of thing. So I mean, you know, their case was so stupid that the prosecution case and they had a, there was a guy, one of the guards an MOD guard Ministry of Defence guard, who worked at the airbase, and his name was Fred. And he came and gave evidence about what the women had done - I think it was about the dancing on the on the silo - and, and he called them glcms - G L C M. And I can't, I cannot remember what they stood for, that stands for, no.

It's an insult, presumably?

But well, no, it was a word that nobody used. And he was saying, 'I could hear the women say, let's go to the glcms!' And no one would say that now. And the women were sitting in court, 'Oh Fred!' Just calling out to him, 'Oh Fred, how can you say...' you know, and you could see him blushing, because he you know, he was being caught out. Yeah, it was awful. But anyway erm.

But because they didn't follow the rules of the court where you don't speak out usually do you.

**No.**

They just did what - they were sort of able to appeal directly to his humanity? Having, having been honest about their emotional reaction to him lying...

I mean, and I seem to remember he kind of for a bit he kept saying, 'You did say that, yes you did.' You know, and it got, and it got a bit personal but, um...

Oh dear, poor Fred.

But yeah, poor old Fred. I mean, he was old. He was, you know, near retirement.

Had he been leant on, do you think to say...?

Yeah, money or something, or he'd been helped or, you know, he might have said, 'Oh, and then they said something.' And, I mean, but no one called them glcms. We all called them silos, where the nuclear warheads were kept at um - but the women were, you know, because they did so many extraordinary things, which you probably know about, I mean, you know, going out at night when, because they used to do these trial runs through through the country lanes with these nuclear warheads. And the women would lie down in front of them, they put sugar in the petrol tanks, they'd do all kinds of things, which, you know, were extraordinarily brave, because, you know, they could have been run over they could have, it could have been an explosion.

A few women did, you know, get hit by vehicles, didn't they.

Yes, yes. I mean -

One death, and there is definitely a broken wrist.

Really? I represented a woman who, because of the evictions, because at the same time, they were trying to get rid of the women who were, you know, camping, and they kept changing the rules about you know, you - first of all women had caravans and tents and then you couldn't have caravans, you couldn't have a tent. And so that's when the word bender came into the English vocabulary when women began to make tents, or - what would you call them? Places to live in - by bending a branch and putting plastic over it. Erm because then we later we did a case a court case, could you, would you, could you be allowed to vote from a bender? And that went to court of appeal. And the court of appeal decided that yes, you could vote from a bender, and that is still good law I am told.

Excellent!

That people still rely on that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I mean, they were doing all kinds of, you know, different - challenging all sorts of different things. Yes and I I represented a woman who, during one of the evictions, when they would come and chuck women off got hurt and we we sued the - I can't remember who we sued - probably the local authority who provided the bailiffs or whoever it was, and we won there because she, she was injured as she was thrown around, because they were... so you know, so there, there was always something going on always, always an er...

How long were you involved with all of this?

Years, actually, yeah. Well, so what did it I suppose 18 months, two years, three years? Three years? Four years? I don't know. Yes. Because I know, my niece was born in 1984 and we were doing a Crown Court trial. Because first

of all, because the being bound over to keep the peace can only be dealt with in the magistrate's court, but then the women started clipping the fence and that was criminal damage. Once again, a token gesture to say we're doing this to draw attention to the issue. This is the only way we can do it, because it's to defend our family da da da, self defence genocide act. And so it was sent up to the to Reading Crown Court. And erm well, two things, two things about that. First of all, yes. My, my sister was having a baby and, and the baby was due. And it was lovely, because er we kept having breaks in the hearing, because, you know, people would always say, 'I need a break, I need break.' So we'd have a break. And, and all the ushers knew that my sister was having baby, they kept saying, 'Has she come? Has the baby come yet?' Of course it was in the days before mobile phones so I didn't really know, I had to keep ringing up. But another thing that happened about the trial um, which you may or may not have heard about, was that er, someone from the Daily Express infiltrated the camp, and wrote a series of articles about living in the camp, very derogatory articles saying that some women were making lots of money and living the high life and other people were - weren't. And that came out during the first of the the first Crown Court trial and so um, we we applied to have the trial stopped so that, you know, I think, the Americans call it a miss-trial, but I can't, I can't remember what we call it. Um anyway, we applied for the trial to be stopped, and for it to be adjourned and start again. And that, that did happen um, but it was a very unpleasant period. And, in fact, I was giving a talk about this about, about my chapter in the book. And a woman was there who you may have interviewed, I don't know, called, I think it was her name was Lizzie or Liz and she had been responsible for taking photographs. And when I told this story about this Daily Express person, she said, 'Oh, my god...' she said, 'Is that who she was? I remember her. And I didn't know.' She didn't know and this woman had, and apparently there had been um, they'd done a naked demonstration er on the base or in the base. And, and the woman who came to talk had taken photographs, and she said that this woman from the Daily Express had said, 'Ooh, have you got the photos? Can I have the photos?' And she just thought she wanted to look at them but actually, what one must assume is that she wanted to, to publish them. But anyway, she didn't. But um, but yeah, that was rather extraordinary.

How were they treated by the press in general, and how did that affect women in the eyes of the law, do you think?

Well, the Guardian was very, very sympathetic. I mean, I've got various clippings if you're interested in those from, from the hearings. I've also got a few cuttings of those Daily Express articles. Erm so the Guardian was very sympathetic and, I mean it was a time, you know, it was the early '80s, there was a lot going on you know it was Thatcher years. So, you know, we were building up to the Miners' Strike, there was the anti-apartheid movement all around Nelson Mandela, there was all sorts of, you know, kind of things going on and, and we, we, in my chambers, there were a couple of sets of radical chambers, who, whose aim in life was to, you know, fight for truth and justice and human rights and so on and so we were right in the thick of it. So, you

know, there was there was a moment when a police officer was sort of standing outside my flat in in, in Amherst Road, actually and I, I didn't know what he was there for. And my phone went peculiar once or twice and, you know, so I don't know if my phone was tapped - I don't know. But they were kind of, sort of strange times. But I think, I think a lot of people were very sympathetic because it was women and it was, you know, and women talking about the war, and we were still close enough to the war for, for a lot of people to remember the effects of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and CND, of course. We had, you know, Bruce Kent, who was the head of CND, he came and sat in the back of the court. We called the Bishop of Salisbury, I think just to talk about, you know, peace, peace and love. And, yeah, so, you know, it caught the imagination - I mean, people came from all over the world, you know, a group of women came from America to be there and from Europe and, and I think it is true, a lot of women came and found refuge there to be in a, in a community of, of women that, you know, that was very peaceful, and that, you know, the whole point was peace. And so for them, it was a wonderful place to come. Um.

Did the public get to see the trials or were they closed to the public?

No, no, they, anyone could come.

And did people?

No, because it was in Newbury.

(Both laugh).

Unfortunately. Yeah. Because getting to - well, having said that, no, I mean, Bruce Kent came and Tony Benn came. Yeah, lots of you know, people did come and journalists and because it was news, I mean, it's a sexy story, you know.

And especially if they're going to do possibly do outrageous things in the court room. I imagine journalists absolutely loved that.

Yes, yes, exactly. Well, that's right. Although strangely, they didn't cover that very much. Um, I think the big thing was the women being carted off day after day to go to prison. But, I mean, it, you know, they were - it was wonderful, because, I mean, wonderful. I'd only just begun in practice, I was two or three years call erm, and here I was in the middle of this extraordinary event, you know, historic event. And I mean, I had come to the bar specifically to work for women, because I'd been working for Women's Aid before and that's why I wanted to become a barrister and, and here was this, this extraordinary event that was completely woman centred, and where they were asking all the right questions and doing, and also doing wild and crazy things. I think some there was a, there was some twins, who a pa - there was a pair of twins who were identical twins and so the whole thing of you know, are you the person



who, who clipped the fence? Or are you the person who clipped the fence? And so that, you know, and they - and then there was some other people who superglued their fingers together. I, I - you know, they just did all kinds of crazy, wonderful, exuberant things to you know, so, yeah. So you never knew what was gonna happen. And but sometimes, I mean, sometimes it was just so wonderful. They were so outrageous in court, and there was Mr. English the court clerk sitting there kind of almost exploding he, you know, he looked almost like a Dickensian character, slightly sort of rosy cheeked and, and a quite chunky guy and then and then these three magistrates sitting behind him and he would just be seething and seething. And sometimes it was it was very, very funny and, and Izzy and I used to just sometimes just have to kind of drop things on the floor so that we could duck under the desk because we would just laughing so much. But -

In what way were they different to most people's behaviour in court?

Oh, every way, every way. I mean, just singing for a start. Reading po - you know, people would write poems. People would sometimes um, yeah, sometimes people would sing a defence, you know, so they'd have written a song.

(Laughs).

And they would sing and, and it would be a very long song. And so after, you know, so we'd all sit there and it would be, 'La la la', and it would be three verses. And then and so Mr. English would say 'Right now!' And so the women would go, 'Let her finish! Let her finish!' So there'd be another verse, 'Right, now!' 'Let her finish!'

(Laughs).

And so and so it was a bit like that sometimes. And, and then people would write incredibly moving things and, you know, tell really moving stories about why they were there and their history and, and what it meant to them. I mean, and they, they were fearless in a way. And, in a - and they were just, they were using it as a stage. And, I mean, in many ways - there was one, there was a person who was prosecuting, he became a Crown Court Judge later um - but he was very straight and strict. And er and he was always trying to re - because we were so young, you know, he was trying to remind us what the rules of professional behaviour were, and but but there was really nothing they could do, because, because we were the, the thin, you know, white line between anarchy in the UK and, and law and order, you know, and we were keeping keeping it together, because the women knew that - I mean, I think I think we did provide something for the women that they knew that they could behave in a certain way and if they went too, too, too, too far, we would we would step in and, and...

Stop them doing something to jeopardise their own cause?

**Yes. But, but, otherwise, you - and we would make sure that things worked, we would make sure that people did things at the right moment and responded at, you know, so that there was that, but in the middle of what, for the magistrates was kind of chaos. Yeah.**

You must have had a great rapport with these women, because that's actually quite a delicate balancing act. It sounds like you must have understood each other - when to step in, and when not to - quite well.

**Well, sometimes. Sure. I mean, I think there was some women who found, you know, because that's always been an issue in the women's movement, you know, those, those people who some of us, you know, some women would say, we had sold out because we had become, you know, we were working with the man so to speak. Erm and, and people felt that, you know, therefore, we were treated better and so on and so forth. We had advantages, which they didn't have, or we'd forgotten our roots or whatever. But well, you know, I'm a worker, I was a working class girl, you know, I'd, I'd, I'd been in CND I'd been on Aldermaston marches, you know, I'd, I'd been there, I'd done that. So, you know, if anyone tries to say I can't be there, you know, I shall just explain myself. So er, and I, you know, I think yes, and also there was some, you know, there were different personalities within the group and I, because the way that they organised, I mean, they organised so well and made decisions together and discussed things I think they knew that we had to be there, they knew that we had to do the, the business really, and and we enabled them to do it, you know, so, so. Yeah, yeah, I think you know, we got on quite well. Yeah. I mean, I still I'm still in contact with some people from those days, so yeah.**

When you first - it sounds like you couldn't have been more ideal really to be sympathetic and to be, to be championing their, their, their corner. Erm when you first kind of got the brief, did you, do you get any, did you get any choice? Were you able to say I want to do that, or I don't, was it just, did you have to do it? And what were your sort of feelings about about it I suppose?

**Well, the there is a cab rank rule, which means as, as with taxis, taxis are supposed to take everyone you know, the first person who asks them, so barristers are bound by that cab rank rule. Having said that, if you feel you are, you know, if it's not in your area of expertise, or if there is any other reason why you shouldn't do it - I could have I guess, but case like that, you're gonna leap on it like, you know whoa!**

(Laughs).

**Guard it with your life. Yeah, no, no, no. I mean, it was just one - I mean it's terrifying, you know, really scary, because you, you know, you, we were going up against the establishment, you know. And also, yeah, you were in a**

**position where you knew that your clients were going to prison at the end of it, which wasn't going to be fun.**

Do you feel they were treated fairly by the, by the law?

**So it depends what you mean, you know.**

I mean, it just seems odd to go to a court, in to a very, to elect a very you know a very ignorant person, such as myself. But the sort of idea that you go to court and the outcome be predetermined, when, when in my innocent head it was, you know, it could go either way for you because that's the whole point of going to trial at all if you know you're going to go straight to prison, you wouldn't bother to have trials and all the rest of it. But you were quite clear they knew that's what was going to happen?

**Yes, yes. Because that was the, that was the only thing you see, in an ordinary criminal trial. Even if you're found guilty, it doesn't necessarily mean you'll go to prison unless you've got quite a record. But with breach of the peace, there is only you agree to be bound over or you don't agree to be bound over. And if you don't agree to be bound over, then the only thing they can do is send you to prison, so that so - I mean, one woman did at one stage say, 'Of course I'm keeping the peace. I will agree to be bound to keep the peace, because that's what I want to do.' I mean, there was a sort of irony in in the whole terminology of what they were being required to do. But um, but I think, for a lot of the women, they knew that the headline was women going to prison. In fact, shall I just, I might just look it up.**

Did they, did they get any, were they ever treated as political prisoners? How was their... And did they ever want to be, you know was there a...

**I don't, I don't think - well, they were only there for sort of a week or two at a time. It wasn't sort of long. But I mean, that was the point of the case we did, the Holloway case that we kind of drew a distinction. We called one of the women from Greenham, who, who'd been in a cell when these other women were on the roof demonstrating, and she'd been in a cell. And so she came and talked about how she'd been treated, taken from the court and how she'd been bashed around in the van and, and how - that's right - and how she'd really, she was really sort of dazed and confused. And she was put in a cell with an ordinary prisoner, and the ordinary prisoner had banged on the door to try and get some medical help for her and the ordinary prisoner was put into solitary as a punishment for doing that. So, you know, so we were able to make those kind of points, which was quite nice.**

And that's very like the Suffragette movement isn't it? A lot of women who were, were in prison through suffrage then campaigned for better rights for women in prison didn't they?

Yes, exactly. So let me just see if I can find... (Keyboard clicks). Right, where are we? (Keyboard clicks). Oh, no, I'm looking at completely the wrong place. I should be looking in here... Right... Have I called it women's legal landmarks, or have I called it something else? Yeah, here we go. Oh, yeah. So, um, well, I'll just show you. This is, um, let's see, this is a picture of me and Izzy.

Oh wow! Gosh you are young!

**Having a conference.**

Oh, it's like you're at sixth form.

**Yeah. I know, that's us two, but these but these are the Greenham women you see, and we're having a conference with them.**

So how old would you be in that picture?

**Oh, I was 32, something like that.**

Really! Gosh, you look very young. Maybe it's partly because the picture's sort of...

**Well Izzy, Izzy was a bit younger than me so she'd would have been late 20s I guess so, yeah. Mid 20s maybe even.**

So were they, were the Greenham woman involved in all of the strategies when you were deciding on how to approach their cases and what defence you'd have and things?

**Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah yeah. Oh, yeah. You couldn't do anything without having a discussion. No, you, you know.**

Did that make things easier or harder or slower or?

**Well, it was harder. But that's a teddy bears picnic. These are just pic - some of these pictures I've got from - oh, this is, yeah, this is about one of the the court hearings. This is from the Guardian. Um December '83. And...**

Oh gosh.

**So, yeah, that's...**

And there's your name, too.

**There's my name. That's right. Yeah. And erm this, oh this is the Daily Express thing.**

Ah, okay. Yes. So I, another, some of the Greenham women did talk about this, and we're very wounded by...

**Yeah.**

By what - because there's lots of allegations about how they were mistreating children there and things like that. It's really unpleasant.

**Yeah.**

And they'd taken her in and lived with her.

**Yeah.**

You know.

**And been nice with her.**

Been nice, yeah, yes, as you did with everybody.

**(Keyboard clicks). Yeah... (muttering) more of the same...**

Because there's there was a lot of tabloid dislike of the camp, wasn't there.

**Yeah.**

They had a very hard time I think.

**(Keyboard clicks). There's another one. That's um, yeah. What year was that... I can't remember. It's nineteen eighty...**

Two I think.

**Yeah, yeah. So.**

And that's Hannah and John isn't it.

**Yeah, that's right. My Auntie -**

I'd recognise that face anywhere.

**My Auntie Sheila kept this one. So she's highlighted my name down.**

(Laughs). That's very sweet.

**I think I think that's probably about it, actually. Yeah, that's right.**

Great. There's your book chapter.

**That's, yeah, I think and that's the cover.**

Lovely.

**Yeah, let's close that. (Keyboard clicks). Oh, whoops. So hang on, let me - I was trying to find that. Yeah, I don't think there's anything else.**

So did it change what you did afterwards, having worked on this?

**Erm.**

Did it affect the rest of your practice I suppose?

**I'd, um. Yes. I mean, yes and no. I mean, it was obviously an extraordinary sort of learning curve. But as I say, I mean, then there was the Miners' Strike, and there was um the anti-apartheid, then there was clause 28. I was also doing family work at the same time. So there was lesbian custody cases and sexual abuse, which was just beginning to kind of be acknowledged by local authorities. Yes. So... so... yeah, I'm just trying to think. Yeah, so I mean, it was all part of it. I mean, it was I, in a way, it was a sort of an extraordinary thing and I never did anything else similar to that there was never anything... No, I mean, I did, I was in court doing another case one day, I was in Bow Street Magistrates Court and suddenly, a load of prisoners were brought in. And they were all wearing sort of boiler suits and covered in red paint. And they'd just come from the MOD, the Ministry of Defence, they'd thrown, they were peace demonstrators and they'd thrown um paint all over the place. They all went, 'Ooh look, there's Liz! There's Liz!' And um I can't remember, I don't know if I represented them on that day. But anyway, but so occasionally, I would, you know, I'd do other groups of sort of peace, peace campaigners.**

And sometimes there'd be familiar faces?

**Yes, yes. Yes. They'd get around, but um.**

Were there any other things that were, that were that sort of - I'm kind of quite interested in the new ways of of, the new defensive ways that were defended quite creatively or indeed things that changed the law, kind of more ongoingly?

**Well, there's the voting case.**

Yeah, that's remarkable.

**In fact, yes, because that's what that was one of the things I had to write about in my chapter, you know, how did it change the world? Er well, of course they went, they went to America, some of the Greenham women, and there was the American court case, and they, that also got a lot of coverage. And -**

Was that when they took President Reagan to court?

**Yes, to court. Yes, yes.**

We interviewed one of the women that had, had been involved in that.

**Yeah, strangely, he -**

Didn't turn up?

**Didn't turn up. No.**

But it got a lot of coverage - didn't it?

**Oh, I know. And I think they got a lot of money as well.**

Brilliant.

**Yeah.**

For the camp?

**Yeah. Um. Well of course I mean, the cruise missiles didn't come up, and what bits there were were removed, the camp closed and is now back to common land. So I mean, that's something wonderful. I'm just, I'm just, yes I'm just looking at what I wrote and a lot of women, as you've said, became lawyers and social workers and so on and environmental campaigners.**

Yeah.

**And er yes, I mean, I think their very, you know, extreme methods of presenting their case have not been duplicated.**

I was gonna ask about that, actually, in relation to things like, Extinction Rebellion, perhaps just in the last year or so, do you see kind of any similarities? Or do you think there's things that activists could still learn from what the Greenham woman did?

**I think they probably could. I mean, I, I mean, of course, yes. All of the I mean, a lot of them are, you know, young people with a message. Although, having said that, of course, Greenham was sort of extraordinary in that, you know, it covered the whole spectrum, a, you know, older women, younger women, you know, grandmothers, my mum went erm to Greenham, you know, people did that. I mean, and it touched women, you know, it really, really touched people. I think, and I th - and I think it was because it was women. I think people, you know I think some of the, sometimes some of the peace campaigners, or, other campaigners for other, you know, excellent causes, I think sometimes people are put off because they feel there is a, there is a threat of violence or a threat of extreme behaviour and that the Greenham women, it was**

**something I mean, who knows, maybe it's, that's patronising - I mean, maybe the good feeling is patronising is what I mean - but erm.**

They certainly seemed to be able to be very creative, rather than just using violence as a default.

**No, exactly. Well -**

To think harder in a way.

**Exactly. I mean, there was no question of violence. I mean, that just was not on the agenda. And so, but, so there were all, you know, there was serious stuff, there was heartbreaking stuff, there was funny stuff. You know, they did it all. There was clever stuff, you know, I mean, talking about bomb making, and, you know, uranium mining, and, you know, um - so imaginative, so interesting. And I think, well, I would like to think that, that, that, that campaigners now would be able to use that if and when they are arrested. But I have a feeling that, you know, the authorities are slightly cannier now and wouldn't allow, you know, that, that those theatrical things to take place, they would be much more controlling about things.**

And do you think that's because of Greenham?

**Yeah, I think they've learned that - well, I mean, who knows? Of course, as we know, people forget so soon. So maybe if another group of activists started to, to be interesting in court maybe they maybe they'd get away with it. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I just don't know. You know, it depends what charge what they're charged with. It depends. You know, I mean, because it was always the, the threat of prison, there was always that which made it so much, you know, because these were decent, upstanding, middle class people, not always middle class, but, you know, fresh faced, thoughtful people who were being sent to prison, and that that seems so unjust. I mean, you know, but I mean, the whole breach of the peace thing, I mean, I don't know if they use it quite so much now. I think it still exists. But I, you know, there are probably other other charges that are brought.**

I expect the charges have changed a great deal and there's a lot of laws that have changed around as, as, responding to or updating or being opportunistic around and in some circumstances around terrorism and the terrorism act. Of course, there's more ways to arrest or detain people now.

**Yes, yes. Yes, I think cos didn't they do that just recently, some campaigners? Wasn't it, it was about...**

Was it Stansted 15 maybe?

**Yeah. So I think it was wasn't it. They got on the plane or whatever.**



And lay down in front of it.

**Yeah. And those people were charged with terrorist court charges, which is so absurd.**

Yes.

**So and of course, yes, so, so the climate has changed and you know, people's fear has been whipped up about that. So people are not so outraged when people have been treated badly. Yeah. So yes.**

Where do you think Greenham sort of sits in the - because I was just thinking when you're talking about the other things that are happening in the law, the other big campaigns, and also the idea of us having words for things like domestic violence and sexual abuse and things like that those things really came out of the radical feminist movement, to even name them and to count them and to catalogue those crimes and respond to them as a, you know, as a, as a, as a body of criminality, erm where do you think do you, where do you think Greenham sort of sits within that radical feminist movement, is it -

**I think it's slightly different. I think it's because domestic violence and sexual abuse and so on, really highlight how the personal is political. Whereas the peace women, it was a much more, I mean, overtly political, I won't say simply political, but it was a political movement, whereas Women's Aid, domestic violence and the work around sex abuse and rape and so on, that's, it has arisen in a different way. It's risen from you know, people's personal experiences. And so I think it's different. But of course, there are those connections, and because some women did go to the camp, to escape some of that to escape sexual abuse and domestic violence, and so they are interlinked. But, but I suppose, yes.**

Do you think that the radical feminist movement that had such successes in the '70s and '80s - until the backlash in the '90s, but certainly the '70s and '80s - would that, would, could Greenham have happened without it, and vice versa? I suppose do you think they come out of a similar...

**Well, the women's movement, I mean, you know I think you have to be careful how you use the term radical feminist just cos -**

Yes, true. Women's movement.

**Because...**

Well, yes, yes, because I was thinking particularly second wave um sort of second wave women's movement I suppose of that time.

**No.**

No?

**Because you've got socialist feminist, you've got radical feminism, you've got revolutionary feminism during the '70s, and '80s, so...**

Oh, okay, all of them.

**Yes. So you've got to be kind of careful. And I mean, because as I say, yes, I mean, my history is that I was, I was living in France, and I heard about Erin Pizzey and, and Chiswick Refuge. And I thought that sounded, you know, just the whole issue was very interesting and -**

What is that, sorry, I don't know that reference?

**Right. Right. So Erin Pizzey was a woman who started the Chiswick Women's Aid Refuge. And, and, in fact, at the time, a lot of other groups started and were working with Erin Pizzey. I was living in France, I heard about it, I thought, you know, domestic violence I, I - it was a concept that I knew nothing about, you know, hadn't hadn't appeared in my life at all. And, but I thought it was interesting, but I did not want to be a feminist. I, my sister was a feminist, I did not want to be a feminist. Anyway, because I thought it was all about consciousness raising and I thought it was a waste of time. So when I came back to England, I was teaching and a bloke I was teaching with said, 'Oh, you're interested in domestic violence, there's a women's group started and they're going to be involved in a a refuge in Leicester.' I was living in Leicester. And so I went along, kind of reluctantly, because it was a women's group, but I did want to be involved in Women's Aid, and, but by the, the meeting was so wonderful and all these women who were there were so wonderful that by the end of it, I'd signed up for every group going, you know, abortion, Women's Aid, Working Women's Charter, consciousness, everything it was so lovely. And, and then I became involved in Women's Aid. And then then I worked in the national office. I mean, that's, that's how that happened. But, but the thing I mean, in those days, it was wonderful, the women's movement, for women, it just meant that, you know, you could be anywhere in the world, and you would just find your local women's group, and you would have chums, you know, and it was a lovely, lovely time. And I feel really sorry for women that that doesn't exist in the same way now. So to go back to your point, I think, in a way, the Greenham movement was a sort of natural development, you know, women working together women, you know, the idea was not strange, that women should feel that they together can work together to make some sort of political change. And I mean, I don't know exactly what conversations went on when those women in Wales got together first of all, but I I imagine it was something of that sort. And, and they walk - you know, started their long march to Newbury.**

That's interesting, isn't it, because one of the things that we we were saying earlier, both of us that people are, people haven't heard, young people haven't heard of Greenham and it is so surprising. And it's very easy to make them go, 'Wow, really?'

I had absolutely no...' The concept seems like where could that have con - it's so, it's so surprising. Whereas actually, that you just saying it sort of might not have felt... If I could, that it was it was almost the next logical step, if you were in a, in a, in the in the if you were part of the women's movement or even if you were just in a culture that was...

**Well, if you if you read the newspaper, you know, virtually and saw what was going on in the world. So yeah. I mean, I don't I - it was just I think it was just easier for women to get together. It was just accepted. I mean, it hadn't been easy until the '70s and the '80s. Or the '70s. It was the '70s, early '80s.**

Why would that be the case? If you think that now with mobile phones and the internet of things, this would be the zenith of women getting together! It would be the easiest it's ever been, but -

**Well, it, you could, I mean, I mea - no that's different isn't it. There's the whole thing about phones just keep us locked into our room just on the phone or on the on the computer. And then, you know, it's a different world. Women get together for different reasons now, you know, for hen nights, and stuff like that, and baby showers, which is, you know, different. And it's a different way of being. I mean, partly because the women's movement in the '70s and '80s was so successful. And so, you know, our work here is done we thought for a moment. But now realise that's not true. But I think, you know, a lot of younger women are benefiting from you know, those campaigns. I think they will also begin to realise that, you know, they're at risk of losing that.**

Yeah.

**That it's all under threat. Nothing can be relied on these days. So, who knows there may be a new a, new wave of women's activity soon. Who knows? Who knows?**

Do you think it's important that Greenham is remembered? Do you think that fits in that... do you think it's an important thing?

**Yeah, I do. I mean, yes. Because -**

And if so, why?

**Because, yeah. Because it was an important campaign. I mean, it spoke about the relation, you know, the, it wasn't even British nuclear weapons, they were American. So there was a whole thing about, you know, the relationship between nations. Erm, it was a way of responding to a political situation. It was a, it was a women's thing. They, they were fearless and brave, and they used the law. And they, you know, they were canny. They knew how to do it, and they did it. And I think it is, it's one of the, you know, the campaigns that one learns about, you know, the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Suffragettes, you**

**know, the Chartists. Yeah, it's all you know, it's it's part of that spectrum. Yeah. Yeah.**

And yet, it's fallen out of the conversation to the last generation. And it's being brought back actually, there's lots of different projects. And it just is lots of lots of people going er! But I wonder why Greenham has fall - fallen out?

**I think a lot of things, I don't think it's just Greenham. I think a lot of things have fallen out of people's memory. You know, it's -**

Do you think there's more risk of it falling out if it's to do with women, or is that just?

**No, not necessarily, because we all remember the Suffragettes don't we. So, you know, people have forgotten the Tolpuddle Martyrs I would imagine I, you know. Erm, and the hunger marches, you know, people have forgotten things that have happened. I mean, people have forgotten about Northern Ireland. You know, so.**

(Inaudible) Fairly soon, won't they.

**Won't they... So, yeah, so, no, I don't think there's anything, specifically anti-women. I mean, because there were lots of, you know, there were other peace campaigns at the time, who also used our defence.**

Oh did they?

**And then, and we had all agreed that we would not appeal it, because if you appealed using that defence, we knew that we would be struck down, we knew we would be told that was not a proper defence, and we couldn't use it. And so that would mean that the women couldn't use - or nobody could use it.**

That would be a precedent?

**Yes, but where, where it wasn't challenged, so it hadn't there'd been no decision on it. We could all carry on using it but somebody somebody appealed it and lost.**

Oh no!

**Yeah. So, I mean, these things happen.**

Dammit!

**A male barrister... But anyway, there we are, there we are.**

So did you, would you now define yourself as a feminist?

**Who me?**

Yeah.

**Oh yeah!**

(Laughs). Quite quickly changed around.

**Yes, yes, yes. Oh, yeah, no. I mean, after about five minutes in that small room in Leicester, I became a feminist.**

How did your sister feel about that?

**Oh, yeah.**

Was she like, finally!

**Probably I don't - yeah. Yeah. I told you so.**

All the reasons that one doesn't do what the, same things as ones sister does.

**Yeah. So that was that. Yeah.**

Is there anything that I - that you think I should have asked you that I haven't thought of or that you would like to have covered?

**No, I think we probably have covered most of it haven't we. Um, I'm just looking through my chapter to see if there was anything...**

Yeah. My questions are mostly based around people who were there. Did you ever visit the camp?

**Oh yeah, yeah yeah.**

Did you spend the nights there?

**No. But I did - well, I went with my mum. But I also went, I, did I - I think I went for the Embrace the Base and I went some other time. Yeah, yeah.**

And what was it like?

**Well it was extraordinary, you know, just extraordinary.**

What are your memories of the actual camp?

**Well just a wonderful place to be I mean, you know, over and above - I mean, and that was, I think that's why it's so interesting, because over and above the political aspect of it, and the purpose, the primary purpose, which was to**

**argue against cruise missiles being in in the UK, it was just a wonderful place to be, a wonderful place, you know, of women and everyone behaving well, and being supportive and sisterly and it was just lovely. I mean, yeah, no, I mean, I feel, I feel very sorry for - well I do for all the women who missed out on not just on Greenham, but all those wonderful things that we did in the '70s and '80s, the women's movement, it was just a fabulous time, you know. Yeah.**

If there was one thing about Greenham that you'd say, evokes, evokes it for you what would it be? An image or a memory, or...

**Well of course there's the smell of woodsmoke. Um, er, I dunno, I suppose it would be probably being in Newbury Magistrate's Court, with lots of women behind and somebody singing. Probably that would just sort of sum it up really, you know, because it was so contraindicated in a courtroom. Yeah. I think probably when I, when I think about Greenham, of course, we used to have to get up about five o'clock in the morning to get a train to go down to Newbury and, and yeah, they were long, long days.**

And it sounds like there was some cases and there were lots of women were in the court at the same time. Is that right?

**Well you see, that that was... because they would arrest them en mass. So there'd be 20 or 30 or 40 arrests.**

Oh so they'd process them on mass as well would they?

**And so they were, they would at first and then they realised that was a disaster.**

(Laughs.)

**So so we turned up at court, and we were told one on one particular day, and were told that the women were going to be dealt with in groups of three. And so the women said to us, 'Oh, no, no, no, you can't let that happen. It's not fair. It's unjust. We've all got to be dealt with in the same way in the same room at the same time.' So Izzy and I went in and we argued and we argued and in the end, the magistrate said, 'Okay, they can all be dealt with together.' So in came the women, and that's when the opera started. That's why they'd wanted all to be in the same room at the same time.**

That's so funny. And did you ever feel any frustration with them that you'd argued, that you'd had to argue for that long and then they'd done that? Or did you just think, great! How was it for you?

**(Laughs).**

A mixture?

**Yeah, I think so, a mixture. Well, you know, because you do your best and then you look like a complete fool.**

(Laughs).

**So that, you know, that was, sometimes that was hard. Yeah. Yeah, you know, you like to think you are a professional and you're doing your job properly. And you're, you know, and -**

And you brought round these other people's opinions, these men's opinions.

**Yes. And you've changed their minds and you've argued properly and thoughtfully, and and then whoosh.**

They were naughty weren't they?

**They were. Well, there you are, that's the, that was, that was the Greenham women. Yeah, you couldn't expect anything different.**

That's lovely. Thank you so much.

**My pleasure.**

It's been great. I really loved talking about that with you. Thank you.