

Loppy Oubridge

You just say what you what you care - that you think you're prepared to share. But a little bit about your, your family background and whether, you know, were you, were - was your family in CND? Or did they, you know, were they encouraging or censorious? You know, were you from a military family? A little bit about your background and erm, and the politics that you grew up with.

Um, my background when I was a child you mean, was very, very difficult and very poor, very poverty stricken. Which it shouldn't have been because my father was a jazz musician, and who played with erm, the Johnny Dankworth band. Which, obviously in the '50s was very famous. But he was an alcoholic. And I later learned he took various things like heroin, so he wasn't there most of the time. And when he was there, he was very violent. And I'd gotten married, and erm had my first child at 20. And, by the time of Greenham, I'd been in CND for quite, quite a while. I can't remember how long and been involved in - well we were, I was helping a friend organise gigs to make money for Salisbury CND. And we - I learned to screen print posters. And when I heard about Greenham I was living right out in the countryside in Dorset, being a housewife. I was fairly bored really, and I decided to, I drew a card of a woman with the world in her belly. And I took it to the Art Centre and we produced it as a card and it was a, was a few weeks into Greenham and I decided to take it there. I was selling it to make money for Greenham so I decided to take the money there and the card to show the women. But I had been involved in Greenham - erm in CND for quite a long time. And also in green stuff. I went to the Green Party, well it was the ecology party, summer gatherings, and then the Green Party gatherings. So I took the card - women had been there for a few weeks in the autumn of 1981 - and they really liked it. And it ended up on loads of posters and banners. Even in Japan!

I think I remember it! Was it, as a poster was it a black and white poster rather than a colour one?

Poster was designed by a man called David something from London, who was involved with the Quakers. But the woman with the world in her belly, he put on it. Originally, she had a blue dress on so that the sea merged with her dress. The sea of the world merged with her dress and was a long dress.

So that, was that the first time you went to Greenham when you went up in, right at the beginning with your, your um...

Yeah, it was a few weeks in. So it was kind of fairly established with caravans and tipis and things at Green Gate, what later became Green Gate. And first of all, I lived in a tipi with another woman, which was - and it became absolutely freezing. That was the winter that was the Arctic winter, the Siberian winter, and it was one of the coldest winters I've ever known. And this tipi hadn't had its poles rubbed down properly. So the water would, from melting snow etc., would run down the poles and drip on you in the night. I remember my

husband coming to visit me and he managed about one night, it was too cold for him. I think women are, I think women are harder, hardier in that way. We can put up with colder weather.

Oh, well - I'm just I'm just thinking of all the sort of First World War soldiers that were in the trenches because I think they had it pretty hard.

They did, yeah at least we weren't been bombed and shot at. (Laughs).

Well, not, not quite, not quite. But that's, I mean, it's actually an interesting comparison, isn't it about men leaving home to fight war and women to fight wars and women leaving home to, you know, fight against war. So that's erm, so what so, um, so it was particularly Green Gate that you stayed at?

Yeah, we were at Main Gate and Fran put her tipi up at erm Green Gate, so she could talk to the people who were constructing things on site. Erm I was, I was at Main Gate, first of all, and later on, I moved into a caravan. We, we did have some interaction with the base. And there was one lady there called Marian, who was completely accident prone and absolutely wonderful. And she was writing a thes - thesis on chaos at the time, chaos theory. And she lived in a tent, which had a paraffin heater. And for some reason, she had gas canisters in it as well, (laughs) and her thesis and I remember one night I was sitting in one of the tipis, and somebody ran in and said, 'Marion's tents on fire.' (Laughs). I was actually sitting in the tipi that the men were in talking to them, and we grabbed the water container and it was solid ice. So me and them and Fran ran towards the fire. And somebody shouted at us from the base, 'Be careful!' And we realised they will right, right as the gas canisters exploded. (Laughs). We hit the deck and the fire engine came out of the base and one of the soldiers said to Fran, 'That's dangerous stuff you're messing with.' And she said 'Not half as dangerous as the stuff you're messing with!' Anyway we had to put Marian into a caravan and she, (laughs) she had to go to a bar mitzvah one night so I thought when she's gone I thought I'd go and check on the caravan because I know what she's like and the bed clothes were, had fallen on top of a paraffin heater that was still on. (Laughs)

So she set the caravan on fire as well as well as her own tent? (Laughs).

We managed to save that. Then she, then she spilled a kettle of boiling water on her foot and had to have that treat - the dressings changed a lot, big bandages and things. And one day we were sitting around the fire with her and she said, 'It...' she said 'It's a myth that I'm accident prone!' And put her feet out to warm herself and the bandage caught fire! (Laughs). It was a really funny place to live a lot of the time...

(Laughs).

... despite the freezing coldness of waking up in your caravan and finding that even the eggs and the baked beans in the tin were frozen.

So what what was, what was happening to your children when you were there?

My husband was looking after them. I used to go back for a week or two and then come back to Greenham and kind of commute. I used to hitch, hitchhiked backwards and forwards. I can't say it did very much for our relationship. (Laughs).

Is it the same husband you've got now?

No.

That's so often the story with these Greenham Women interviews! (Laughs).

He encouraged me had to go in the beginning. But then I started to get told off really for not being there where I should be, looking after the children and everything.

So so did you erm, so I was going to say, did you have a preference with the gates that you were staying, but really there was only Yellow Gate, Main Gate to start with wasn't there?

And then there was, there was Green Gate, which Fran was mostly on. We first of all, when I went, I was very naive. And I used to be put to talk to press and all sorts of people. And then I wasn't, because they didn't agree with what I said. I - there was a lady who was writing a letter from Greenham and she said that we wanted to tell the women of the world that we want peace. I said, 'Well, actually, no, we don't want to tell the people of the world because it's generally not the women that are making the problems.' Anyway, she altered the letter, and then came yelling and shouting at me and telling me that I could, you know, I wasn't welcome there. Anyway, so there was a bit of erm, there was a bit of a rebellion going on. And see, this seems to follow me about this, you know, being rebellious and not agreeing with people. Anyway, I was living in a caravan with my friend Caroline, and she was organising the Embrace the Base. Then where we had festivals at each gate, and I remember we drove down to Leicester to get the marquees, and she was booking different things to happen. And Helen came into our caravan. One time, we organised a load of men to come and do bridges over the streams and things, because there were a lot of streams and bogs all around the base. So they came to do that, and Helen didn't like that. So one day, we were in the caravan just sitting there and she came in and said to Caroline, 'You're no longer a signatory to the bank account.' Which was a bit of a shock because Caroline was organising the whole Embrace the Base thing and the erm blockade and everything. So we had all these festivals at each, things at each gate and we were block - going to blockade the whole base. And so Embrace the Base was actually later that was a blockade we were doing. And we had no money. So she had to ring round the peace movement basically and people like Bruce Kent and that gave her money because we had no access to the money

for the organising. And I remember we drove down to, we drove up to Leicester to get the marquees. Us and some other women were digging toilets. We'd got some long drops from Glastonbury from Michael Eavis. Yeah, so basically, there were it was us rebellious women organised it. And I went to Green Gate and I well chained myself up to Green Gate with some of my friends, and we were chained up for 24 hours. And that was the same all round the base.

Well I was gonna say how was planning and decision making done but...

Erm, it was supposedly by consensus, but in reality, it was the tyranny of structurlessness...

(Laughs).

... where the strongest and most bullying would win the day if you weren't careful.

Okay. So did you get arrested? Did you go to prison?

No, not when I was at Greenham. Um, when I left Greenham in March or April 1982 - so I was just there really over the winter and for the spring and we started another peace camp at Burghfield. And we were sleep - basically sleeping in those plastic, orange bivy bags first of all outside Burghfield. And I got arrested at Upper Heyford when we went to do the blockade there, the first blockade. And that was - I can't remember when that was I, that was, I got in the autumn of '82, I got a job working for Dorset Peace Council and I was paid by the Quaker Peace and Service, and I trained two different NVDA groups. And people knew that we were - basically we just had a lot of fun and we giggled a lot. And so they put us on the gate where they knew that the arrests were unlikely to happen. And the police must have known that I had trained both groups because both the groups were put on that gate and I was the only one arrested first of all. And I was held by the scruff of my neck up in front of all the others, like an example and taken away and put for an hour or two in one of those - is it a paddy waggon? Is it a paddy waggon? They're all metal like little boxes. And you've got a tiny tiny little window.

Yeah, like a horse box.

Yeah, I was in there for about an hour or two, before they filled it up with other people and then took it to the police station.

Would you like to explain how the connection with Burghfield and Upper Heyford? They were both military bases.

Burghfield put together - well took apart warheads, basically, from cruise missiles and such and I think it does Trident as well. They took them apart and the stuff inside I think came from Aldermaston so there was like a

triangle. And then I think they put them back together again at Burghfield and sent them off because I know that the land based cruise missiles used to go there. And that's why we were at Burghfield. There wasn't at that point any peace camp at Aldermaston. It wasn't a secure at Burghfield as it is now. (Laughs).

Yeah. Have you been going back to Burghfield then?

No, I haven't been for years. But I think now it's a lot more secure from what I've heard because I remember my friend Betty hitchhiked back to Burghfield Peace Camp and stayed in the lorry and got right inside the perimeter fence on the lorry before they took her off and searched her.

So you came and went from Dorset. So were you part of a like part of CND in erm - that was the local, your local because you were doing a bit of Greenham Women everywhere back back home as well.

I - it was - wasn't until I'd left Greenham that I worked was working for Dorset Peace Council. And I had to coordinate all the peace groups and all the green groups in Dorset and do a newsletter and do NVA - NVDA training and I also organised a Star March. Do you remember the Star Marches? I organised one from Dorset to Greenham.

Yeah. Yeah, I do. And I went on a march. I don't know whether it was one of the Star Marches but it started off in Plymouth and I was living near Totnes for for the first couple of years of Greenham I was coming and going like you. But there was a march that went all through the West Country and ended up at Greenham.

We might have met up with you because it was of course we went through Andover and loads of Marches went through Andover.

Yeah, yeah, I remember the Somerset ones mainly. And erm yeah, that, there were, were there were quite a few marches weren't there. There was the Snowball that was a CND thing that Snowball Marches as well. They all came later.

What year was it the Star Marches? I think it was '83.

Oh, right. Yeah, that would that would figure with my timeline.

Yeah.

And stayed in all different church halls and, and peace groups and things. Yeah.

That's it and some, a bit of camping and it was good fun.

Yeah, it was. It was. So have you got any any favourite my favourite memories and the worst memories? You've already talked about the freezingness and fires.

I remember there was constant TV cameras all the time. And sometimes, you know, you'd see there was a lady from Germany who came back and of course, I ran to give her a hug. And there was this blimin TV camera that said, 'Could you do that again?' We said no. It could be quite intrusive. There's all sorts of things happened. Like I had a friend called Fiona who had various pets, one of which was a hedgehog. And so she she came to see us and she took off her Wellington's and left them in the kitchen of the caravan and left her hedgehog out there as well and it crawled into into her welly and then it couldn't back out because of its prickles. So we had to destroy her welly to rescue the hedgehog!

(Both laugh).

Yes.

All those little, all those little things.

I remember the, after the thing that we did with the blockade and everything for 24 hours - I mean, we were absolutely exhausted and these blokes that had been looking after everybody, we just went to bed, they went out and got us dinner. Then a load of ruffians came along and started throwing stones in the middle of the night at the camp. Load of yobbos and these blokes were then asked to sit up all night and protect us. So this is kind of one of the reasons I had a different attitude was because this, this, basically this bloke stayed up for 36, 48 hours looking after looking after us. The other thing I remember when I was at Burghfield, over Hiroshima day we did a fast in the centre of Reading, and we slept in our bivvy bags on a traffic island. And I remember that I went to sleep, and in the morning I woke up I was absolutely soaked right to the skin, everything I wore. But what had happened while I was asleep was my some of my friends had been beaten up by skinheads and I felt terribly ashamed because I hadn't woken up I hadn't heard or anything. Yeah.

I was going to ask you, what was your, what was your experience of the reactions from the Newbury locals? And for Reading obviously.

They didn't like us. And I think it was quite a Tory area. We had a few people that lived nearby that were really lovely and really friendly. But no, it wasn't, wasn't, we weren't terribly popular in the town from what I remember. Well, when I was at Burghfield, we had a few local supporters, quite a few in Reading, and some more locally. In Burghfield, itself, there was an old couple. And they used to come and kidnap one of us and take us home for a bath and feed us and even darn our socks, and they seemed very lovely. They were kind of old communists. So I thought they were lovely until we went to a public meeting where there was somebody who was pro Greenham and against a Tory in a kind of village hall, political meeting, and we were sitting there and as soon as the Tory spoke, he shouted, 'Crap!' The old fella just

constantly shouted, insulted the Tory every time he spoke, we was, we were sitting there thinking, 'This isn't, this isn't the way to behave!'

Yeah.

But they were very lovable.

Yeah. So you did quite a few sort of speaks going to - because of your role with the Dorset coordinator, you'd went and did quite a lot of talks and things that different groups, did you?

Well I started off - the first time I had to speak to a big group was when I was at Greenham and the local CND organised erm a big meeting a really big meeting in Salisbury Art Centre, which is a church, converted church. And I had to speak there - which I think I'd be absolutely terrified by now. But then I think I was just young and naive so I just did it. I remember I got back to Salisbury - I couldn't get home to Dorset in time to get changed so I had to wear a local Salisbury woman's clothes because I was just so incredibly dirty and muddy. But yeah, I did. Yeah, that was the first time I ever spoke in public and when I worked for Dorset Peace Council I had to do a lot, particularly on things like the Star March where when we got to to places like Andover and that they'd want - they'd have organised something they'd want people to speak. My husband also he, he was working for them as well and he did, organised the conferences in Dorset, and we had a magazine called The Radiator - which I don't, I don't know if you remember The Radiator?

No.

That was kind of south western magazine - peace movement magazine.

Have you got copies of it?

Yeah.

Oh, good.

Also I've got pictures of I've got the poster of the woman with the world in her belly. I haven't got any original cards but I've got the see through things that you use when you're making a poster on silk screen. I've still got the silk screens, I've still got some artwork I did for The Radiator. And I've got a few, I've got the posters that I did for the Star March the Dorset Star March and another Greenham poster that was done for the Festival for Peace and the blockade. So I did send photographs of them. I can't remember whether, if it was to you lot or not.

There is a sort of Archive of Resistance that's being based in I think, Bristol. I've seen them at The Green Gathering. They have a big exhibition space now it's really great. So that's a good place to deposit things as well.

I mean I didn't, after that I didn't do much with the peace - I got arrested again, but I can't remember where it was, it was a base somewhere. I got arrested again and fined, and the Quakers paid my fine because by then I was a single parent and I couldn't go to prison and leave the children. I didn't really do masses, I went on all the marches and everything. I didn't - wasn't massively involved again in the peace movement really until the Iraq War, at which time myself and some other women decided to protest - I was living in Wales by then - we decided to protest in the Welsh Assembly. And we made t-shirts which each had a letter on so that we spelt 'No War'. And we went in with obviously with our jackets and that on and we went in, and at a certain point, we got up, we took our, took our coats off and got up on the chairs, and spelt 'No War'. But they had obviously sussed us because we were grabbed really quickly from behind, and marched out. And we had, we'd organised it so that this woman who was a famous actress in Wales - she played the wife of Dylan Thomas, she was quite famous - she was supposed to be, when we, when we got arrested, which we knew we would she was supposed to be at the front to speak. But they arrested us the other way round so that I was, so I was on every news programme in Wales (laughs) saying that we didn't want, we didn't, we didn't want the Iraq War. Yeah. And what was lovely was that erm (inaudible) and - oh, who was the other - the Plaid Cymru people came out and sang with us outside.

Because erm, Wales was a nuclear free zone at that time, wasn't it?

Plaid Cymru in the South were very anti-nuclear. I think they were a bit more pro-nuclear in the north with Anglesey and all that. Quite different the North and the South.

Yeah. Yeah. Um, what what did you make of the, the media coverage? I mean, you said that there were quite a lot of reporters and TV cameras erm at camp. It's sort of, it's quite opinion forming, wasn't it? The media coverage.

First of all, they kind of - it was quite shocking some of the photographs because some of the photographs they'd kind of catch women in positions where they look rather provocative, which I didn't like.

What do you mean sexually provocative?

Well, yeah, kind of chained up. Kind of - I can't - yeah, it was a bit... It was fairly friendly. I thought, first of all. Think they kind of thought we were load of weird eccentrics. And then it became more and more unfriendly. And we were kind of, you know, all the stuff about bobble hatted and everything. Yeah.

Woolly - woolly hats, yeah. Um, one of the, one of the things that, well, it - a bit later on possibly then, when you were able to get up to camp - but there was a big split with Yellow Gate and the other other gates and erm, I wondered if you had any comments about that. I mean, actually, you sort of summarised some, some of your

experience around the erm, the hierarchy. You know, the hierarchy of oppression but hierarchy of I don't know, decision making and, erm.

I mean my experience, you know, was that there was some people who, after the festival that we - and blockade that we organised - they came out for the TV cameras and pretended to be clearing up. And then went back again and everybody else did the clearing up. But you get that in every organisation.

Yeah.

We were aware of things that were going on when we were at Burghfield. And, you know, in the, the rest of the time, and while we were on the Star March, but I wasn't involved with it. I was more involved locally and training people for demos and blockades and things.

Yeah, yeah.

I kept well back because I felt a bit bruised by some of my experiences at Greenham. I think I see it from both sides a bit more now.

Do you feel that erm, your involvement - what sort of impact do you think your involvement had on on your life, looking back?

A lot, huge amount. Erm, had a hu - gave me a lot more confidence. Opened, it opened I mean - well it destroyed my marriage which wasn't too good. But it opened life up for me. And after I'd worked for Dorset Peace Council, when I moved back to Salisbury from Dorset, I worked for social services for adults with learning disabilities, and enjoyed that. And then after that, I also worked in festival welfare at Glastonbury and various other festivals. And we started the Big Green Gathering.

Oh, yeah.

And we yeah, we started the Big Green Gathering until - and that went on until 2007. 2009 we were going to have the other one but the police stopped it because basically it was too popular, too successful and making too much money. But that, Greenham gave me that confidence so that I could do the radio and things like that at festivals.

Yeah yeah, ah great . So what - so that was your personal impact, and what do you feel that the erm - there's a Green - you know, what would you say was the Greenham legacy? We're coming up to the 40th ann - our 40th anniversary this year. So do - how, on a broader scale, what do you see was the impact of Greenham?

Very much empowered women. Women saw that they could make a difference. It impacted Gorbachev.

Hmm, hm.

I mean, he actually, he actually cited Green - the Greenham women as one of the reasons that you know, for Glasnost. I think we had a huge impact. I think the grit, the peace movement grew hugely from, from Greenham. We were already large, if you remember that 1981 demo in London, that was huge then. And I think we influence, influence, influenced the next generations. Our children, my son was on the huge anti-Iraq march in London as an adult. I mean, that was a million people, I think, one of the biggest demos ever in the UK. So I think Greenham had a huge impact and made, and made people realise how insane nuclear weapons are. We didn't stop them unfortunately. But we got them after a while, I mean with Cruise Watch and that. We got them off those vehicles. They weren't going around the countryside threatening Russia you know, after Cruise Watch and that and that came from Greenham.

Hm, yeah, that time - and at that time there was a huge sort of explosion really of peace camps all over the country, you know, like, women's ones and mixed ones. Now I went up to Menwith a few times and Faslane a few times - it's a long way to Faslane. And I mean, that hasn't ever really stopped in Scotland, has it? The British imposing the nuclear thing on, submarines on Faslane. And I think it is, it's definitely nowadays actually still part of the argument for a lot of Scots of having independence.

Yeah. They've got this base that they don't want. I wonder what will happen if independence happens, because I think it's far more likely now we've left the EU that Scotland would become independent. I wonder where they'll put them then? I suppose Plymouth. I don't know. Is it deep enough Plymouth? I suppose it is, it's got submarines there.

Yeah. Well they might get decommissioned! (Laughs).

That would be brilliant, wouldn't it? I mean, what use are they anyway? We can't use them without permission from the Americans. They go on about sovereignty, that we've got our sovereignty back, we haven't! We've got bases all over our country still. We have to ask the Americans for permission for everything. Yeah, yeah. I do rather despair of the young women nowadays because I just think they don't remember what we did, and they don't remember why we did it. They don't seem to have the respect. You know, they seem to be pandering all the time.

I think, I think it's partly because, as per usual, you know, a lot of women's struggles and achievements have been erased, you know, we're not - in fact, we're not even being recorded. I, I, you probably, you probably read or at least know this magazine?

I know about it.

Alright. Oh, okay. Well, I subscribe to it. And erm - so I've just had the new, it only comes out a couple of times a year. I always used to buy it at The Green Gathering actually. And this issue, I got it this week in the in the post, so I'm just working my way through it. And there's erm, it's in the sort of news brief on the first few pages. It's called Twyford Rising, and it's partly a review and promotion of a book. It starts off, '28 years after the event...' of the Twyford bypass, you know, it's at Winchester. I mean, it's very much our neck of the woods and I went along to the Twyford thing for a few days out. But, '28 years after the event, we have a book recounting the story of the direct action campaign against the M3 motorway, cutting, a motorway cutting at Twyford down. This was the first...' listen to this, 'This was the first time environmental direct action on this scale had been taken up in the UK, and inspired many similar campaigns in the UK and abroad.'

I mean, it's ludicrous to say there was no environmental protests, because they - I mean, they could say that Greenham was a peace protest. But there was all the women that, that were doing things - anti-nuclear stuff for nuclear power stations, trying to stop them being built. There was people like Brig doing the Sizewell inquiry about Sizewell B. There was there was loads of environmental demos.

Yeah. And it was and Greenham was was so much about direct action. We...

Yeah.

... I think we - well we probably didn't - but we really modernised the concept of lock-ons.

Yes.

You know. And, and also, for me, it was an environmental protest, because it's actually about reclaiming the common. For me, it wasn't just about nuclear weapons, nuclear war, America finger on the button. It was about reclaiming the common, you know. And I think, again, like what documentation there is in the mainstream it, it, it reiterates that it was an anti-nuclear, anti-war thing. And for me, it wasn't just about that it was very much about reclaiming common land. And if that isn't an environmental issue, I don't know what is.

A nuclear fallout is pretty much an environmental issue isn't it! (Laughs).

Sure. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Have you got anything else you want to add? I'm doing too much talking. Now it's your turn.

No you're not, it's good. Trying to think...There's so many things when you start thinking. That's the trouble.

Yeah. It's nice to just hear little antidotes like the thing about your friend being accident prone, and then she sets fire to her bandage on her foot when she's warming her... and the hedgehog in the wellington!

(Both laugh).

And I remember at Burghfield we were looking for somewhere to camp. In the end, a farmer let us use a little area to camp in. But at one time, we were looking for somewhere to camp and we thought we'd found a spot, and these men turned up with rifles. And they were kind of - I don't know what it's called when they undo the rifle, put it back together again, point it and things and just being very quiet and very threatening. Yeah, I remember that. I remember we made a cup of tea. I remember another time at Boscombe Down which of course, they had the F11s up and when I was, had just finished working for Dorset Peace Council, erm and I went up to visit the peace camp that started at Boscombe, and we actually knew the MOD Plods fairly well because they, you know, they were there all the time. And a load, a bus load people that had been apparent - they were a load of people that were to do with Stonehenge festival, came along tore the fence down and threw stones at the police, and we were not at all happy about this. And then the riot police came. So I said, 'I think I'll put the kettle on.' So we put the ket - put the ket - there was all this mayhem. We put the kettle on, these blokes got back in their bus, and the riot police got back in in their bus and chased these blokes in their bus. And I think they left one person behind because I took a cup of tea over to the MOD policeman he was obviously - he was obviously a bit shaken up. And this, this bloke that had been left behind swore at me and said I was a traitor and that. And basically I told him to fuck off. You know, that he wasn't wanted there because we were non-violent and you don't throw stones at people just for their job. You respect everybody even if you don't agree with them.

Yeah. Yeah.

But yeah, it was interesting because we both kind of in in those worlds there's kind of an overlap between, between the travellers and festivals and, and peace movement. There has been right from the beginning.

So did you take your children to Greenham? Were they too little? Or too...

They visited a few times. But of course when I was there it was in the winter, it was far too cold really.

Yeah.

Erm I went back to them. They visited Burghfield as well. But I couldn't expect them to sleep in a plastic bag. Yeah, they did visit. I don't know, I don't know how good or bad it was for them. I think it was bad in some ways, because I think they really missed me. And yeah, that wasn't good for them. But they are - they seem to be very resilient. And actually, yeah, they are pretty anti-war and and that, as a result. I don't think, I think that, I don't think - I think I was too young really to have children. So I think I didn't think of them enough. I think I was desperate not to be a housewife. I think a lot of women

that came to Greenham were like that. I think a lot of Greenham women were incredibly bored with how, I mean, how we'd been brought up to be.

Hm.

And we had to escape it.

Hm. Yeah.

Yes, I don't, I don't - these roles that we were pushed into and kind of conditioned to. I think, I think that's another result of Greenham is that, and feminism is that we, you know, managed to, to a certain extent get out of those roles and become a lot stronger. So whatever's happening now, I don't know. What I don't like nowadays is the emphasis on looks. And women being sex object. And, you know, people having female singers on the telly, having to be half naked all the bloody time in order to be famous.

Yeah.

You know, this is what, this is part of the thing we were fighting against, is being constantly seen as sex objects, rather than as strong, intelligent human beings.

Hm. Yeah.

I mean of course we are sexual beings. But I don't know. The whole thing about appearance and makeup and all that kind of bollocks, I think that I'm very much, yeah, anti it.

I was having a chat the other day with someone and I was talking about Greenham. And I said, I said, we were deconstructing the fashion industry.

Yes!

(Laughs).

The fashion started - people started to copy us!

Yeah.

(Laughs).

We didn't have that terminology. But actually, that was one of the things we were doing. We were quite - you know, chopping up clothes and painting on them and stitching banners on them and everything was definitely we were, we were an antithesis to the, of the er fashion industry that I think very much overlaps what you, what you've just been talking about, the pressure on looks now.

A lot of it was to keep warm. I remember going to the charity shop in Newbury and getting you, you - I couldn't, I couldn't find ladies long johns. I found these men's long johns, but also this strange garment, which went like all in one and with like shorts and had a flap underneath, so that you could go for a pee. So I wore both. And a woolly dress, and trousers, and leg warmers, and two pairs of socks. Yeah, we had to - I mean, it was really, really cold that winter really, really cold. But we were I mean, we were lucky because at least we had tipis and caravans. When the eviction happened women were reduced to kind of basically, (sighs), tarps and benders - weren't they?

Yeah.

I mean what happened with you? Were you, were you one of the tarp and bender lot, or?

I, when when there were, there were sort of daily evictions I started going up one weekend a month. I was working in Exeter Women's Centre, er, so I could get one, one weekend a month off and go and stay at Blue Gate and that was my - well it was plastic sheeting. We just put a long piece on the, on the railings every night and all bundled, bundled in together. You know, it was, it was - I didn't know when that was, like '85 probably. But then I got a truck because I just thought I'm not - I can't do this, erm, I can't keep doing this. And also we didn't really have that many vehicles either people didn't - women didn't own cars very much.

No.

I mean, there were, you know, there were sort of more middle class women that had, had access to a car or something but mostly we were really short of transport weren't we.

So I wouldn't like my daughter to do what I did because I hitched backwards and forwards from Greenham on my own. I did have a couple of lucky escapes. But I really wouldn't want my daughter doing it. I did have a difficult situation with a lorry driver who was Irish, who stopped in a lay-by. But luckily, he noticed my wedding ring and for some weird reason - maybe he was a Catholic. I don't know what, you know, and I told him about my children and everything. And he desisted.

Yeah.

I, yeah, escaped, basically. That did put me off.

Yeah.

And luckily, in cars, they didn't in those days have erm central locking systems either in cars, which was helpful. (Laughs).

Yeah, you always knew you could open the door.

Yeah, you could get out at the traffic lights and that.

So you must have - did you have those conversations when you were hitching about, 'Oh, I'm going to Greenham Common...' You know, 'What do you think about the peace movement?' Did you have those conversations?

Occasionally. In fact, I did have conversations with army people. Because of course Salisbury was very much an army town.

Yeah.

I remember we camped outside the Guild Hall in the centre of Salisbury once, and we were sleeping on the steps. And all of a sudden, there was this vast influx of soldiers all drunk, who had apparently been to a football match, and they wanted to kiss us good night. Which wasn't terribly pleasant, but (laughs), we were just polite to them. And then the military police came - it was amazing. They just saw the military police and they were just like conditioned they were, do you know what I mean, they were instantly obedient. There was just one left asleep on a bench all night. It's very much to do with conditioning a lot with the army, I think. And I met an army officer when I was hitching and I talked to him about and he said that he was anti-nuclear, nuclear weapons. He said, 'I've been trained to go forward and take and occupy land. And you can't do that if it's radioactive.' So that was very interesting. So there were people in the military that were anti-nuclear weapons as well. And I remember we - I went to visit with my first husband went to visit Heyford. We stayed the night and in the middle of the night, we were sitting - I think it was in a dome or a bender and this - oh, that was it. This - somebody had chucked molotov cocktails - well paraffin things with a fuse at the camp. And we got up and went in the bender to be all together and this American came along very drunk and came in with us and burst into tears, and he told us how he had been at Woodstock and how was he now hanging bombs on aeroplanes?

Yeah.

And that and basically he passed out and went to sleep. Then the police came. So we sat, we all sat in front of him - people from the camp so that the police wouldn't see him and we told the police what had happened and that we suspected it was drunks to do with the base, that had chucked, and they were given the, you know, the thing with the wick in and everything. And they went away. It's weird we also felt like we had to protect him, even though he was probably involved with some of the violence, because he was clearly really confused about what he was doing.

Yeah.

And that was the only way you could get a job or an education for some people or health insurance for Americans.

Yeah.

I remember much earlier than that, in the '70s, we had a friend that was basically staying with us who was on the run from the army. He did get caught in the end and put in, put in army prison. But he was on the run because he'd been recruited in Newcastle and - very poor, working class bloke - and he found himself in Northern Ireland and realised that he'd have to, you know, that somebody could be waiting to kill him as he walked down the road with his gun and that he might have to kill them first. And he deserted. I think a lot of people that they recruited when they're very young and they don't really understand, they see things in films and that with all these heroes and that they don't really understand the reality of it till it hits them.

Hm.