

Caroline Poland, Anne Scargill and Betty Cook

At the beginning, if you say your full names.

I'm Betty Cook, Women Against Pit Closures.

And so how did you hear about Greenham common?

Originally, um, there was a notice on the union notice board at work about um, a day at Greenham, I think it was Sunday. And the union was organising transport. So um, I went down with one of our shop stewards, and that was the first time that I experienced brutality against women by somebody in uniform. When it was a horrible day, we were walking around the base and you know it, it was (inaudible), and it was muddy and it was slippery. And one woman grabbed hold of a fence just so that she can - and they just beat her with a baton.

When were that, Betty?

Well before Women Against Pit Closures, pit camp, I went down with one of our shop stewards from work, so that that was the first time. And they'd got the helicopters going, and they were coming as low as they could and it was whipping all...

Was it '84, that?

No, before. It was whipping all the dead leaves and stuff, you know, into your faces. It was horrible. And we all had a candle vigil, and we were so cold, we were holding our hands and feet over these candles to keep warm. So that's the first first time I knew anything about Greenham, and the first time I'd been down.

What union was it?

(Inaudible).

And who did you go down with?

Just one of the shop stewards from work, yeah.

And how did you travel there?

We went down by a coach that the union had organised.

Have you got in touch with Aggie? Because Aggie used to go with you all, you know, you know.

No, perhaps at the end, we could come back to think what else?

'Cause Aggie used to go with you. It was Aggie and me who went first down in vehicle - I went first time we Aggie.

Well, maybe, maybe I'll finish Betty's story and then come to you Anne, and then you can bring coming with Aggie into that, and Sarah can work out who else...

Go and see Aggie.

Yeah. And how long were you there?

Just for the day, just for the day.

Do you remember what gate you went to?

I can't remember, because we were sort of walking around the fence, and it was a huge, wasn't it, huge fence to walk around.

And what made you go, what made you decide to go?

Well, I'd heard about Greenham women, and far from being a feminist. And I was more or less nosy! (Laughs). I just wanted to see what it was

like, and you read things in the press, didn't you, which you know you couldn't believe anyway. So it was sort of well, go and find out then, put your boots on and go and find out. And your long johns underneath your trousers as well. It was a bitterly cold day.

That's the kind of thing that's coming through from a lot of people. How cold and wet it was.

It was. Yeah.

And did you meet people there as well? Did you kind of talk to the women that were there?

Not much, no. Not much. We were just sort of sympathized with women, you know, particularly the woman who they'd beat her hands with, 'cause she was all down the fence. No we - I think we were just both just taking in everything. You know, see what everything was doing and everything was happening, what have you, yeah.

And how did you feel kind of going down to the camp knowing that it was a woman only camp? How did - were you, not were you in approval of it, but what was your thought process knowing that it was women only?

I thought it was brilliant that women were making a stand. And in charge of their own lives, if you like, which I wasn't at that time, but yes, yeah, it was an experience to see all these women, and how they stuck it out, I don't know. Think there was just so much admiration for these women that were sort of living down there.

Was the shop steward a woman, that you went down with?

Yeah, I was the branch secretary at the time, and she was one of the shops.

And was that the only time that you went - just that one time?

Just that one time.

And how then do you feel it influenced your own politics after that?

Not an awful lot apart from um, you know, the violence that people in uniform were allowed to get away with towards women. Admiration for the women, and knowing that I couldn't do it. And, but still being able to read in the press and thinking pffft, you know, it's all made up this isn't like, women at Greenham common, that kind of thing.

Yeah. And then did you take that idea any further when you did Women Against Pit Closures?

**Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'd got a real education by then, hadn't I!
(Laughs).**

And how much later was that from when you first went to Greenham?

It was quite a long time.

I suppose '84 was not that long after it, but that's pit...because it must have been earlier...

'93?

'92?

Yeah. So going to Greenham must have been the early '80s?

Oh, yeah, definitely. It was well before the miners' strike.

Yeah, maybe 2 or 3 years before because I think did Greenham start in...

Early '80s.

Early '80s. Because I think I went in '82.

It was '84 when miners' strikes started. It were first in Barnsley, weren't it, they came on strike Gorton Wood.

Yeah, that's right.

In, er January.

Yeah.

So it must have been before '84.

Yeah. So maybe it was - because they were on strike a year or two later, and then everything went. (Laughs).

And what had been your experiences of activism, if any, before Greenham, before you went?

Just within a trade union. Um. Basically an experience of a strike at work, you know, trying to run a strike at work. But I was sort of involved in local politics if you like, um, but not, not into it in depth, you know, it annoyed me, we were isolated community, we couldn't get anything. And I started to agitate about getting some kind of service for us. The kids had to go through a wood to go to school, because we were a split community. Windhill was at the top, (inaudible) Colliery at the bottom, and a wood in between. And if you can imagine children trying to go to school in winter through the woods.

What village was it?

It was on (inaudible) edge. We were called the Windhill estate. And Woolley Colliery was at the bottom with the colliery houses down at the bottom and yes. So I've lost my train of thought.

Sorry, my fault.

I did find that before I went to Greenham I had to sort of get involved very heavily, not in politics, but I lived in this horrible two up, two down little cottage. If you didn't have rats, you had mice, that was the conciliation that the old ones used to say 'Well, if you've got mice, you don't have rats', and that sort of thing. And they built a new washery at the Colliery, and the agreement was because there would use so much water, they only ran it at nighttime, not during the day. But being as they were, they ran it more or less 24 hours. So I had a baby then, and it was a case of putting two kids in a pram, walking down to the next village to my mum in law's to fill bottles with water to make bottles and such. And I got so incensed with it all that we were in Wakefield area then, and I sort of bounced into Wakefield social services with two kids, and said 'You'd better look after these two, because I can't.' And they said 'You can't do that.' I said 'Watch me'. 'Well let's come and talk about it.' And the result was we got somebody from the colliery coming up shouting 'Who's that stupid woman who can't make bottles for her kids', you know. You were sort of fighting, but you weren't always winning. And then it was about 18 months later, one of the women came down from the bottom row, and said 'There's no water.' I said 'I know there isn't.' She said 'Well, what are you going to do about it?' I said 'Nothing, it's your turn now. You know you've got a baby. You get on with it.' And then the kids woke up one morning, they were hopping around the bedroom and said 'Mummy, the floor's really hot.' And so I got out of the bed - the house was on fire. Because what had happened, every time you know the old set pots that you had in the corner, mine was adjoined to the next door neighbors, and so when she let her set on a wash day, I just have to take my kids out because the house filled with smoke. But this morning it was on fire. And I had to get my husband out of bed and we didn't have a phone box then, so we had to farm at the top of the hill. He ran and rang for the fire brigade. And they came and what had happened was, apparently when they built these houses, the beams went across the chimney, and this continual thing and the wind - that's what had got the fire going. So they'd sawed up floorboards, and this, the man in charge said 'I'll go down the pit, I need to see them down there.' And they sent this man up, and he said 'I'll tell

you what, get a hammer.' I said 'I have't got one'. 'Well get you husband to get...' I said 'He won't do anything.' I said you know 'It's your responsibility to make this floor good again. I've got two kids, get on with it.' You know, so I got involved in this fight, but not politically. But learnt a lot of you know, a lot of time screeching and shouting.

And in terms of the legacy of Greenham, we've talked about (inaudible), kind of things like that. How do you feel it has been remembered among people - if at all?

Well, we used to have fun down at Greenham, didn't we? You know, the women were brilliant. We were always made so welcome. And used to, we used to have a minibus, and you used to make a big pan of stew, or take bacon and tea cakes and things. We used to make tea cakes, bacon sandwiches, and stew. Anne once said to them one day, 'Look, there's loads of stew left, have you got a pan or something out we can put in?' And they brought out this pan that must have been used for cooking loads of (inaudible) never, never washed, just put on that - well at that time we were horrified to see this. And then one of the women had been arrested, so we went to demonstrate outside the police station, and while they were there the Greenham women were in the bottle bank getting bottles and things they could use. We were horrified to see this happening. Don't do things like that!

Is the after - during this - which year are we?

That was during the strike.

During the strike. So '84.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

(This sentence is largely inaudible). 'Course this woman, she used to come, and we - bacon and egg - and she... being an egg sandwich, but don't tell anybody! (Laughter). And then an other would come. It fascinated me. They must have been...

They used to be coming out from the wood, weren't they?

They come up to us.... yeah, we used to - from 1984 to '90...'90, when, you know when they started to close the...

'92.

'93 - 1993. 1984 to 1993, we used to go regular - 'course Aggie used to, can you remember when she said to that bobby 'You are a clever swine'. 'Do you want to buy a badge for sacked miners?' She says, well 'You bastards put them there'. Know what I mean? (Inaudible). You ought to get Aggie because she's, she's for what, and that lass, that lad who she were talking to through fence, he were (inaudible), she says 'Eh, come here...I know the mother and the father and all. Come on here.' (Laughter). Can you remember that day? Orange Gate, weren't it, we went?

Orange Gate.

I think we were we were sort of quite vocal compared to the Greenham women. And sort of, you know, we were here, and one day we actually did take over the Orange Gate - got rid of the police and took over the Orange Gate, and sometimes I think the must have felt oh, it's a bloody invasion again. Because we weren't gentle and quiet like them.

We were noisy and dancing round and that you know. They never ever said owt wrong to us. And they were always, when we went, they were always glad to see us 'Eh, up, look who's come!' (Laughs). 'They've come.'

You might find some other women who remember them. Because they're interviewing 100 people.

Because after that, what did they call her - who were going to go down pit with me? She was from...

Rebecca.

Yeah, Rebecca

The one who...

With a mother, she came from Switzerland. She were lovely.

Anne thinks she was lovely. Her and I had a violent disagreement.

Well I liked her. She were alright with me.

Yeah, but she came up to our pit camp, right. And we couldn't have run the camp 100% - often we needed the men to do a little job or something. And she came in and she said 'You don't have men in this pit camp.' It's our put camp, you know, we need, we need, we need these men, do you know what I mean? And so she went then and told the men they'd no business there. So I said 'Right the shit's hit the fan now - it's you that's going'.

I know what I'd have said to her.

Exactly.

'See ya, it's our bloody pit camp, so if you don't like it, get off.' That's what I'd have said. You know, I'm not like her - she's reet nice...

Yeah but I wasn't nice that day, I was very angry.

I mustn't have been there.

You were, because you said 'I better take her home to my house' so you took her back with you to your house.

Get her out of your way! (Laughs).

You did, Anne. You did, I can remember it.

Because I quite liked her, but apart from that...

She were gonna go down pit with us, and who what other from, what you call it - she was from...

There were two of the women that used to come up regularly from Greenham. And they used to do the weekend for us at the pit camp.

Which pit camp was this?

Grimethorpe. One of them I think was called Eileen, and they were very supportive. They were very supportive. And it used to give us a weekend off as well, they used to do the pit camp for us.

And how many times did you go down to Greenham?

Ooh, we went a lot.

We got a police escort one day, didn't we?

20?

Well, see, there was that space in (inaudible), weren't there? So we didn't forget them, and then in that time, they were organising - other people were organising for people to go down. And I always went on them buses and that, when they made a thing around...

Oh, Embrace the Base.

Yeah, I were there that day. Yeah. We went on bus. You know what I mean? If they organized owt, Aggie, she used to go. So you know what I mean? And I tell you, me and Arthur had been speaking to some of them coming back. And she's - we went, and we're all sat round in a

corner. We - Arthur being there, and they looked at me and they says 'Bloody hell, it's Anne with twinset and pearls!' 'Cause I was dressed up. (Inaudible). Then she looks at me and says 'Bloody hell, it's Anne with twinset and pearls!' (Laughter). I'll never forget that.

Brilliant.

Yeah, we'd been speaking, because I saw Greenham, and I said 'Come on, let's go see them.'

That might have be doing the strike then - would it probably be during the strike?

We went over Christmas time.

No, it weren't - it were before second strike. It weren't before big strike, but it before 1993. It were in that period, you know, in that period...

That 7 years.

That 7 years, it were then.

Okay.

And I mean, we didn't go every week. But if there were owt going off, we went. If we used to say 'Shall we go to Greenham?', you know, and we hired a minibus, I drove minibus. And we went quite a lot.

Betty, why do you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

Because I think the women made a stand, and historically it was something out of the ordinary. And the main thing was they were defending their country, their children, and their community. They weren't, they weren't in it to bring down a government or anything like that, you know what you're doing is unjust. We don't agree with what

you're doing. And we're making our protest, and it's a peaceful protest. That impressed me, so much, the way they were so quiet and peaceful. But yes, and I think it's important that their history is chronicled. We try so hard to make sure that ours is, we speak to lots of young people now at universities and colleges - doing dissertations, and, and it's really good because we know that through them, our history is being chronicled. And I think in a lot of ways, maybe women of '84/'85 have maybe overshadowed Greenham, and we need to bring it to the front, and walk along together with it - chronicling our histories together like we're doing today.

Yeah. Why do you think, why do you think it's been overshadowed?

Probably because, at the time maybe we didn't understand 100%. Maybe at the period it was women should be in the kitchen and at home, not out there doing what they're doing. I mean, the first picket that I went on, I didn't even tell me ex there's strike, that I was going on a picket line - I daren't tell him you know. And, and I think a lot of these women were so brave, because a lot of them left their families at home when they went. And we were of that generation that you're there to cook, look after your kids, you know, I mean. So, it's so important that their history is chronicled.

Yeah. Did you see any children when you at the camp as well?

I've never seen a child.

No I didn't see any.

Never ever, whole time I've been. I've been a lot. Never seen a young child, and I'll tell you what, they weren't roughies like us, they were middle class women. You know what I mean (laughs). I mean when I went they didn't know how to handle us. 'You can't do that.' - Aggie 'Who can't do that? I'll show you.' Yeah. They were, they were nearly all middle class women. Yeah. Because you know we used to go, when

me and Anne went to meetings in London and that, and I saw women there, at Greenham common and these women.

I think as well feminism was a big issue.

Yeah.

'Cause we didn't understand feminism. Well, I'm not saying - I individually didn't understand - I think there were a lot of women as well. And some journalists would say 'Well, are you a feminist?' Well, if you tell me what a feminist is, I can tell you whether I am or not. Yeah, I still don't think I'm a feminist, in the 100% of the word. I've got a lot of feminist ideas and things. But no, I still don't think I'm a feminist 100%.

I'm not a feminist because if a man opens a door for me, I'll say thank you. You know what I mean, if he stands there - and I've seen these women and when they've opened the door for them, they'll have said 'I can manage', you know what I mean? Real abrupt.

I still call myself a feminist, but I would still say thank you to somebody.

That's what I mean.

People have different ideas about what it means.

Yeah.

Exactly.

And you know what I mean? I mean, I can stick me corner.

I reckon you're both feminists.

Yeah, I do as well.

Yeah, if you believe in the power of women...

If we're arguing with people, like we were the other week when we started singing. I mean, I can stick up, you know, for myself to a fella, I'm not scared of him. But if he opens gate, the door for me or anything, I'll say thank you.

I go around with the idea that we fought for centuries for equality. That's fine. But keep the men at the side of you, we don't want women to rise above the men. Like...

We want equality, proper equality in the world, don't you, in a way?

Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

But you see...

We supported men, didn't we? A lot of them men thought that their wives couldn't come. But, we went. Some of them were grateful, because if if they saw you, they used to say 'Go on, Anne, they're coming, hurry up', do you know what I mean? Betty? I mean police were...

But I think there again, they're just, Northern Ireland as a battleground, as for dealing with women they used Greenham then.

Then when we went into court for Michael Mansfield, stop the strip searching women.

They stopped?

Using Northern Ireland tactics because all MPs stopped it in - yeah. Yeah. Tell them, because when we - we first were arrested, we got stripped searched, it was terrible, and proper strip searched. And then when I come out and telling everybody what they'd done to me, they were really uproar, weren't they? And I think it were him from northeast.

And then they stopped it until you were charged. See, we weren't even charged.

So do you think like, if you hadn't been to - if you hadn't, if a lot of us hadn't been to Greenham - the idea of the pit camps would probably not have come up as an idea?

I think somebody who maybe remain nameless came up with the idea.

Yeah.

Because we've been in Greenham common, and they're outside, I said, we'll have a pit camp here.

Yes, yes, it was inspired by Greenham. That's what I mean.

That's where we got it from. They're outside, we'll stop outside.

Was it because you thought it was successful? That was the reason?

But no, things were going down, there were nowt on telly about all.

You mean the campaign in '92?

They were dying, and we did to try to go down that pit.

Sara's meaning like, did you think because Greenham was successful, it would be a good thing to do a...

Yeah, we just said 'We'll go down, we'll try that then.' And Dot and Billy came, he were, they were good with us as well - from Lancashire.

Lesley and her husband used to come.

A lot of people come from all over. And you see, then it were getting up to Easter and it were dead. You know, we only just got locals. And so we said we've got to do something now to bring it back onto front.

(Edit in recording).

Used to dance round, didn't we - like this, all around. You know. With women in middle and that thing and that - police were livid.

One day we'd been quite naughty and the police were obviously ready to make a move, and the Greenham women came out of the woods and the danced round us, and danced us back to the minibus! That was solidarity.

(Laughter).

You mentioned before you were at Orange Gate.

Yeah.

Was it a choice to go to Orange Gate?

No, it just happened!

It just, we finished, we started going round and we saw it. So we went...

We'll have this one, we'll make it Women Against Pit Closures.

(Laughter).

Yeah, we had some lovely times there.

That one as well. So you need this one, I'll keep this one.

We used to sing, didn't we. And then we had some badges done. She, as I said, she used to go around to the cops and try and flag them! And

the inspector, he comes to me says 'Oh dear,' he says 'How long are you stopping?' I said 'Oh, about 5 days.'

At Greenham, you mean?

Yeah. Greenham. '5 days?' He says. 'Aye'.

And what was it like camping there?

We didn't stop.

You didn't stop?

It was a day trip.

Really, we really had some good, I know it's awful to say - hey, tell her about that woman who were telling us her husband had gone away.

Oh gosh, yeah.

We've got a right story!

You might have remembered, funnily enough she was called Anne, and she lived at Greenham. And her husband worked abroad. And she got herself on the base. And she'd been on the base 3 or 4 days before they even found her. And so she said 'I knew they'd take me to court and fine me, but I wasn't going to pay, pay the fine, because everything in the house was his. So the bailiffs could come, and it wouldn't affect me whatsoever.' She said 'They didn't send the bloody bailiffs, they sent me to prison.' She said 'I've never know anything...'

We went to see outside...

'And I've never known anything like it.' She said, 'It were filthy', and I'm going like this 'Have you seen the muck here?' And she said 'They said to me can we remind you you're not a prison visitor. You're a prisoner.'

And she said 'I got into my cell and I changed it around 'cause I don't like the way it is. Well everything were bolted to the bloody floor, I couldn't move anything', she said. And then on the night they dropped the flap down and said 'Would you like something to help you to sleep?', and she said 'Yeah a cup of tea would be nice, please.' They said 'We're not talking drinks, we're talking drugs.'

Oh my god, frightening.

Yeah, she was lovely though, we often laugh about Anne, and 'The bailiffs come because it's all his stuff!'

And we didn't tell them we were coming, we used to - it went round like Chinese whispers - they're here!

They used to take us on the bunny run, didn't they?

What's the bunny run?

They used to go and hide, and it was all trees around it, and it were like a little den. But it were in open air.

And I think a lot of them might have used it for a toilet at times.

(Laughter)

Well I didn't say that.

You mentioned about Embrace the Base, that you were there as well when everybody joined hands around the silo...

Well I went 'cause everybody, everybody around here went, there were a lot of us, buses went from here.

I don't know, Anne.

Got older...

I didn't go with the (inaudible) lot, I went with with (inaudible) lot.

I didn't know unions had gone with you, but the Barnsley lot went - we all got hold of ones, everyone. Yeah, yeah. I couldn't...people were helping you. And they went all the way around.

Yes. So, Anne do you want to say your full name for the recorder, and then I'll get on to your questions as well.

We've told you!

Anne Scargill, Women Against Pit Closures.

So how did you hear about Greenham?

Oh, I don't know how I heard about Greenham common, but obviously I were married to Arthur, and he were very, very political. And he often spoke about Greenham coming women and things like that. So, obviously, I knew that there were some Greenham common women. But that's how I heard about Greenham common women.

And when was the first time that you went down?

I went down er, quite a few times. But it wasn't in the early time, it was later, when they were coming and doing things, and getting - you could see that they were going into prison for doing things. And obviously, we decided that we'd go and have a look what it were about. Yeah.

Yeah. And that that first time that you went, what was your, what were your impressions of it?

Well, I felt really sorry for them, actually. And I could see what - because I agreed with them to get them Yanks out of England. We didn't want them, and I really really, agreed with them. You know, I

thought they're all doing awful to them. Police. And I think that they're doing a good job for us. So that was my first thing of Greenham common.

And did you see the violence against the women?

Yeah, because they were pushing them around. Little did I know that years later, we were going to get same treatment.

Yes. And, and did you - you didn't ever stay over, did you? You just went for the day?

Yeah, just went for day, yeah there were quite a few from - you know they did get buses up quite regularly.

Yeah, and what did you think of the conditions when you went into the camp, as well?

Well, I just thought here we are in a lovely base! (Laughs). I don't like camping anyway, because I don't like creepers. (Laughs). So I felt, ooh, I couldn't stop here. Honestly, for the night, and then I felt sorry for them. But then when I spoke to them, what can I say? I found that they were really middle class women, very intelligent women. You know and I thought, they must be brave to do this, and I really really thought they are. Yeah they are, doing all this to get these damn Yanks out, because we used to sing 'Go home, go home, Yankee, Yankee do. Yankee soldiers. The women are here to stay.' And we used to sing that. 'Go Yankee, Yankee soldiers. The women are here to stay.' Yeah.

And did you make friends - both of you, Betty and Anne, did you make friends with the women on the camp? Were there women in particular?

Yeah, her that came up, what did they call her? Her that...

There was one called Eileen who used to come to pit camp. Then R... everybody knew Rebecca. You sure you don't remember it?

I bet if you look for people, that you'll find somebody...

Was it Rebecca Johnson?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. Well, she knows me and her right well. Have you been to her?

No, we haven't. But she's done lots of interviews in general about Greenham.

Well, tell her that we've been asking about her, me and Betty.

Anne's been asking about her!

(Laughter)

I like her, in-fact she used to come to our house. Well I liked her!

(Laughter)

And what did you think of the non-violent direct action that was taking place as well?

If they'd have done that, I'd have had to retaliate. When he was...

Yeah.

Yeah.

They were rough, weren't they, know what I mean. We found out they were rough with us.

I was so impressed by these women, how quiet they were, you know they didn't react like we did. Yeah, difficult to understand living like that and seeing all that violence, how they...

They didn't hit them him back. They were just letting them push them about. You know what I mean, and I was surprised.

We haven't changed!

(Laughter)

And Caroline, do you want to give your name?

My name is Caroline Poland.

And how did you hear about Greenham?

Um, I heard about Greenham, I can't quite remember exactly what happened when - I was a part of a group called Sheffield Won't group. Sheffield Won't, which was Sheffield opposed to the nuclear threat. And so I think we, I think it was - my son was born in 19.., December '82. And I think I think he was just 9 months old when I went down on the, I think it was called Embrace the Base, with bolt cutters. So we all had big bolt cutters. So I was part of, so I went with the group women - Sheffield Won't group, and we had our big bolt cutters. And so yeah, I was busy cutting the fence down, on friend's shoulders and cutting the fence down, and then I got arrested, so I got pulled into the base. First by the police, and then by the army, and then put some handcuffs on - the zip handcuffs. And the idea was if you were arrested, you're not meant to say anything, to keep quiet, so anyway that took me in the base, and they didn't know how to undo them. (Laughs). So they had to use my bolt cutters to undo them. And I was just like trying to keep quiet then, it was just hilarious. So um, but my son was only - Tom was only 10 months old, I suppose, so I was only going down for the day, which took longer because of being arrested. Obviously friends were waiting outside, but then we - along with a lot of other women got

charged quite a serious charge. So it was conspiracy to commit criminal damage, which is conspiracy - is always worse than the actual doing of it, which I can never quite understand. (Laughs). About the conspiring. So I think that was you know, a ridiculous sentence if you get done for that. So one of the other women in it, who was also a solicitor at the time, she just like put a different jacket on or something (laughs), so we were kind of defending ourselves, so she was defending me. So I had to go down a few more times because of appearing in court. So I think I did um, I think I did stay over once - I can't remember it terribly well actually. All that um, a lot of that time gets to be a blur, especially when you've got young children.

And what court was it that you were at?

I can't - it must have been in Newbury. Yeah, it was in Newbury. And so there was that, and then there was quite a - where's it gone? I've found it, I was looking for ages for this. I've found the criminal charge sheet, but also it was in The Guardian, it said 'One takes one's hat off to the technological genius behind the cruise missile. Behind (inaudible) of course, it's quite a different matter.' (Laughs). 'One of the Greenham protesters arrested over the weekend was placed by the US Army personnel in a pair of American design cuffs, and driven inside the base to await the arrival of the British boys in blue. When the time came for her to be released, neither the US Army or the British police force could work out how to undo the cuffs. And she was only released due to the dexterous use of the women's own bolt cutters.' (Laughs). Anyway, and it goes on a bit there. I just thought it was funny. And then I went a few other times, and I think after '84, during '84/'85, there was - like Betty and Anne were saying, there were lots of Greenham women supporting the strike. Um, and when that - after that we did this series of women made links postcards, which were - four from to do with Greenham, and then four to do with Women Against Pit Closures, so that's like an early thing of women being involved, opposing and supporting the men in the pit in Wales. That's picketing at Treatham (spelt phonetically), and that's an American women miners, so we were trying...sorry.

What did they call that woman who come to our pit camp. She were reet tall with grey hair, and she were at Menwith Hill an all.

Not May?

She come to our pit camp quite a bit.

From Greenham?

Yeah, she was, she were at Menwith Hill...

Not Lesley?

In that, in that caravan.

I can't remember the name.

Because they went to Menwith Hill, and you know.

They did yeah.

I went with Sandra Hutchinson, for 3 year to Menwith Hill, because they had a... 'cause they taught our Thomas how to do them drums! (Taps on table).

(Laughter)

The woman's name evades me. So hard to remember.

She was awarded some kind of award in America and they refused to give it her.

Wasn't she Welsh, and she was one of the original...

Very tall, she were yeah. She were a really nice lass. She were always there at Menwith Hill. And I used to go with Sandra, I can remember

our Thomas, going, he'd be about 5, 6 and 7. We went 3 year running me and Sandra, and we took him. You know, because we took him out of school, they let him come out of school 'cause they said,

(Inaudible) education.

Yeah, yeah. You know.

He had a very good teacher didn't he!

(Laughter).

(Edit in recording)

For me, when I saw that this project was there, I think somebody sent me an email about it, it just felt really important that, um, you know, obviously without 1984, without the 1 year strike, and being involved in Women Against Pit Closures, but also without Greenham, that we wouldn't have - the pit camps wouldn't have happened without those two things.

No, I don't think they would.

So I really wanted that to be part of this Greenham story. You, as you said, record the history of Women Against Pit Closures. So, I think I first met you two, I think me and Fliss came to Barnsley - when you set up first Barnsley meeting, we came to the beginning, and then Sheffield was set up. And then we got involved with Sheffield. And yeah, so.

And did you make friends at Greenham?

I mean, I, I don't think...

Was it somebody Johns?

Helen Johns.

Ah, now I know that name. Yeah.

Yeah. She come quite a bit didn't she?

Yeah.

I knew it were.

It must have been very difficult for you having a small...

Yeah. I mean, I did some crazy things with, with Tom I think. (Laughs). But I didn't take him down, down there. So it was kind of limited what I could do. Um. My daughter was born in '87 so she, that period of time she, I mean they both really enjoyed the pit camp, they've got really good memories of it - quite an important part, David and his history in Bullcroft Pit and everything, I mean Tom's - they know that they will wheeled around in you know, like Tom was in a pushchair when he was, in '84/'85, they went on lots of demonstrations. But they both remember the pit camp really well.

Somebody came, I'm sure they came to our pit camp, she'd been pregnant during the '84/'85 strike, and taking my little lump on the picket line!

(Laughter).

She was so proud of that, that she came with her little lump on the picket line.

It's really important.

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

Um, I mean, I, you know, I agree with what Anne was saying earlier in the sense that the pit camp we had was a women's pit camp, but we were really involved like, the men and the miners were really a part, part of it. Um, but I think just women - I suppose, I mean, just thinking like, you know, brought up, I mean, I'm, I'll be 70 this year, brought up in the era of we were brought up in and what expectations were for women, was always less what women would do, what kind of jobs you would do and you know. I went back to do A' Levels in education yeah, some kind of - and it took me, you know, a long time I think to see what feminism is about, and to feel that I was a feminist. And, you know, actually to really value the company of women. I mean, I can remember that first time I just in the early '70s, and just going out for a meal, and it was just with women friends and I got home and I thought I've had a really good time! (Laughter). So, just that whole thing and you know, like expectations of, you know, of us at that age, of what we would do, and you know, worked in an office and things. So kind of just believing in women, and what women could do was like really important to me. Um, so I think that this was something that women were doing it, and were doing it in, you know, maybe in a different way than if you had lots of men involved. I think that is true.

We didn't just have a pit camp, we had a social camp.

Yeah.

Yeah, everybody come. There were a man who used to come with his family from about 6 o'clock while 8, go on (inaudible) and then come back quarter past 8 (inaudible).

...happened to be his wife's sister.

Oh that's awful. Don't think that's what we set out to support, though.

No, but I'm saying just was not, and can you remember that man who left a baby - that young lad? And Sandra had to take it to care?

I think, I think you found our pit camp like we found at Grimethorpe, though. You couldn't get the support of the local women, because they were still in that time warp that women stayed at home, cooked, cleaned, looked after the kids. I know one night, I can remember that the Grimethorpe women said they'd come and sleep at the pit camp for the night, which were lovely. But there were one or two, and they were enjoying it and having a good time until somebody banged on the door and screamed 'You're not here to enjoy yourselves'. So they didn't come back after that. But it was a shame because we'd got us women here that had done '84/'85 in the pit camp. These women were probably '84 / '85, and so they were, if you live in a different time warp to us, yeah. And I think you found the same at Hawton (spelled phonetically), didn't you?

I mean, there was some, you know, there women like, you know, (inaudible) from (inaudible). And er, Chan from Goldthorpe - she worked at the Dearne Valley advice - I think they'd become politically active in '84/'85. So, they were a really important part of it. But yeah, you're right. And also, I suppose Hamp is not really a central part of the village is it? Men that worked there came from all over as well. But you know that thing about, like if you don't um organise it, so there is some fun as well, you can't, you can't stay the course can you?

No, no.

You've got to have that, really...

Yeah, and I think, I do think that's probably a different - that women do think more like that. You know.

And did you see that at Greenham as well - with all kind, of with all the artistic stuff, but also even the Embrace the Base was colorful and fun.

Yeah. Yeah. And imaginative really, just doing things in a different way.

Women were coming from all over the world to support us, and, and men, and even women who were on television...you know...women... and then obviously then they all come from village.

Can you remember the day when Charlie Williams came? Charlie came and he sort of stood at the top, where pit camps were, and he just screamed 'Aaargh, Charlie's Angels', and came running down to us. We were Charlie's Angels alright. (Laughs).

Of-course with the management, they were buggers, really, and (inaudible), they did all sorts. Anyway they were all going and occupying managers' offices, so anyway, police come and they said 'Look, when you go in the office, you lock it. When you come out you lock it. Because we're not coming to fetch them lasses out of here anymore.' So anyway, anyway, we had a police caravan, kids had been pulling strips off it, Mr. Logan wouldn't acknowledge this... said to him 'Hit me, hit me, go on hit me'.

Because he was so angry?

Yeah, 'Hit me, hit me', so anyway I go in on a Monday morning and putting thing, caravan, special...and he were coming to pick it up (inaudible)... Anyway he went in his office and I went...(inaudible).

We had a great security guard, actually at Hawton, and he always used to pin the door open, at night time for the toilet. Great, actually.

Were they alright?

He was, he was great, actually. Yeah. I mean, I think that, you know, the NUM branch at Hawton was really supportive, but you know, like they mostly, didn't live in that village, you know, because it was a pit where people came from lots of different places really, but um. But it was, I mean, that thing you were mentioning earlier really in about for Greenham, and you know, for our pit camp really, about women coming from all sorts of different places, and you know, how much you like you

trust people, where they've come from, and what they're standing for, and also whose pit camp is. So I think all those, like potential lack of trust - certainly you have to work through, don't you?

Yeah, yeah.

And I think, you know, because, in a way, if you're there 24 hours, 7 days a week, you'd either work through it or you don't. You know, to build up that sort of trust in people, which I think did happen

(Inaudible)...nights, didn't you.

Yeah, me and the kids used to stay at nights,

'Cause I were looking after my mum, I was going to uni. So early mornings were okay. But the rest of the day seemed to be taking up, so I used to do a lot of nights, because Maureen Stubbings and Derek - they used to come nights, and somebody always used to make sure there were a few bottles at the top.

We used to get - the milkman used to come down and deliver. But then also like when the men were signing on for days, day shifts, which would be about 3 o'clock in the morning, they'd fill up the brazier. And you know, 'You alright in there?' - it was like about you know, like you say it was about doing that together, but it was still a women's pit camp, and that was important.

And would you say for you, it came from, the inspiration came from Greenham, like being at Greenham seeing how it worked?

Well yeah, like I was saying earlier, I think we all think that if Greenham hadn't happened, women - you know, Women Against Pit Closures hadn't been set up, and did that whole year and beyond. If that hadn't happened, and Greenham hadn't happened, the pit camps wouldn't have happened.

Certainly not.

So, you know, had to be both really like, you know, without kind of...

I think, although we used to go down to Greenham a lot during the strike, didn't we, I think '92/'93 brought us even closer to the Greenham women, because they used to come to our pit camp and stay there 2 or 3 nights and, and during that time, then you'd sit around the brazier chatting, and what have you, and you felt that you were in your own environment - different from going to Greenham. Shouting, and them being so gentle and quiet.

Yeah. Yeah.

And in terms of non-violent direct action, how, how did you feel that worked for you? When you were at Greenham?

Um, I just think like non-violent, direct action, imaginative action's brilliant! (Laughs).

Is it something you took forward in your activism as well, the ideas got there, or the ideas that you saw there?

Um. Yes. Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think a lot of my politics were shaped in the 1970s really, in that I am - you're allowed to have a boo for somebody coming from this house. (Laughs). But you know, I was brought up on the edge of London, and lived in Britain in the 1970s, and involved very much in community based action, and you know, working in the community. And um, so, you know, just seeing a lot with the violence of the National Front, actually and, and the police, the Metropolitan Police. I had my eyes massively opened in that, in my 20s - massively opened. I learned more than I could possibly describe really. Um, so, but I, you know, I also, you know, can I can remember being in Lewisham at a national friendship march, and the police on horseback, and then there was bricks being thrown from all directions. I thought, I'm sure there's something better to do. Just you know, and I think you

know, those ideas, and what could we do - something more, you know, how could we take over the road? Things that actually we didn't manage to do, but I just think that being more imaginative, and doing things that are direct action, but, er, I think probably are ways that women look to, look for, a bit more generally speaking.

(Edit in recording).

And Caroline, in terms of when you went to court course as well, did you have a reaction from the local residents there?

I honestly can't remember. I know there was a lot of animosity, wasn't there, locally.

Were there Greenham women in the court with you as well?

Well, the, the rest of the group came down to support me, and then it was like, negotiate it, but I think they then reduced the charge to something eventually, which was just criminal damage. But I can't remember.

Were you scared when it was happening?

At the court, or being arrested?

Yeah, the whole thing.

I think I felt very - I knew that nobody would forget me. (Laughs). I probably - got home at some point. Because it got really boring, really, because you were stuck in there for hours and hours and hours. And, you know, eventually people started singing - I can't sing to save my life. But, you know, and then you have to keep going back to court. So it gets, but yeah, I felt like - that thing about being in a group of people, women that you know, really well, and you know, there's no way they're going to forget you.

I think that's how we felt when we used to do things that we shouldn't do. We were women together. We'll do it, we'll get the way - the men can't do it, so we'll do it.

We're not scared of them.

Yeah.

And in terms of the collective nature of decisions at Greenham, did you see any of that happening? Or did you take any of the ideas from that to future campaigns?

Um. I don't know, I think in a way, you know, a lot of things, I felt became really important to me, and that I learned was very much in the 1970s, actually, you know, including, you know, just a lot of funny stories, I mean. And understanding police brutality and police life, I mean I could tell you some stories but they're not really relevant (laughs). But had a big influence on me, really. A big part of collected housing project and the squatting projects, lots of things - homelessness and stuff that was going on then - I learned a lot. Um, so in a way Greenham was, I mean, I suppose you know, that I mean, these, these postcards were about trying to build the links, saying what we women were doing in Greenham, and what Women Against Pit Closures were doing, you know, there was lots of - we wanted to celebrate those links.

A bit like that program 'Never the Twain Shall Meet' - that you were all so quiet and gentle.

Just, just you know - just thinking about, well, obviously, you were telling a story about, you know, that woman coming up from Greenham and taking over. I mean, obviously, there's lots of different people have different kinds of um, er, understanding, or, you know, different things are important to them, you know, so that women have no understanding (laughs), that it wasn't her pit camp and things, but just you know. And people just, you know, actually coming together about things - whether,

whether people still hold to their politics of social justice and things when they're 10 years old or something, that's when you start to know, don't you, whether people are still, you know, hold those views in their 20s and 30s and 40s, and you know, when they're in their 70s and 80s, you know, yeah, we are still the same thing that's important to me.

I'm worse now than I were before. I don't care what the... after they strip searched me, I felt they can't do owt to me.

You build, you've got the level of confidence that you can do these things.

Right. And I were a bugger.

Yeah. So I still believe the things I believed in the '70s and '80s. Do you know what I mean?

Yeah.

But anyway, I can't remember what your question was!

Consensus decision making and things.

I mean, I think that's, for me, it's really important. It's bloody hard work sometimes (laughs). But I do think that, I do think that's important. And in the end, you know, bringing more people in and doing things together is a better way of doing things. There's more people around at the end fighting.

I felt at Greenham , sort of there would be a group at each gate. And, but everybody was there for the same thing. There wasn't any division. It was just lovely that, you know, every gate had a group of women that belonged on that gate.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And what do you think the reason is that something say like the Suffrage movement has been remembered and canonized in history, whereas Greenham and your Women Against Pit Closures kind of hasn't in the same way?

I mean, I'm sure class is (laughs) fairly relevant.

Yeah, yeah.

And it's obviously lots of working class history gets lost, doesn't it? And, um, so I think that's really what I mean. I suppose there was that sort of split between the Suffragists and the Suffragettes wasn't there? And so there were clearly like, some very active working class women in the movement, and women's emancipation of the vote. And I suppose, some of those stories have been given more publicity than they were. But...Yeah. So I think that's probably the big - would you say? Why did some - I mean, although the year long miners' strike, in a way has become a, I mean, an incredibly important part of history, isn't it?

Yeah.

Yeah.

And actually, Women Against Pit Closures, for that year, I think probably there has been a lot written about - I think the fact that actually a lot of us came back together again, 7 years later, has had very little written about it, which is why we want to keep telling that story that we are not there to go away. (Laughs). I say 'we' in a way general thing because I, you know, my personal, um, you know, I mean, David and I have been together for nearly 40 years, and his background is clearly a mining background. Goes back to the Welsh mining, but mine isn't, and I'm not pretending - I would never pretend otherwise.

(Edit in recording).

During the strike three women photographers came up from London, and they went into different areas, and one was called Rica Page, who is dead now, but she came into South Yorkshire. And she took a photograph down at Woolley Colliery on Low Row - some kids stood there. And if you didn't know, you'd think that was in the '80s. It's, it's a sad photo. But it's brilliant to think that people thought that was all gone now, and this is what our community is doing now - this is what we're fighting against.

Yeah.

Yeah.