

Celia Chasey

And so could you tell me a little bit about the first time you visited the camp? What motivated you to go?

Well, I was involved in the Kidlington Peace Group to start with. And following from that my husband and I, at the time, Steve Chasey, set up the Hayford Peace Camp with a woman called Ru - amazing woman. And she owned the land around the Hayford Peace Camp. And there was a sort of a small pathway along the side there. So we set, we set the peace camp up, a few people turned up. I can't remember their names, but Helen was one of them, who was I saw this in one of these books here I've got. And a woman called Margaret who, you know, is no longer with us because she was well in her 70s then. And so we got involved in Hayford, Hayford, setting up Hayford Peace Camp. And our house was sort of like the base for people to come and visit. And people from the camp used to come and have all their showers and things at our house. Hang around sometimes like 'When are you going? I've got a family here to sort out!' (Laughs). So we made friends with with a lot of people. And at Christmas, we had a big open house and everybody came. And our phone rang continually to do with things to do with the peace movement. It was quite invasive, actually, in a family, it was quite difficult. My daughter remembers - I've got a daughter and a son, and they used to come with us to the events. And there were lots of events that went on around Hayford Peace Camp. So I was very involved with that, but I was also a member of Kidlington Peace Group and a lot of people in our village - because that was the nearest peace group there was, belonged to that. And that was sort of like linked with Oxford Peace Group. I made all the banners for for all the events. I haven't actually got the banners because when my marriage broke up they were left in the loft, and I wasn't able to go back and get them - it was a bit traumatic, the whole thing. But I have got some photographs of - I found the pictures of the banners, some of them that I made. So I made the Kidlington Peace Group V's group one, I made Reclaim the Land, which was the Hayford - because they were going to extend the base

one time. So it was Ru's land, they wanted to buy it off of her and extend the base - Reclaim the Land. I made one for, er, one for cruise missiles, like a black and white one. And I made one for Women - I haven't got a picture of that one - Women for Peace. So because I love embroidery and sewing and things, so I was always the one that was chosen to do that. So part of Kidlington Peace Group, we went to lots of events up in London, and it was tied in with the Miners' Strike and things like that was visits to Greenham. So we went to visit the women, I can't remember the gate - such a long time ago this all is - and we went to visit the women, and I was really inspired by them, you know, and the woman who lived at Hayford Peace Camp, because they had, you know, it was tough, it was cold. And, you know, some were older women and some were younger women, and there was a camp where men - one of the base gates that men were allowed to go to. So it wasn't like they were all dead against men not being there. I didn't actually stay there, but I went, I did the Cruise Watch several - every I think once a month, we used to go, and another woman called Kath Hannah, who's died now, who was very involved in the peace movement, her and her husband, they lived in Steeple Aston village. They had their toilet papered out with The Morning Star - they were the communist party! (Laughs). And they were just crazy. They were crazy people, actually, but they were lovely, you know, and very, very sort of serious about what they did, you know, we used to go to the Levellers day with them also, which was...

What's that?

It's quite a political event - you know the Levellers who were to do with Oliver Cromwell, and it's held at Burford, and whether it's still held at Burford or not, I don't know. But the Levellers, their graves are in Burford churchyard. You could research it.

I will!

But everybody used to go to Levellers day, and all the peace groups went as well. And they used to have a lot of sort of meetings - I've got some pictures of Tony Benn and my dad and things, and they used to

be at the Levellers march. So everything was sort of interlinked, really, you know. But when we did the Cruise Watch, we used to have to go and sit all night on one of the roundabouts, in a car. So I used to drive and she used to come with me, and we used to sit there with our sandwiches, and we had to wait and see - because they were taking the waste products from the base to to the direction of Wales- one of the camps that way. So if we saw these huge sort of, great big sort of container things going by, I think we only saw it once we had to - we were given these phones, and we had to phone the gate, you know, certain gates - someone would pick the phone up and, and sort of they just noted it all down, you know and registered it to sort of track it - but it was always done at night. So used to sit there and I remember it's freezing cold, freezing cold and the police kept going by and stopping and looking at us, and we'd chat to them, you know 'What are you doing here sitting here on a roundabout?' We said - we just told them what we were doing, so that was fine. And they were very friendly and nice, you know. We were parked off the, off the road. And this is nothing to do with the peace movement, because there's no toilet there - I went to go to the toilet and there was this - I didn't realise, it was pitch black, all these stinging nettles. And I sat on all these stinging nettles! (Laughs). Yeah, so we used to have some fun but it was very, it was very cold. So we did that once a month. We used go down, we took it in tuns from Kidlington Peace Group - Oxford would have gone as well and sat at a different road, you know - this was the road going to the M4, from Greenham and Newbury. And so and then we also visited - I think we went in our cars to the Embrace the Base, and my children came too. And that was incredibly powerful. It was a freezing cold day, it was very muddy, I remember. And the women had hung, and we hung - we took daffodils, and we put daffodils and we wove hearts and things, and the words 'Peace' and all sorts of things into the wire. Some people took wire cutters, I cut the wire at Hayford - I used to have a piece of it, I can't find it. I had a piece of the wire, you know, and my boss that he - Chris Jones he was he was, he ran Banbury Peace Group, and he had a piece on his mantle piece - a piece of wire from Greenham - yes, but he's moved. He's died as well. And his wife has moved down to Devon. So I don't know what's happened to all these things. But that was quite a

sort of thing - to get a bit of wire. But I was never arrested. I didn't get arrested. But the Embrace the Base was, was um, I just remember we sort of all held hands, there were children, women and the whole of the base was surrounded. I can't remember how many people - you probably know how many people were there?

Thousands and thousands.

Thousands and thousands of women of all different ages, and children. And they did this sort of ululating sound in the throats, and we all did that, you know, and it sort of travelled around. It was, it was, it was amazing, actually - it was amazing to be part of something like that. People came from all over the country from Wales and Scotland and everywhere, you know, to that Embrace the Base. It was very, very powerful, yeah. So that's what I, that's what I remember about visiting Greenham. I didn't I thought, you know, it's funny now we take pictures all the time, but it didn't take lots of photographs, because I didn't have mobile phones. And I mean, when we, when we spoke to the women, it was like on walkie talkie things, you know? So, so it wasn't, so I didn't - people, people didn't take pictures all the time then. I mean, my father took photographs because he was a photographer, but - so I took a few when we went on marches. I've got one or two there that we did, you know, we did quite a lot of quite long marches. And I worked at the Cheshire Home and I got a man called Peter Reynolds there - got him involved in coming. He used to come on the marches as well with us, he had cerebral palsy. So I used to push him, pushed him from Hayford to Oxford two or three... several. Yeah. Um, so what else do I remember about Greenham?

Do you remember what the atmosphere was like when you were there? The feeling of it?

The feeling of it was, um, the women were very, very - they were very strong women, it appeared to me. I mean, I didn't lie down in front of lorries or anything like that. I don't know whether it's because I wasn't brave enough - I had my family you know, so I was looking - I had my

children with me, so I was looking after my children. So everybody sort of did what they could do. But the atmosphere was - it was quite electric, actually - there were so many people there. And we walked - we did quite a long walk around the base to look at the things on the, on the fence. I mean, some of them hung tampons and things like that on, so there - some people were quite extreme, and other people were just there because, because they believed very strongly in what they were fighting for, for the future generation. And I still do you know, still, I think if it resurged again, I probably would get involved. Because I find that as I've got - since I've left work, when I was at work, I was in involved, you know, my energy was so much in work, but since I've left work I've got - become more sort of political. And I've always, always had that really strong feeling of um, um, fighting for what is right. And that um, you know, morally what is right. And I still do that you know, in my personal life there's a lot of things been going on that have been quite difficult, and, and so that sort of stays, stays with you - it was, obviously was there before I was involved in in the peace movement. But the, I was quite in awe of the women, I suppose really, you know, that lived there - because they lived there for quite a few years. And they were um, they were quite tough a lot of them. Yeah. So, no, it was wonderful - people singing, lots of songs that people sang. We Shall Overcome, and there were lots and lots of songs that people - that we knew then, that we sang. Yeah. It was good.

It's also about the pragmatics of things like going to the toilet, and that's kind of how women managed washing - I imagine not that often, but washing and...

Yeah, they had their laundry hung on the hedges, you know, sort of gypsy, gypsy sort of style - and they dug holes in the ground and things. I mean we, I mean, I sat all night round at the Hayford base too, sat up all night with my daughter, and some friends and you know, like many, many other people. And we took flasks of coffee and we, you know, just went in the bushes, that didn't faze me any of that. Yeah, I think it all look quite squalid, where they were living you know, they tried to make it

nice - bunting, not bunting, but sort of things hanging up - banners and things you know, but it must have been pretty tough for them, but...

Did you get a sense what day to day life was - obviously had these big events like Embrace the Base, but did you get a sense of what they were doing when they weren't - when there wasn't something big happening like that?

Yes, I think - will continually like when things were being brought, in they were lying in front of the lorries. And I think they were quite friendly with most of the police, and there were - I we were with the people at Hayford too. So yes, I mean, I was - that's about the extent of my visits to Greenham, really, yes.

And what were the - also with Hayford, and Greenham - what were the relationships like with the locals?

Hayford was quite difficult, because Hayford was right next to the village. It's a housing estate now, but the village was there, and they had to get their water from the village because they didn't have any water. So I don't know where they got the water in Greenham, because it's not right next to a village, but they must have taken cars to get it from somewhere - fill up from somewhere. So there was always somebody - like there was somebody in the village, and there was Ru, who would allow people to come and fill up the water containers. But there was a water tap in at Hayford near the horse trough. And some of the villagers were quite, they didn't want them there at all. No, no, they were - they didn't understand why they were there. They were messy, they were dirty. But, but there was some other villagers who were quite, quite sort of supportive, and brought things you know, like Christmas cakes and things like that, you know. I used to take, I always took a Christmas tree, and took things up. We went up every weekend and took things for them. But, but we were seen, I suppose, other than the people that I was involved with in the village that that were involved in the peace camp, I didn't like advertise it all the time. Because there were other things in my life. You know, my children were at school in

the village, and in Steeple Aston village which is next up at Hayford, yeah. And Ru was always seen as being very eccentric. And so she, she, you know, she stood out anyway - she rode a horse and smoked a pipe. And I thought she was just very left wing, but she didn't mind what she said or what people thought.

How brave.

Yeah, she's a wonderful, really wonderful woman. She'd like to speak to you actually. Yeah, I could ask her.

Yes, do, that'd be lovely.

Shall I?

Yes, that'd be lovely, thank you. I imagine we've got somebody who is down that way, who's close.

I'll ask her if she'd be interested in talking. I'm not sure if she ever went to Greenham, she didn't always come - she kept herself back. But she was always there, you know, sort of supporting people and having people in her house and yes.

You spoke about it being obviously wanting to welcome people and support the movement kind of through the house, your house that you have that. But did you sort of find that so engaged politically in activism, was that difficult personally? Did you find that it's difficult to be doing that, basically?

Yes, it is. Yes. Yeah. Yes, it was difficult because we lived in a tied cottage, so we had to be quite careful because the people who owned the estate that we lived on, were not in that - didn't have that sort of frame of thought at all. And the man came around once and asked, you know, really concerned about all this that's going on, sort of thing. So we had to keep it quite sort of private really, I suppose, you know, it's just family - family that knew about it, but they must have seen people

coming in, coming and going because we had lots of visitors - but then we had lots of friends. So they weren't to know that they were - and I kept in touch with some of them - one man Mark, he just recently died, unfortunately, ended up on drugs and alcohol, you know, but he, yes, but, and another man who I met when I went up to London once, so they lived at the peace camp. Nice people. Yes.

How do your children remember it? Do they remember that period?

Rowan, my son, has mild learning difficulty. He doesn't - he remembers going to the peace camp and dancing, and all that sort of thing - we used do these circle dances there - different things that went on. And he - but my daughter remembers it really clearly. And it very much influenced her - how she was, but she said, she said quite only recently to me, she's 51 now she said, when she was a teenager, she was sort of terrified there was going to be a nuclear war. So it caused her - I suppose we brought it home, you see, so she said she was really, really frightened about it. She remembers that being really fearful of war - that she would make sure there wasn't any light showing and things because they might, they might see that she was there when she was smaller, but when she was older - 12/13/14 she just had this fear that there was going to be a nuclear war. So I don't - I mean they were very involved in it, they came, and they shared their house with all these people dropping in and out, you know. And yes, my daughter wrote a poem that was published in Peace News, which I've got here actually. (Sound of papers being ruffled). That's our phone - take copies of these - there's my phone number there, that's in Peace News. Up at Hayford Pace Camp - that's to do with Greenham common thing. So all these peace camps were all connected with it. And all my old badges (sound of badges being moved around). CND one, that's the Miners - that's my dad's. And the poll tax was all involved in that. Yeah.

Is that your phone, would you like to get it? Don't think it's me, because mine's there. Just put a pause on this.

Yeah, so that's one, so all these things were all tied in together really. That's my CND badge, it's gone rusty. And when I went to my job at Redlands, I worked with adults with learning difficulties, the Banbury Peace Group, I wore this on my coat and he said 'That got you the job!', he said. (Laughs). Because I had the CND badge on.

That's so nice! When we finish I'll take some photos if you don't mind?

No, no, no, that's fine.

I'd love to see them.

I didn't know if you'd seen that book - that's got some Greenham papers in it. Morning Star - this is my daughter's poem. She wrote this - here it is, that's her writing. And that's the drawing she did with it. I think she was 14 or 15.

Wow, she drew that?

Yeah, yeah.

That's beautiful. Oh, gosh, I'm so envious of people that can do that. That's amazing.

Yeah, she's she's very clever. She's a clinical psychologist, but she just recently got involved with an art therapist, because she, her work is on mindfulness meditation, and sort of - she works for a big, for the hospital - for the NHS at the moment. But she's I think, you know, hopefully in the future things, she might be able to involve her art more with what she does. Yeah, it's lovely isn't it.

All the detail here.

I know. I think she's 14 or 15. So that was set by - a book she wrote. But it was published in Peace News. 'Home for Peace' - "In all the bitter soil, a single flower grew. Hope and defiance in a barren wilderness of

poisoned ashes. Where the emerald blood of distant years was blackened by disease. The scarlet dream a sheer opiate to my mind, lulled a sweet melody. I smiled, and the vibrant beauty of the flower engulfed my whole vision. The gentle curve of the stem so serene, against the harsh mesh behind. The delicate petals fluttering like tissue, butterfly wings. A vision none could take for himself - a wild thing. Then from behind the wire I heard foul wheezing, wailing whining that grew and grew. The darkness of spreading mean bony fingers, groping and clutching at my throat. Suddenly, the great machine was screeching overhead, intent on its mission of genocide. A trail of death suspended behind, and then it was gone. The terror and the dread transferred to victims far away. The air was silent, and the red flag blowed again, taller now and stronger. Flower of peace in life, but no longer in solitary vigil. For all around the earth was strewn with seeds, seeds of poppies bursting with new life. Seeds of hope.” Oh, I feel quite emotional reading that!

That's so moving.

I feel quite emotional reading that because, just think that little girl, you know, just a child wasn't she - 14/15, thinking that yes, yeah.

The sort of frightening-ness of it, but also the hope.

Yes.

The optimism.

Yes. Yeah. That's right.

The refusal to be beaten in the face of something really dark.

That's right. And she's, she grew into a very strong woman. So she says to me that all of the things that happened in her childhood, she's really grateful for. She said, although some - they were, you know, different than a lot of her friends. It's helped her to become the strong person

that she is, she said that, you know, and to have a sort of - a diversion of interests as well, and to meet people from all walks of life, you know, and I think that sort of really, really, really helped her, you know. So, I hope so. She's a lovely woman.

Gosh, that's incredible. When you next speak to her, will you just tell her - it feels really special to have been allowed to hear you read that. I want to say, really, I find that quite..

I felt quite emotional when I read it. I did, I did a little embroidery of a poppy actually, and I started a textile group when I left work 5 years ago. I've done lots of other things, I'll show you what I've done.

Wow!

...But it's part of Becky's poem I put around the edge. So it's right you know these things influence your whole life, really, don't they because that was sort of from this.

Is this the wax?

Yes.

And you dribble that over?

Yes, yeah. It hardens, and you stitch over it.

Wow. How amazing. Thank you so much for showing me this.

Oh, that's alright. She wouldn't mind if you took photos of these, I know.

Yes, I'd to - yeah, yeah. Because I think the hope is that we'll put some things on the website that we're creating, and also we're going to have a touring exhibition, so I think, to have things that we can share - obviously crediting everything to the people doing it.

Yes, yeah. There was a peace tent that was made too, have you heard of that?

No.

I have no idea where it was. It was sent to Oxford for an exhibition. And everybody did some stitching on it. We did it in Banbury, we all did a little sort of square. We stitched something about the peace movement on it, and our hopes of peace, and the Muslim community were involved too. And it made a tent - peace tent. Might be able to find that if you looked...

Was that quite recently?

Not so long ago.

Not for the exhibitions that's at the the library is it? The Weston Library?

Well, I mean, 10/15 years ago.

Oh.

No, peace tent.

Wow, I'll have to see if I can...

Peace tent, yes. I just suddenly remembered that. I mean, we we sort of saw it all put together, but people from all different areas, put things together - women stitched things.

I'm always fascinated by how sewing, and stitching, and embroidery plays into women's activism. Doing a lot of work on the Suffrage movement, obviously they made the banners as well - I still think that's fascinating.

Well, sewing has always been seen as a very passive women's thing, hasn't it? You know, just sit in the window and sew to while their days away. But actually, it's very powerful way of expressing yourself.

There's something so lovely about it being sort of tactile in some ways. It's more than painting in a way, because you can feel it.

Oh, no, absolutely. Yes. Yeah. And there was a book of the week - Seeds of... um Stitches of Life, I think it's called - Stitches of Life? The book of the week - Radio 4, a couple of weeks ago. And it was really interesting. I listened to listen to the whole thing in one go. And it was about women stitching right from the Bayeux Tapestry, which isn't a tapestry, but they called it a tapestry because it's made it more sort of acceptable to the men. It's an embroidery. And, you know, just amazing, amazing work in it. Going through to the Dinner Party.

Oh, yes, the Judy Chicago.

Yes, Judy Chicago - Dinner Party, that was probably wasn't the last one she did, but she talked about that. And that was really interesting. With the embroidered runners, and then the plates - everyone had their own plates. And so yes, a lot of embroidery, and sort of textiles and things. That's why I love making the banners and things. (Edit in recording). We're a quite a nation of sort of lovers of war, aren't we? I was thinking about that, you know, they never stop talking about - I mean, I know it's important that people understand history and things, but it's almost every day on Radio 4 there's something. Now they're on about Churchill again.

Oh, those comments about him being (inaudible).

Yes, that's right. Yes. Yeah. So, I find that quite disturbing, really.

We basically structure our history around wars don't we? We learn about the First World War, the Second World War, the interwar period. War on terror.

That's right when I did history at school, it was all the battles I learnt about. (Looks at something). Oh, I think that's because it's my father's birthday, June the 9th - must have taken. Oh, yes, lots of Buddhist monks involved. That was nice.

It says on a peace rally?

Yes, CND march. They must be my father's photos. They're not personal to me. Although I was there.

You spoke about your daughter feeling really fearful, did you have that same fear - was there a real fear that there might be a war?

Yeah, yes yeah. Yeah really part of it, because we were by the base and we heard the planes going over, you know when they - what would that have been when they went across? Gosh, I've forgotten. When was the Falklands? No there was yes, I just remember the planes going across you know - they used to be about 2 or 3 in the morning you'd hear the jets going across, so there's a lot of sort of - and our phone was tapped a lot. Every time I picked the phone up to phone my mother there'd be click, click, click. Yes, that was definitely was tapped - people we knew had - ah, this must have been going to Oxford, to South Parks. Because this is the man with cerebral palsy, Peter, who used to bring 'Cause I worked at the Cheshire Home then. And so I brought him on this march - they've faded these terribly. There's me pushing Peter from Hayford to - and it was, this was what it was for - Libya, Libya that was it - that was when I did that banner. And they went across.

Gosh, must have taken such a long time to do those banners?

Yeah well, suppose it did really - on the kitchen table.

Did other people join in and help?

No, just me on my own. (Laughs).

Artistic vision to be executed!

Just me on my own. Just find a picture and do it. Nobody I know in these, but these are Oxford South Parks.

It gives you such a sense of just the number of people, doesn't it - and you know, even just what people are wearing is so interesting. The temperature and all this...

Yes, that's right. And that that was my husband there - he was the organiser of this particular march. With the - there with the CND beret on, he had the mascot on the end. Yeah, that's the banner behind.

Yeah.

Where would that be? That's coming through Summertown isn't it?

Yes, it is.

Summertown.

How long did it take you to walk, do you remember?

Must have taken a couple of hours - 2 or 3 hours. Yes, it was a long walk, I remember that.

(Laughs). Policeman at the edge, there!

Yes. They had those sort of hats on. I was just thinking the policemen had these really long coats on. I would have known a lot of these people.

Did people sort of come out to see you walk along way the way?

Yes. Yeah. Got a lot of support, really. There's me pushing Peter.

Oh yeah. Gosh, I hadn't realised there are 160 bases.

Yes, yes.

As the banner's just told me!

Yes, yeah, yeah.

Wow!

Aren't they faded these photos - gosh. Yes, they didn't say American bases on the front of them, they'd say that they're British bases. So there's those pictures, and this is another demonstration, and we went by boat.

By boat?

Yeah, we went from Kidlington to Hayford on a boat - it was great. There's my son - Mothers for nuclear disarmament - that must have been that one.

Did you do that one as well, that banner?

No, I didn't do that one. I did another one that was Women for Peace, but I haven't got a photo of that. Becky's in it - Rowan's in that, at the front there. That's Rowan. That's my, that was my - that's my best friend, she lives in Stroud now, and her daughter Charlotte.

Little blue socks!

I know, they look old-fashioned don't they. He's probably got a badge on saying...

Oh, drums. Is that a drum he's got there?

Yeah.

So were they quite a noisy affair?

Yes. Yes. Have you ever been on a march?

I have, I've been I've been to the education one, and the Women's March. They were very noisy.

Yes. Yeah, they were. They were very noisy. Lots of people with drums and guitars.

And actually one of my really clear memories of being younger is when I was younger, we were in London on the day of the march against Tony Blair and the Iraq war, and that was dead silent. That was the whole point of it that nobody made any noise. That was actually more disconcerting.

Last one. I went. Yeah.

And I can remember...

God, that was an amazing demonstration, wasn't it?

Yeah.

We went on the train from Banbury, there was about 50 people came from this area, went on the train together. Yes, I remember that - it was fantastic. I made that banner too - it's the Kidlington Peace Group one. That's my daughter. That's her dad behind her - hundreds of badges! Used to wear his badges...

How many badges can I fit on?!

Becky may well have his badges - she might have his badges and his and his beret. I think she has got his beret, actually. And that's my son Rowan. And this is Val and somebody else. They live nearby.

That's a great picture.

Yeah.

Singing.

Yeah. You go to Leamington Peace Fair, and they're dressed like that, now. You wish you're better informed? Yes, there was a lot about, um, there was that book that was done in - who the cartoonist that did it? It was done in cartoon form, it was about protect and survive. See, I'm sure I've got some more stuff up in the loft. I think I've got the protect and survive booklet up there. But I couldn't find it. If I do find it, shall I'll let you have it?

Oh, let me know, yes.

Because I think it's the booklet - the government booklet that was given out, that tells you you know what to do in the event of a nuclear war - mainly get under the kitchen table. Yeah. Paint your windows white. It was bizarre. Absolutely bizarre.

I think I hadn't quite realised how real that kind of fear of nuclear - because I think, because I've obviously grown up always knowing that it's there. And I suppose there's been long enough that something hasn't happened. Obviously I can understand the disaster where a nuclear weapon launched - that it never quite feels, you know fearful I think that's the thing that I really - somebody I interviewed said she hoarded all this canned food under - in the cellar, and she was really, really fearful. Listened to the radio every day.

You know, my daughter's doing that now - she's got a stock of food. Wonder whether that's sort of a throwback to, to - because of the Brexit

thing. And because she's frightened. She says 'It's for Armageddon, Mum'. And she's an intelligent woman, you know? And her little boy says things like 'Oh, I hope there's not going to be a third world war because we we won't be here.' He's 10. So he's aware of it, too.

Yeah. Wendy was really saying, you know that it feels like it did before. She could almost sense the atmosphere now - it's like it was.

It is like that, and it seems like people aren't sort of acknowledging that.

And that's the frightening thing.

Yes. Yeah.

People just sort of - it's almost hard to know what to protest - we know there are lots of things that are bad, but actually what's the thing that you...

No, exactly, exactly.

...that you target.

Yes, yeah, she's got - oh, there's my partner, runs an archery business - open the gate... (Edit in recording)... Storing food - everybody did that, had lots of pasta, in-fact my daughter has done it, and when she came at Christmas she said 'Haven't you - haven't you sort of got some stocks of food Mum? Because if there's a hard Brexit we won't get food, and also you never know what's going to happen.' she said. So she's got big bags of rice - I was quite surprised, really. I thought no - surely not? No, she was quite serious about it. So I did talk to Wendy about that actually. And she said 'I don't know, should we go and get some?' she said, so we did actually go and buy some lentils and pasta and rice and things! (Laughs). And put them in a box - I've already started raiding it. Yes.

So Kidlington Peace Camp, was that women only as well, or was that mixed?

No, it's mixed, it was mixed.

And what did you think about the decision to make Greenham women only?

Um, what did I think about it? Um, some people, some people didn't like that idea at all. They didn't like that idea. They just sort of thought, oh women hate men - because it was around the time of the feminist thing burning your bra and things like that. That was the, that was the, that was what people thought feminism was - that women were just like, you know, hated men - all women hated men, and that was sort of how it was portrayed.

By the media?

By the media. Yes, by the media. So, a lot of people thought, thought that's sort of how it was. No, I thought it was good. I thought it was good that the women were standing alone, because they'd - because it was always very difficult even in the '70s, you know, to get your voice heard as a woman, you know, even though it is slightly better now, but I'm sure it must be much better now, do you think it is? Yes?

I think it's...

There's still a long way to go.

I think there's a long way to go. I think there are definitely areas where it's much easier for women to get their voices heard. But I think that particularly in infrastructures of power, that are very long established - things like the government and, you know, I think, I think it's still difficult for women to be heard there. And I think that's almost the sadness of it about that second wave feminism in the way that it's reported now, is that now we think so much more about individuals and you know,

women - you can do whatever you want if you shout loud enough, or try hard enough. And actually, we've forgotten the really valuable lesson from the '70s and '80s feminism that you have to address the problems that are in the institutions, and undermine those. And I think we still see a lot of challenges with that, and I think that's partly why - certainly a lot of women my age, I think, feel quite helpless - actually how do you affect big change you know, on a large scale. It's getting easier and easier to sort of live, you know, an ethical life yourself - if you're a middle class woman, of-course, and you have the time and resources and things like that.

Well, because because I was a teenager in the '60s, it was - I mean my brothers were encouraged to go to university. Well, my younger brother - I had twin brothers. One has schizophrenia, so he, you know, 17 he was first sectioned - the other one went to university. But I was never encouraged anyway, it was always - it was taken for granted, as with most of my - all my friends, we were all quite intelligent people, but we weren't at school or anything encouraged. We were just seen as we were going to get married and have children, because we were the first, you know, generations that after our parents who'd been through the war, and that was sort of what women did. Yeah, most women did. So now a lot of women I know they've done things later on in life - much later on in life, got degrees and things like that, you know, had careers.

Yes, for the Suffrage project we did, we interviewed a lot of women who just volunteered to talk about Suffrage, because obviously no one grows up in that period anymore. And they were saying very similar thing - that they'd been encouraged to either start a family straight away or to work in a very limited number of jobs, which were normally care, or taking or being a secretary. There really were almost three or four jobs that you were encouraged to do if you were a bright girl, as it were, and otherwise...

No, that's right - I think on offer was - I wanted to go to art school. My father said 'You'll never get a job if you go to art school, you'll have to go to secretarial college.' That's what I had to do learn - how to type and do

shorthand - dire! So I got pregnant when I was 18. And um, had a family very young. You know, which I don't, I don't regret now because I grew up, you know, and then I had lots of life left, if you know what I mean, you know, to do yes, yeah.

Of course, and I suppose for a lot of women my age now it's going the other way, isn't it - that people will probably have to do their career earlier on, and then the children later and then have less life on the other side.

That's right. That's, yeah, that's what that's what my daughter's done. She didn't have a child until she was 41/42. But yeah, it seems like god, I must be so old when I think about it! But you know, it was talked about as being well, my friends had illegitimate babies, you know. You don't hear that word now - do you?

No, but I think it's shocking how quickly...

Oh, they hid the births. You know, a friend of mine - her mother never knew she was pregnant. She had the baby in the, in the bedroom and she, she took it to her aunty.

Oh my goodness.

Yeah. Then her mum found out, obviously. But you know, it was so shameful.

Gosh.

My father got a carving knife to go find Steve because he was seen as the father.

Yeah, gosh.

We were involved with Woodstock Peace Group too, I remember these two people - don't know where they are now. There's Steve at the back there.

Aww!

This is on the boat.

Sort of canal boat?

It was the canal boat, yeah, it was - had to have a sort bit of light relief in it.

Yeah. Musical boat it looks like.

That's one of my brother's there. Well, this - I did that banner, Reclaim the Land for Life on Earth. And that was when they wanted to take the the base, there's my brother holding the Kidlington - I did that banner, Kidlington. It's a shame, isn't it that they weren't sort of looked after those banners.

But lovely you've got photos of them.

Yes. This is going across the field that they wanted to extend the base on, so that's Upper Hayford.

Oh, I love that woman at the front with a...

Yes. Yeah.

It's amazing that there's just always something I really noticed when people show protests - there's always an instrument somewhere.

Yeah.

It's really lovely.

I can't remember that man's name but he was a great campaigner. He was there - oh this is dancing in the field. Yeah. Becky remembers that - we had cabbage leaves in our house. (Laughs).

Why cabbage leaves?

Yeah, she'd go back to school and say 'I danced with cabbage leaves!' That's Becky there. That's me.

It just looks so - in the face of something so horrible - so joyful.

Yeah. And the base was here, we were right next to the base. This was here. I can't remember what the dance was, but it was that sort of, you know circle dancing. Oh, there we all are. Yeah dancing round.

Where did the ideas for the dances, for the circle dances come from?

From Eastern Europe - Europe, European dances. Because I've done circle dancing, not just with peace, peace movement. There are traditional dances that are still done in Greece, you know, in a circle - so yeah, they're universal dances. But the group that I used to dance with it's called Sacred Dance, because it's quite meditational and there's a lovely place - Holycombe at Whichford over that way, which - they've got a beautiful centre there and we - I used to go dance there. Yeah. It was lovely. We did lots and lots of different dances from all over the world. And a woman called Suzy Straw who is actually the sister of Jack Straw MP - she's died, but she used to be a dance teacher, a universal dance teacher - sacred dance teacher, and she danced in all the cathedrals all around the country, yeah there's a sort of travelling in St Paul's - it was beautiful. And then we wove this CND symbol in willow against the - sun and birds and things. The photos are faded terribly - these old colour things are dreadful.

It makes it very atmospheric though, I think.

Yeah.

160 again, your banner.

Yes, my banner. Oh these are the same ones - similar. Oh, there's Steve there.

What were these tethers - do you remember what they were holding up?

There was a sort of - they're looking at a stage there. Yeah. And there's people speaking on the stage here. Yeah. I think it was in South Park's - one of those parks. There's Steve.

I like the infamous beret - see him coming and you know who it is.

Yes. Yeah.

What he's here to do.

Yes, I imagine that's South Park's.

Musical boat again.

Yes.

Wow. Thank you so much for showing me. I'd love to take some pictures before I go.

Oh yes, you must. You've looked at those, haven't you?

Yes. So in the peace movement more broadly that you were involved in, was collective decision making quite an thing? Or did you have demarcated meetings and roles?

No, it was collective. Yeah, it was definitely collective. I mean, somebody took the role of doing the sort of secretarial work and things

like that, but it was very, very, everybody sort of worked together. Yeah, it was really good. Once we went, we went round the pubs - just came into my mind then, with Kidlington Peace Group at Christmas, that's quite a difficult thing to do. Everyone - all the lads with their beer, and we came in as a peace group, reciting poems! (Laughs). Poems for Peace, it was called.

Wow.

And we were sort of like a travelling group.

Did people get on board?

(Laughs). Sometimes they did, yeah - we got some good - so it was quite difficult sometimes 'What are they doing in the corner there?', you know.

Have to be quite brave don't you?

Yes, you do. Yes. Yeah.

And was that something that you'd seen before, or was it just sort of what naturally felt right?

Well, there were a few teachers and writers and things like that, you know, from, from the village, so they - and Kidlington area. So, because it tended to be people who were more thinking people got involved in it obviously, you know, so somebody came up with the idea of let's have a sort of poetry band, as it were.

Was that the collective decision making as well - was that something that you were modelling on something else that you'd seen, or did it just kind of emerge naturally in what you were doing?

No, it just emerged naturally. Yeah.

Do you think it's particularly - it's something that works well, when you're working with peace?

Yes, I do. I do. Yes, though I can't remember any sort of any animosity amongst people at all. No, people just sort of agreed or, you know - we used to meet to decide what to do. There was a core group, I suppose - yes of people, which Steve was sort of involved with. But people just sort of, they worked well together. It was sort of how society should be. Yes, yes.

So modelling what you wanted to see, I suppose?

Yes, that's right. Yeah. Yeah.

Things are so hierarchical now, aren't they - it's hard, hard to imagine that.

Yes. No, it worked well. Not quite like news from nowhere, but like...

(Laughs). How do you end peace movement...

There's a communist...these are my father's things?

So he was part of the Communist party. So that was something...

My father belong to the - he was very, very left wing. He came from a quite a poor family. And he married my mother, who was quite middle class, I suppose, you know. So he changed his sort of way of thinking and everything - everything sort of that he, that he did. He was always fighting for workers, sort of workers' rights and things like that, you know. And he was always writing to Fenner Brockway, and people, you know, and he got very involved with, with lots and lots of politicians, and he used to - and politics was his sort of thing really. And he belonged to the Friends of the Soviet Union. He used to go up there - I don't know what he did. My mother didn't know - they had a funny relationship. But he had a sort of canvas bag with a hammer and sickle on it, which is in

one of these photos, and he used to carry copies of Brezhnev's latest speech in it. My mother used to say to him, she used to say 'I'll pay, I'll pay for you to go there, Jack - one way!' That's a nice card, CND symbol on it.

Proceeds of card sales to...(inaudible).

Those are all songs and things that people used to sing. These are um, that's my father, there. Michael Foot, Tony Benn - that man lives near here, he's a farmer. But he was, he was in the Labour Party at the time. That's my father talking to... there's Michael Foot. This is at Burford. This is a Leveller's day. I think my father might have his bag there.

Yes. Oh, yeah. Yes.

Russian bag. Don't know quite what they thought of him. So he would go up - all the important dignitaries sitting there, and he would just go up and talk to them.

That's brilliant!

Yes, get in the photos. These are all in the gardens at Burford. There's a photo. Oh, and there's my mother - the anti apartheid group, there were lots and lots of groups she used to join - there's my father, used to join in. The more I look at this, the more I know there are some other things in the loft.

It's amazing you kept everything.

Well, when my marriage broke up I lost a lot of stuff. That was the thing, really. So um, that's that Leveller's day - human rights celebration. That must be have been - David Barbara is the man who lives near here. He was very involved in that. Michael Foot, Tony Benn - Bruce Kent, that's the other guy.

Oh, morris and clog dancers. (Laughs).

All good healthy stuff. Yeah.

Yes. Maybe we should talk about why you think it's important that we remember the peace movement and Greenham common, women's activism at this time?

Why we think it's important we remember it? Well, for me, it's big for my children, my grandchildren, you know, I see them - they're so sort of, they seem quite anxious, you know, the children do, when they start to have an awareness of what's going on in the world, you know. And I've lived through - I mean, there have been wars around me, but you know, my parents lived through Second World War, and our generation haven't had that, you know, and I don't, I don't want any generation to have it. So I think it's really important that - particularly because they're girls - I've got three girls. And the women's link in our families, my family is very strong - my daughter and me, and me and my mother, and me and my grandchildren - you know my granddaughter - I know she adores me, and she sort of contacts me because she can talk to me, and I really like that, you know, it's lovely.