

Mary and Anna Birch

Okay so um, Emily Strange.

(Mary) I'm Mary Birch.

(Anna) I'm Anna Birch.

Cool, er, do you want me to ask both of you?

(Anna) Yeah if that suits you, that's good.

(Mary) You do what you want.

Yeah, that's fine. How did you find yourself at the camp, and how long were you there for?

(Mary) How did I what?

Find yourself at the camp - like get there, and how long were you there for?

(Mary) Well I'd been supporting peace movements for god knows how many times. I mean we'd always gone marching and all that stuff, and there was quite a group of, mostly, at that time, the people I knew were Quakers and we had a group of people who knew, met every month or so and discussed the terrible situation, and then we got to know about Greenham, so some of us decided we'd go to see if there was anything we could do to help. So that's what we did.

(Anna) And I went to a Quaker school, and because my mum and dad - they were anti-nuclear basically, so I was brought up with that, and thought it was very important from a young age.

Um, could you explain why you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations.

(Mary) I can't hear. Explain what?

Why you think it's important for Greenham to be remembered by subsequent generations.

(Mary) I can't understand.

(Anna) So why is it important to remember Greenham, for young people?

(Mary) Well I don't know that it's particularly important. We were just a group of women, and by the time we went to the camp, the camp was established by a few people at Orange Gate, and gradually the knowledge about the camp was spreading, partly because there was quite a lot of publicity because of-course nobody wanted it there except the women who were there, and those of us who were helping. And people helped from all over the south of England.

Yeah.

(Mary) And gradually it got, well it was a sort of long term argument between the government and the women, and we didn't, for one thing most of them were anti-war and had been on peace marches and so on, and other people were just furious because the government had come in and said that, had allowed the Americans to come and take a piece of land, which after all was common land. And common land meant it was land that didn't belong to anybody, and should be used by people of the area. It was often used by people years ago, er for sheep or cattle or drying washing, or meetings of people. Common land meant that it didn't belong to anybody except those around, so there was certainly there was no truth in the fact that the government should allow Americans to come and make an airport there. They did it in a lot of places - I think there were sixteen airports, American airports in the south. I only visited one other aside Greenham, but Greenham was the biggest one. So that's how it happened, and er gradually people got to know more and more about it, and the women started coming and staying the night, and that's what happened.

(Anna) And I think it's important for young people to know about it, because for example with the climate change actions at the moment people think that they're starting something new, but actually it's very similar because it's peaceful action, and I think that's what we were most supportive of the Greenham women about, because they were taking non-violent action, that was what it was. Do you want to move in a bit Ma, or are you comfortable?

(Mary) No.

(Anna) Alright, we won't move you.

So they didn't try to achieve things by being forceful or..

(Anna) That's right.

Or um, physical.

(Anna) Exactly.

Um, were you at any gate in-particularly?

(Anna) Look directly at Ma and speak really loudly to her.

Which gate did you join?

(Mary) What, what?

Which gate did you join? Were you at a gate there?

(Mary) I'm so sorry.

That's okay.

(Mary) What state?

(Anna) Gate.

(Mary) Was I in?

Yeah, which gates were you in?

(Mary) What state was Greenham in?

What parts? I'm trying to think of another word.

(Anna) Which gate did you join?

(Mary) Gate?

(Anna) Yeah.

(Mary) Oh god. I don't know, you know what date it was.

(Anna) No, gate ma, like the Orange Gate. Which gate?

(Mary) Well I went to the Orange Gate.

(Anna) Yeah, tell Emily.

(Mary) You perhaps got this from someone else that very soon there were enough women, and divided up all around the whole area, and Orange Gate was the main gate, and I used to go there, partly because I knew people who were there, and partly because we had a camper van, and we used to take a lot of stuff and bring a lot of stuff and that, we used to leave it there, and there it was distributed. And the gates in a way, some of them were very, almost private - I mean the Green Gate the Yellow and the Green Gate were very anti-men, and they wouldn't even let my husband drive the van to deliver wood took them. Because no men were allowed anywhere near.

Weren't they? Wow. Can you tell me a bit more about the day to day running of the camp, how you brought in toiletries...

(Mary) Well I think there wasn't any day to day running, because it just depended on what happened in the day. Sometimes nothing particular happened, and at the beginning they had tents. Well the the tents got ripped up by the - American soldiers came out, the police came, god knows who came, and simply ripped up the tents, pulled up the tents, so when it was like that, then they had to gather themselves together and make some sort of covering to sleep under. And after a few weeks they ran, got into shape, and I don't know who taught them how to do this, but they started making benders, which was when you've got early, soft wood, bent it over, joined it at the top, so it was like an igloo made of branches, which was a little bit of cover for them, but not very much. I think most of the day was spent with women, they had to go and get the water that they wanted, and some of them would go into, what's the name of that...

(Anna) Newbury.

(Mary) And the Quaker women in Newbury helped them quite a lot, and they would go into Newbury and use the washing machines and things like that. I suppose the whole day was spent gathering up the strength and eating what food they'd been given, cooking on a fire, and hoping that nobody was going to come in - leave them alone. But most days they were disturbed by either the soldiers from the camp, or the police, and of-course there were other people who thought we were dreadful. There was no such things as a women's movement in those days. If you were a feminist, you hadn't got a group to visit or anything, because a woman was just a - someone who did the work, got married, looked after the kids, probably did a job as well. And most of us were just like that. But some of us had husbands who were very supportive, like mine was. But others didn't, and quite a lot of women eventually left their husbands, and come to that, their children, and came to live at Greenham. And

at the beginning Greenham was such a mess, and it was just ghastly. It was muddy and they didn't have a loo - they had to go in the bushes, and they never knew who was going to come, and gradually they divided up into different patches all round the centre, all round the camp. And each of them were slightly different, because they brought in women who they knew of course. So I don't know what all these people did over on the other side of the camp. I only know there was the entrance and the feminist camp, and on the other side here, I think it was Purple Camp, which was a lot of international people. That's where Toni was...

(Anna) Oh was it?

(Mary) American people came. But as for what you asked me - what do they do in the day - they just managed to survive.

(Anna) And what did you take in the van for them?

(Mary) Well we used to take a lot of wood, because they were - and stuff for fires, and we also used to bring back from there blankets and sleeping bags, and I'd got a very good washing machine that washed and dried things quite quickly, so we were just going backwards and forwards. I guess we went every week and took them back clean blankets. I collected food - people would give me food to take, and we just took everything that we could that would be helpful.

(Anna) Do you want to tell Emily about the daisy chain?

(Mary) Well that was later on.

(Anna) Have some water, it's hard isn't it?

(Mary) If they listen to this people'll think this old girl was not there years ago - well it was - how many years ago?

(Anna) Thirty. So you were 63, you were the same age as me, basically, when you went. I'm 62, by the way! (Laughs)

(Mary). Well the daisy chain came a bit later, because that was when we then knew what was in this camp, and that was...

(Anna) Cruise

(Mary) And what?

(Anna) Cruise, cruise missiles.

(Mary) There were cruise missiles. I mean actually nobody actually even knew what was in the camp, really, but this is what was reckoned to be in there. That the Americans had set all these camps all over the place which would have airmen, trained airmen and planes and missiles, and when they were ordered they would fly out, god knows where they were going to drop all these missiles - I don't know - but on other military bases they knew, to France, I suppose. But obviously an awful lot of the women around the base - I would think the majority of them had children, and that's why they were so livid about what was happening, and determined that they could do what they could to stop all this. So they had an arrangement whereby anybody found out that the army was, that the American army was going in or coming out of the camp..

(Anna) Of the base

(Mary) Of the base, the base was - I don't know, you probably remember how big it was....

(Anna) Massive

(Mary)...by it was pretty big and there were lots of tents, but also a lot of sheds and things with offices in and places where the men ate or whatever they did. Anyway when anybody heard that they were going to move, and what we knew was some of the times they were going to practice bringing the aircraft out of the base - they weren't loaded, as far as we knew, at that time, but they were pulled out of the base with lorries and driven round just for a practice I suppose. And then also the lorries would come out full of men and just generally using their influence over the area and we really didn't care for that. And somebody, and I don't know who it was - somebody who lived in Newbury started the idea that I'd - anybody knew that any movement was happening in the base, which meant that people were coming out of the base into the country, particularly if it was lorries or planes, we would phone up all the people who could be gathered, who would drive immediately and block up all the roads around the base, and so that's what we did, and in Bristol it happened that I got, I was fairly central to most people where I lived in Bristol, and also I'd got a lot of room for people to park, and a lot of room inside to store things, so people used to bring stuff to my house, and then we'd have meetings. So then we started thinking we must help them with the cars in the road, and I don't know who it was started this, it wasn't me, but it was at my house. A daisy chain, which meant there was one person in the centre, and that happened to be me - because it was my house - I suppose, and round with the numbers of the clock were different people with their phone numbers, so somebody at the base would phone me and say 'Alert', so I had to

phone 12 o'clock, and 12 o'clock phoned 1 o'clock, all the way round, so all these women were told to be alert and get ready to drive to Greenham, and that's what they did. And sometimes, more often than not, we didn't do anything, because we'd then hear that nothing was happening...

(Anna) The missile wasn't coming out. The missile wasn't coming out.

(Mary) Yes, that nobody was coming out of any importance, or they'd heard about it, because everybody had got spies all over the place - there were people in the camp who told us stuff, and people in our camps who told the soldiers stuff, and then we'd hear we're not going to block up the roads today. But from time to time we really thought that was the best thing to do, and of-course when we started blocking up all the roads they simply went back into camp because they couldn't move.

Wow.

(Anna) So they created roadblocks, and also this is before mobile phones so the woman in Newbury picked up her phone at home and rang you, and then you picked up your phone at home and rang round. There were no mobile phones.

(Mary) No such thing as mobile phones or anything like that. Anyone who was concerned was quite convinced that all our phones were tapped, and I don't know - who knows whether they were or not, I mean people would hear noise and reckon that someone was tapped. And I mean I'm more cynical about that now, but at the time when you're involved with all this emotionally and you hear strange noises, and you know that they're after you, then you sort of hear things that perhaps were nothing at all, but we all thought that we were tapped. And certainly several of the women had been in prison because they either - two women once got over the fence and into the camp - that only happened once. And they were taken to court and imprisoned, but quite a lot of women were imprisoned just for a day or two days or something because they probably managed to hit one of the airforce chaps, or hit one of the politicians or something like that. And er, they knew who we were, I mean one time when I went, I had finished taking the stuff in, and I'd got all of the blankets and sleeping bags in this camper van, and I stopped the van on a road near to Greenham, really preparing myself to drive back, and a policeman came along on a bicycle and stopped and got off, and came and said 'What are you doing here?' So I said 'Well actually I'm carrying a few blankets to my house to wash. Why are you asking?' So he said 'Well I think that you're to do with Greenham common,' and I said 'Well maybe you're right, so what?' And he said 'I shall book you, you're not supposed to park here', I said 'Well that of-course is rubbish, this is an ordinary country road and I'll show you on the map, which I did', so he said 'Well I shall make a report, and you'll probably have to appear in court', I said 'Well look, why don't we

both go down to the police station now and sort it out, I can't be bothering with coming to court'. So he wasn't very pleased with that, but we went back down to the police and they've got a block of, I don't know, sheds and things, and an office there, and a big counter. So I was told to go in and stand by the counter, and there were quite a few people behind, one of whom was asking me questions, whose car was it, and what was my name, what was my name before I was married, where was I married, did I have a job? Masses of things - just ridiculous. And I said 'Well I don't know what all of this has got to do with it - if you want to know, I don't mind' so this was all put onto a computer, which was very early then, you didn't have things all over the place. And um, they said you realise that what you tell us must be the truth, because this will go straight to Number 10! (Laughs). I said 'Oh really? What on earth what do you think is going to happen then?' They said 'Well you might laugh now, it's not a laughing matter, you'll be called to court,' I said 'For what, exactly?' They said 'well you were parked where you shouldn't have parked, and you haven't been serious about asking these questions.' I said 'I'm perfectly serious, so then one of them said 'Actually, we think you've come from Cuba!' I said 'Well not actually, do I look as though I've come from Cuba?' At that time I was very, very blonde, naturally, straight blonde hair and very thin, so I mean nobody could be less Cuban really. So they said 'Oh well we have information that these people are coming, and we're going to meet..' - I've just remembered this - 'We're going to meet them off the train, and then they won't be able to get to the camp', so I said 'Well let's concentrate on this - you've got enough information from me, and I'm going home now'. So they've got my address and phone number - absolute rubbish. So I went home and I never heard any more about it, except that they had told me that all the names that they had taken would go directly to Number 10, and Margaret Thatcher would make sure that all these people were reported to all sorts of work where they were, and just awful. And it did in-fact affect certain things that we knew about, so that's what it was like.

(Anna) And you felt that they'd taken your details, and perhaps um, had, um affected your, um phone and um, perhaps Pa...

(Mary) Well we didn't know what it was...

(Anna) Because Pa was director of the Polly at the time...

(Mary) It was just ridiculous we're just friends and we liked meeting, and another minute you think my god, we're doing something vital, because if these planes get out with nuclear stuff - so it was a very emotional time, and it was very emotional for Greenham women who were living there, and some of them were there for months, and some of them just went for one night every so often. I had an American friend who always went every couple of weeks just for a night, and people, a lot of people did. I never attempted to go for a night, because I'd got young children at home, and

I didn't, really to tell you the truth I didn't fancy going and sleeping in a bender if I didn't have to. And a lot of them enjoyed this. A lot of them became lesbian which was not surprising in that awful situation which they were, and actually unfortunately a lot of marriages broke up - very well. It wasn't quickly, because when the marriages broke up they were really a lot of women who were unhappy in some way, and then suddenly they've got this freedom of doing what they wanted to do, and there was a great deal of friendship between the women. So we went on doing this for I don't know how long.

(Anna) A good few years.

(Mary) How many?

(Anna) Two or three years, I should think.

(Mary) Oh yes it was certainly several years. I'm sure somebody's got a proper diary - I expect Jean probably..

(Anna) Yes that's right.

(Mary) Have dates and stuff.

(Anna) Exactly.

(Mary) And um, one of the really hard things was Heslatine, who was then a member of parliament - he wasn't a lord at that point, he was a very important conservative member of parliament, and he supported Margaret Thatcher, and this ghastly lot of people tried to get rid of the Greenham women, and often they would have everything torn down one day, by the time they'd built their benders up and collected more, all their food would be chucked out, all their clothes chucked out, it was just horrific. And by the time they'd got things together, in come the troops and did it again. And it was - I don't know how they managed to really live there, I really don't, and they were just - and when they were ill they had to go into - there wasn't a doctor at the camp, they had to go into Newbury and see a doctor. It always really awful. And although I and my group in Bristol kept on doing this for quite a while, it was nothing compared to the women who actually lived there. What, don't know how the ring around the camp started.

(Anna) Embrace? Embrace the camp?

(Mary) Yes, I don't remember whose idea that was - it wasn't from our gate. But this was suggested - we'd have Embrace the Camp, and by that time we had enough women - I don't remember what size the camp was.

(Anna) No, we can find that out.

(Mary) It was miles and miles round with this awful wire around. So we had Embrace the Camp and that meant that all the women who possibly could come, we'd all hold hands and go right around the whole camp...

(Anna) It was amazing.

(Mary) And that's what we did do. And there were twenty six bus loads from Bristol went. Yes, it was quite extraordinary. We were all excited about it, um, and we took some children. Some people brought their children, and a lot of people brought photographs of their children, or babies' garments and we hung all these things on the fence, so if anybody came along they could see it there - so babies, and babies clothes and children's school clothes. All sorts of childish toys and things, because it was essentially a save our children - we were doing what we can, but save our children. And it went on very well, and then in the evening we all came back to the Orange Gate which was the biggest gate and I don't know how many hundreds of people there were, because you came from London, didn't you?

(Anna) That's right.

(Mary) Did Jessie come with you?

(Anna) As a baby. And she was a tiny, not yet 1 baby.

(Mary) I remember that, and then we all gathered around the Orange Gate and we all had candles and sang We Shall Survive

(Anna) That's right!

(Mary) I don't sing that any more! (Laughs). I've survived long enough, but that's what we did, and that did get into the papers, because a lot of stuff never got into the spaces at all strangely enough - not many people knew about it, though it was interesting because I went around the world twice in the next three or four years with my husband, who was asked to go around the world to visit universities and schools and all sorts of things, because he'd been a professor all his adult life, and he gave up the university and came to take over the polytechnic, because there was a great deal of discussion - so many people were going and taking a degree, and then they didn't

know what to do because there weren't enough jobs. It wasn't bad at that time, but it was bad enough for people to start thinking, and also my husband who was very practical about these things was saying out loud 'I don't think all these people should be taking a degree, they should be taking trade training, so that we've got hundreds of people ready to work in the factory or building or whatever, and not only will it be good for the country, but also good for the people. We don't want all these people, leaving school.' Well now it's got worse because I think they have to stay until 18, don't they?

(Anna) Really?

Yeah yeah.

(Mary) Dreadful.

Yeah

(Mary) And you know, they're - so many of them, the last two or three years at school is a complete waste of time for them, and then people wonder why there's such a trouble with the youth as well, you don't need to wonder - just have a look. So my husband was very outspoken about this - he was on a lot of national committees and all this stuff, and so he was asked to go round, I think first of all we visited universities and colleges to see what they were doing. And how they did training - I remember we went to somewhere in America - I can't remember, a great big city, where dental training and medical training was very important, and they had only just decided that in their first year all these students must take time in a dental surgery or doctor's surgery looking, seeing what happened when the patients went in there, because you've got so many people who might be brilliant at cutting up people, but had never actually spoken to a patient. I know it sounds ridiculous now, but that's what happened a lot of the time.

(Anna) So you wore your badge - you wore your badge - the international Greenham badge.

(Mary) On my clothes...

(Anna) Travelling the world.

(Mary) And fortunately I don't know - it was because I'd always been in education, or perhaps anyone could have done it, but my husband being on an official tour got first class everywhere, so we were allowed to use the first class money for me to go, because we didn't go first class obviously. So it was very lucky for me, but it was

interesting because almost everywhere I went, and I always asked to go into the medical department and the art department, and almost everywhere I went people commented on the fact that I'd got a Greenham badge. And what was Greenham doing? - They were very interested. I mean you didn't expect people in Australia or South America to know anything about it.

(Anna) Japan.

(Mary) Which was very nice to know that, it was very interesting.

(Anna) Do you want to do the last questions now?

Yes.

(Mary) Sorry!

(Anna) No, no, no, that was great.

That was really interesting.

(Anna) That was great Ma, well done.

Really, really well done, yeah. Right let me have a look. How would you sum up your experience in a few words, do you think?

(Mary) I'm not one for a few words!

No that's fine! (Laughs)

(Mary) I'm either silent or talk a lot.

No in-between!

(Mary) Well I think the experience was - it was um, very moving, and it was, it was very interesting because it meant that a group of women were doing this. We didn't have anything to do with men at all. I mean we weren't like the Green and Yellow Gates who wouldn't let the men anywhere near. But we didn't, we didn't speak about the men who were helping, and a lot of them did help in a lot of ways in the background, but none of them ever stayed at the camp - they weren't allowed to stay there, or go into the fires or anything like that. And it was a first thing that we knew - the thing at that time nobody talked about the Suffragettes.

(Anna) No, that's right.

(Mary) Only recently there's new all this...

(Anna) That's right.

Really?

(Mary) Oh it's ludicrous, when you think that I and all the people of my age went right through school and never once knew nothing about Suffragettes, and unless you had a mother who was interested in this, which my mother was not, then you never knew anything about women having any power whatsoever. I think by the time that this started I was a bit more sensible than I had been, when I was married - but it never ever for one second occurred to me that this was a really stupid set up. My husband was very, very busy the whole time, because he was doing, always doing a new degree or report or something or other - anyway he did work all the time, but I actually worked all the time as well. The whole time I was married, I always did a job, and quite often it was a full time job, which was teaching, and I liked to teach in downtown areas and I mostly, if I could, taught the older children. So I was teaching full time, I'd got two children with two years between them, um, and I did everything! (Laughs). And I made sure that before my husband came home in the evening, the children would probably be more or less ready for bed, and if they weren't they would go and have a bath with him, perhaps. That would be quite fun for a little while, but normally it was me who looked after the children entirely. I did all the cooking, I did all the washing, I did all the cleaning. For a little while I did have a helper who used to cook a cake in the afternoon (laughs), Grey-Grey she used to cook me a cake every time she came. She came twice a week in the afternoons, and my husband was often home, and he was sitting in his study doing god knows what!

(Anna) (Laughs).

(Mary) But my helper would be, well Grey-Grey used to take you out for walks all the time, and then I had another much older lady who looked after them, and she had actually been trained as a house worker at some time, so she used to madly clean things, and I could never find anything - Miss Bizan her name was. And she disapproved of me very much, because she thought anybody going to work 'Good lord, what on earth are you doing leaving the children for me to look after?' Well she liked looking after them, she was very, very kind, and even after we left, to go to America, and after we didn't use her any more, she used to send savings stamps for you and Joe every Christmas.

(Anna) Sweet. So, words for Greenham - moving, you said it was moving, and that it makes you think of your role as a woman and as a mother.

(Mary) Yes, well, it didn't make me think - well I certainly didn't think I'm not going to do all this stuff at home, it just never occurred to me. We were just glad, I mean all the women were obviously against war...

(Anna) Yes.

(Mary) And a lot of us still had fathers who had been in the Second World War, and grandparents who had been in the First World War, um, both my father and my husband's father had been in the First World War, but they would never talk about it at all. They'd both been wounded very, very badly, and my father in law was sent, he was taken home to get the wounds sorted out in his legs, when they promptly sent him to war again, when his chest was ruined and that's what he died of eventually. But we all know that war was terrible, and we weren't really grumbling about a position of women, we were really anti-war.

Lovely. I don't know.

(Anna) Last question?

Just trying to think....um, what, don't know if I've done this before. What moment would sum up Greenham for you? What sort of...

(Mary) Well the best moment was after we'd gathered all around the whole camp, we were all outside, I mean I don't know - hundreds and hundreds of women...

(Anna) Yeah, Embrace the Base.

Yeah

(Mary) Outside with a candle, and singing, that was good, actually that was the moment I think everybody would remember.

(Anna) It was terrific wasn't it, it was so uplifting, and we felt like we'd done something. It was a real achievement, and a real sense of solidarity.

(Mary) I think one of the problems in a way was nobody was used to taking charge of things.

(Anna) No.

(Mary) So I'm sure if it happened now, for one thing which wouldn't be very good, there would probably be some women who got to be in charge, but in other way, I'm sure a lot of, a lot of things could have been better if there had been some women in charge. I mean nobody wanted to be and they all did their own...

(Anna) That was a big part of it, wasn't it - not having a hierarchy.

Yeah.

(Anna) No bosses

(Mary) But they did, people were not interested, they never thought about feminism in those days.

(Anna) Well I don't know about that, because the '70s was very big, the '60s was very big, and now we're in the '80s, so there was a big feminist movement that then became um, a big raft for the peace movement. I mean the peace movement didn't like the Greenham women at first because they were separatists.

(Mary) Well you say there was a feminist movement, there probably was - I'm sure there was if you say so, and you belonged to it, but most people didn't know anything about it.

(Anna) No, fair enough.

(Mary) And as far as I was concerned, Margaret and there were two of them...

(Anna) Anne?

(Mary) No, Anne wasn't a feminist - good lord.

(Anna) Oh okay, Margaret then

(Mary) Margaret and there were two other women... four wives...

(Anna) In the '50s

(Mary) In the whole of the university staff who were in any way whatsoever working. I mean women were at home once you got married...

(Anna) In the '50s.

(Mary) You stayed at home. And I remember the four of us, there was somebody else, because there were five of us, went to several meetings and we just used to go and sit in the front row with stony faces!

(Anna) (Laughs)

(Mary) Not that it ever did the slightest good, but it made us feel as though we were, I mean at that time - I mean I know now in lots of situations, but at that time in everything women got less money than men. Even if you've got a PhD and you're working in a department where there was somebody who's just got a BA, he would get *less than you - women just got more. *I think this may be a slip of the tongue, and Mary means men got more than women.

(Anna) It hasn't changed. I can put that on record!

Absolutely, it's about 30% now isn't it.

(Mary) I was teaching all the time from the time I was married - that was in 1950, until what, I don't know

(Anna) Well until the early '80s - you retrained as a craft design and technology teacher, and then you were in your late 50s and they said to you at Bristol council, 'Isn't your husband the head of the polytechnic, shouldn't you be looking after him?' You we're 55 and your family's left home, and you've just retrained.

(Mary) Oh you're quite serious, chairman! Because I did a retraining course to teach, because when I'd been teaching, it was only the rather sort of dull children - non-academic they would say, and they were sent to do woodwork and needlework, woodwork and metalwork, and that was only the boys, the girls didn't do that, and then suddenly there was an extraordinary suggestion that girls might do woodwork and metalwork but of-course they hadn't got anybody to teach them. Because they'd only got men and most of those men weren't trained as teachers, they were craftspeople - if they were a carpenter, they'd come in and teach them, that sort of thing. So they had a training year for anybody who was interested in teaching those subjects, which I was, because it had always annoyed me that this was - they were discarded into wood and metal, so I did this year's training, and at the end of it I applied for a job in Bristol, there were all these men. I mean women didn't come into any of this.

Wow.

(Mary) And the chairman - I knew him, because I'd met him at lots of things at the polytechnic, and I mean that was another thing that never occurred to me that I'd say 'No, I don't want to go to that.' - I'd spend half the time going to things with my husband, and um, and this chap was chairman and he just suddenly said to me 'Hello, I'm sure you're Mary - wife of the polytechnic Director?' I said 'Yes'. So he turned to the others and said 'Well it's so nice of you to come, but it's very unlikely that we could consider you, because I'm quite sure that your time is completely occupied with looking after your husband.'

Wow!

(Anna) This is in the '80s, in the '80s!

(Mary) Somebody said that to me now - they wouldn't dare to say it now!

It would be in the papers now.

(Anna) That's right.

(Mary) So I just said thank you and walked out, and that was that. Extraordinary.

(Anna) You were really upset you were really, really disappointed and taken aback after making all that effort.

(Mary) Extraordinary.

Like you're his career or something!

(Anna) Yes! That's right, like you're his career, no that's right. Well done Emily, that's a good line.

(Mary) A completely different life for women, and I think the Greenham, the fact that it was all women was a very pleasant feeling for women to do this. I mean there were a lot more women that would have done it if their husbands had let them.

Probably yeah.

(Mary) Well I'm sure I knew who women who would have helped, but 'So and so, he doesn't want me to do it'. You didn't feel badly about it, it is just how it was.

Yeah.

(Mary) Which is extraordinary really.

Crazy.