

Sian Jones

My name is Sian Jones and I grew up in Wales in a family that was sort of quite divided, I think over the issue of peace. My Grandfather was a member of the peace pledge union and conscientious objector in the First World War. My Uncle Norman, was a conscientious objector. My father was in the army. And my Mother worked in a munitions factory. And my Grandfather, his, my Mother's Father, refused to speak to her throughout the war - because she worked in a munitions factory as - I think she worked in the finance department. But my, my Grandfather, particularly, I think - a very good analysis of, of - one I remember when I was quite young, this sort of discussion around some meal, about how the arms companies and breweries and the Tories were the people who made money out of war. So, you know, there was quite a lot of discussion about it. I think my, my father, who had a sensible perspective on my engagement with political things - I think around the time that Greenham started, my mother was quite good friends with a lot of Welsh nationalist people who were involved with, in Wales, a small group of women in Wales who started the whole thing off - they are part of the same sort of milieu, as it were, sort of political milieu. So yeah, I suppose I mean there was no sort of outright condemnation. And, in fact, the first time I went to Greenham was Christmas, it would be just after Christmas 1981 when I was coming back from spending Christmas with my parents in Wales, and my mother gave me an extra Christmas cake to take to Greenham. So this would have been I don't know, New Year-ish time. And so I stopped off at Yellow Gate. And I'd never been there before. And they said, 'We've got far too many Christmas, many Christmas cakes. Everybody brings us Christmas cakes. We don't want Christmas cakes. Go somewhere else.' So I thought all right, that was friendly. So then I went to Green Gate. And they said, 'Is it vegan?' And I said, 'No.' Knowing my mother. And, and so I went home with my Christmas cake. And feeling slightly sad that my attempts to go to Greenham and be nice had come to nothing, except I had an extra Christmas cake to eat. So yeah, so that was probably, that was probably not encouraging. And having spent a lot of time subsequently at peace camps I don't think that that was unusual. Or, I mean, the sort of hostility to anybody who comes from outside is a bit weird, really. But you can see it when you know, you have loads and loads of visitors and actually, they're just coming to visit and you're sitting there in the pouring rain and blah, blah, blah, but it wasn't wasn't an encouraging experience. And most of the I mean, I think the reason, the reason I wanted to get engaged in Greenham is that I was involved in lots of women's stuff anyway. Like the women's centre in Southampton, and part of - I was working full time in museums as part of the group called Women's Heritage in Museums. I mean, you know, sort of nearly everything I did, I was doing a lot around women's history. I was teaching women's history you know, so so it didn't seem you know, and that, and a vague peace movement background seemed to make sense. But actually, I think I think in a way it was the the non-violence that was quite attractive, because in the late '70s I was involved in quite a lot in anti-fascism and anti-racist protest. And it was violent. It was around the time of the National Front. And it was around the time when there

were really, really big demonstrations. And the left was, I would say, as violent as the National Front and as violent as the police. So I got very - there was a time when I just thought I can't do this anymore. It was yeah, there was just so much violence that you, and you also didn't know where it was coming from really, it could, you know. Oh, you could get squished by some other people being violent. So I think the non-violence was quite attractive really. Yeah, so that's, that's a bit background.

Oh, thank you. So, so you - would you say that it was through being involved with feminist networks that you knew about Greenham then?

No, I think, well, I don't know. I wouldn't say everybody knew about Greenham but, you know, any, any thinking person would know about Greenham. But I think because we were so close to Greenham in Southampton. And there were a number of different, there was sort of feminist networks. There were lesbian networks, and there were families against the bomb networks. And there were, I think there was a Family's Against the Bomb network in Southampton. So there was quite a lot of different groups, which eventually sort of, I don't know, somehow all percolated together. And there was a very consistent number of women in Southampton, who were involved in Greenham to one extent or the other. I've just been looking at, sort of looking forward to the 10 million women in 1984. I found a list of women from Southampton who had gone to Greenham and it covers sort of, I would say about 200 women from Southampton, went to Greenham for that - either for like the day or for several days or for the whole thing. So I think there was quite a strong network there with some quite strong women who were probably very engaged. And some women who lived at Greenham at one time or another, I never lived at Greenham. No, I don't, I didn't think there was anybody who went to live at Greenham sort of permanently - but women dipped in and out of that sort of activity. And also, at the same time, quite a large number of women would later from about 1984 onwards get involved in Cruise Watch. And there was quite a lot of women involved in - I would say that 75% of Cruise Watch in Southampton was women. So there was a lot of potential for women's actions and stuff like that.

You meant you mentioned like in the early days when you stopped off at Yellow Gate and Green Gate. But what, what, did you - what gates did you tend to sort of stay at when you were coming and going from Greenham?

Generally Southampton went to Orange Gate, which is where Camden women also went. And some other women from London and from Essex. And quite a few women who've been involved in the South London Women's Hospital campaign. And then some women from Bristol... Somerset were there fairly consistently so it was a, I think that was the general - I mean, obviously there would be women from lots of different places at different times. But I think that was the sort of core, the core group. And I mean, we would go to you know, I knew, I knew, you know, I used to go and visit some women at Violet Gate because I got on and I liked them. Sometimes I - there's a couple of

women from Wales who used to go to Red Gate, you know, it just depended really on who you knew, or who you got to know. And then you went to visit them. But generally I would you know, if I was going, back for the weekend or to do a Night Watch or to do something specific or if there was an event on or whatever, I'd go to Orange Gate.

Yeah. And that some character, some people characterise the gates as, as having slightly different sort of personalities or agendas and remits. Are you - do you want to mention any of your experience around that? Apart from them all being a bit unfriendly when you turn up?

No, I think that the, the, I mean, after that first time it, I mean I don't think it was was like that, at all, really, that was just a bit of a sort of, you know, slightly off putting thing. I mean, at the beginning, we weren't like, you know, the - because we were so near the day that the missiles actually arrived. You know, we all got messages, because by then we had telephone trees. And I think it was 1983. March 1980, I did make some notes somewhere, but I think it was March 1983. And we just went and we went to obviously, we went to Yellow Gate because that was the the Main Gate. And of course, that was long before the split. And I sort of, being in my head, that the split sort of happened much earlier. But I just refreshed my memory and it wasn't till 1987 that the actual you know - I mean, it built up from earlier than that, but it does sort of, the real nasty viciousness was 1986, 1987. So Yellow Gate was quite a sort of fine place to go and to be early on, and there were, you'd just go and see some women there, you might not want to talk to all of them. Because there's some people who were quite annoying, but there were women who were quite annoying at every gate, you know. So they all did have their personalities. And I think that women also sort of did a bit of, you know, touring from one gate to the other until they found somewhere where where they wanted to go, you know. So I think - what would I say about Orange Gate? I think there was a definite sense of sort of political commitment at Orange Gate, because there were quite a lot of women who'd been involved in other campaigns, and also women who were involved in - there was a woman there from Essex Rape Crisis Centre, which actually had been used as a model by lots of other rape crisis centres setting up, was quite sort of well known and well respected. And the women from the South London Women's Hospital campaign as well. You know, they were quite sort of, yeah, quite sort of feisty women who'd been involved in quite a lot of political campaigning or campaigning around women's issues in quite a sort of strategic and organised sort of way and coming from quite strong, strong sort of... I don't know, I mean, there were probably some, some socialist, I don't know, I can't put people into categories. But it was, you know, it's quite interesting. It was probably not as cosmic as Green Gate. But what did - that didn't mean that, that there weren't nice songs and activities and important sort of rituals and stuff like that. So yeah, it seemed quite a comfortable gate to be at, partially because I think the area was quite big. So it was quite possible for quite a lot of women to come camp there. Where as some of the gates actually, you know, Violet gate was actually quite tiny in comparison, so, you know, yeah.

One of the things that I think about Orange Gate there was there was plenty of room to park.

Yes, that's true.

And the coaches would come up from Southampton to Orange Gate.

Yeah. I never came on the coach, but maybe I went on the coach my first time. No the first time we just drove up, because that was the time when the, yeah, that was the time when the warheads actually came in.

Yeah.

But that was at Yellow Gate, I think. Yeah, I mean, Orange Gate, wasn't that useful in terms of blockades and stuff because there was really very, very little traffic in and out of it. And I've got quite a lot of pictures of blockades at Orange Gate. And I'm thinking now, what was it that we thought we were blockading? Because hardly anybody went in and out. I mean, you know, Blue Gate, Yellow Gate, were more sort of likely to given, where the convoy in the end was located and where it came out from. But I think it was, you know, a lot of it was very symbolic. I'm not sure what we, what we were blocking. I mean, you know, we went and did stuff didn't we really. I mean, some of it was well thought out, and some of it was well planned. And some of it was just sort of like having fun, really, because you could, and particularly up until about 1985, before they brought in the new military lands bylaws, I think that's '85, '82, but they weren't bought in til '85. So basically, you could, you could just do what you like, really. And then I can't remember when they started sort of - I mean, I had to look through some old diaries, and certainly that we were involved in some court case, but I'm not quite sure whether - I can't find my criminal record file. Early as, early 1984, I think. I'm sure we'd been in before then quite a few times and got out again. I mean, that was wasn't actually terribly difficult. And I remember it took me quite a long time to decide because I had this job and I thought, oh, god, I'm not gonna be able to do this. But actually, you know, in a while, it became sort of second nature really. It wasn't, it wasn't difficult, it wasn't problematic. And Orange Gate was a bit of a difficult place to get to the silos. For example, I mean, I remember being in there for four hours, and we never actually got there. We were found before we did so, you know, it was obviously much easier to go into Green Gate or somewhere around go in Blue or Emerald if you wanted to get to the silos. So yeah, we did. We sort of stood on the runway a few times. I'm really not sure what that was, or painted the runway or, you know, I mean, the word sort of pointless actually wasn't pointless. It was a campaign of attrition against the US military and that they couldn't take that land away you know, so there was a point going on it but probably I think it was probably just sheer weight of numbers really. And I know that after they bought in the Military Lands Act there was like a competition really to see how many, many times we could get arrested. I mean, it got, it really really did get a bit like that.

I would, I would suggest that actually you know if, if Blue Gate and Yellow Gate and Green Gate were being really effectively pocket blockaded, then they, it would be important to blockade the other gates because it closes their alternative, their options for leaving.

Yeah, but being realistic. I mean, apart from you know, like I'd say in 1982 There were probably enough women round that you could do that. But I've been looking through my files you know, and as soon as embrace the base is over, there are letters going out saying, 'We desperately need women. We haven't don't have enough women at the gate. We don't have this and we don't have that.' And, and I think that there's this whole idea that you know Greenham was full of women all the time and most of the time there were not that many women at each gate and for those women at those gates it's a real struggle. So actually to be able to, I mean, I think that's why we did Night Watch because we could come up from Southampton and we had these red things called getaways so that you didn't - you got in your sleeping bag and you get away rather than having to - but they were sort of there rather than being in a tent. And the aim was to watch the gate and then to be able to alert anybody if anything was happening. And I would generally do that at Orange Gate. And so I assume there were other women doing it. Other gates, I mean, split like the food run, as well. And I, for some reason, some reason I think we did Blue Gate. I'm not quite sure, in Southampton anyway. But maybe we did other gates as well. I mean, we took it in turns to cook and took it in turns to deliver. So I'm not quite sure how it all worked out. But I think, yeah, I mean, there really - probably, there were times when there were enough women to cover every gate. But I think there were times when everybody felt a bit thin on the ground and really needed more women to come. And a lot of energy and organisation went into organising activities, which would encourage other women to come whether they came for a day or whether they came for the weekend. But the, and then there would be other women who would sort of come in from quite far away, and stay for a reasonable amount of time. And it'd be like women from London who come up for a couple of days, and then they go back again. So having not lived there, I don't know what the feeling was in terms of you know, we're okay, we're fine. And we're resilient, or how much of a, you know, looking back at sort of some of the appeal letters, it just sort of looks like shit, we need more women to, to be here with us. And I think particularly when - I think that in 1984, when the 10 million women thing happened, although there weren't 10 million women - although I really strongly believed that I wasn't going to be able to get there because of the traffic jams - but actually quite disappointed, really, that oh, it's gonna take me ages. And we'd also done a walk from Southampton with a goat or something to sort of publicise it, and then some of us went back and got stuff and whatever, and then, then, then went to it. So we'd already been doing the walk a few days before. And yeah, I think we expected that to be like 1000s of women that - and there probably were about 2000 or maybe 5000, I don't know, I don't know if anybody ever counted them. But after that I don't, I'm not sort of conscious of big gatherings. I mean, you know, reasonably, reasonably large

gatherings, but not huge. So I think it's quite remarkable that the women who did live there, were able to maintain it all of that time. And I think that is because there was a good support network. And there were enough women popping down and bringing stuff and doing their own actions and stuff to keep it going. It's quite remarkable, really, really, really is quite remarkable in how, how, how the camp sustained itself and did so much and made so many links, you know, links with Women Against Pit Closures links with the Women for Free and Independent Pacific and all sorts of other linked, - I mean, women from Australia, Australia or New Zealand where bringing issues from the sort of that part of the global south. It was it was very interesting, I think, politically, and it was also very interesting in terms of, of why women were there because the women were there for all sorts of different reasons, you know, the land reason, and - you know about reclaiming the common and then a sort of biological essentialist we're against war sort of stuff. And then women who wanted to live in community with other women and women who wanted to go somewhere where they could be bit cosmic on the sort of nice space and obviously women against nuclear weapons, but there wasn't really much discussion around militarism, - it was, it was part of the blockades. But it was very, very focused on yeah, on nuclear weapons rather than nuclear weapons being part of the sort of military industrial complex. But then there were women who had specialised like Kim Beasley, who did a lot of work around zapping. And she was herself a sort of a scientist, and she knew an awful lot about the military as well and stuff. So it's, it's quite yeah, it was, you know, I think, given that, you know, the socialist feminist Women's Movement said it was a sellout. And, you know, all those sorts of famous 1980s feminists who wrote books just sort of thought Greenham was some sort of bourgeois deviations stuff. I think it was quite amazing that it was sustained. Because it, because it was very, very diverse. I mean, not, not diverse in terms of, of race, or ethnicity. It was, it was pretty white. But it was diverse in terms of the range of mainly middle class women's beliefs. Let's go as far as that.

Yeah. You touched on erm - like the sort of league table of how many times a week you could get arrested? Were you arrested very much, and what was the outcome of that? Did you go to prison at all?

No, I didn't go to prison because I had a job, when I first started, and I wanted to keep a job. So when I first started doing actions, I adopted a, an assumed name. But then, as I got better at court cases - and it was the days when you defended yourself, you know, none of this sort of have - I mean, the first time, which is more to do with Cruise Watch than anything else - but we had a lawyer and it went really, really badly wrong. So, I mean, we defended ourselves in court. And the first time I sort of won and I got costs, they went to this false name. So I decided - I've still got a check in that false name. So I thought, fuck it. And so then I, then I would get arrested in my own name, but I just paid the fines. I mean, they were like, between 5 and 20 quid. And it didn't really, I don't think it made - it didn't make that much difference to me. I know, a lot of women were sort of... but I knew that if I went to prison, I would

probably lose my job. And I wasn't that committed to, you know, for a lot of women, it was their whole life. And they made that commitment. And I, yeah, I just wanted to carry on doing my job as well, because I liked it. And, and certainly, I mean, it was not without its difficulties. But I think, I think I got away with it all the time, time during Greenham I think it was, yeah, it was the Gulf War that, that they started asking questions, because yeah, '91 I think was the first time - but that's, that was different. That was Official Secrets Act. So that was a bit more and then my - I had to go to work thing and just narrowly kept my job. So yeah, I mean, most of the I don't know how many times I got arrested. I probably got arrested more on Salisbury Plain than I did at Greenham. Because I think Cruise was a little bit more intense and focused in terms of the actions. And it was, it was very full on because I can't remember when it was from, but certainly probably the first convoys went out in 1984. And probably 1985, 1986 was like once a month. And I used to sort of, it would be like a whole week out of each month. And then we'd sort of have time to recover and then it would start again. And I remember going into work one morning when I'd been out on Salisbury Plain till about 6 o'clock in the morning and then I'd driven back and then I went in, and I used to work in museums and I used to do education work with children. So I'd get in and there'd be 30 children all wanting to know something. And I'd have a head like cotton wool, you know. So sometimes yeah, it was a bit of I mean, it didn't stop me from doing my job. But it yeah, it was a bit of a struggle at times, really, because I was just so so knackered, but it was - I don't know I think there was a lot of, it involved quite a lot of adrenaline, really, I think. I mean, particularly when the convoy's going out and coming back in terms of tracking it, but then in terms of finding it on Salisbury Plain. So I think that the adrenaline was probably the sustaining, the sustaining thing.

That and coffee.

And coffee, and I mean, it was it was, it was very odd, odd thing to do, I suppose. But it was, it was. - it's quite interesting, historically. That. I mean, there were a couple of women around Newbury, who were very, very closely, close to the camp, but also, they were really. Yeah, three very great women, Evelyn, Dragon and Peg, and they were like the powerhouse behind - I mean, Cruise Watch was mixed, but the men were not supposed to go to Greenham. And they were, they were, they weren't - there was a sort of little perimeter, which they shouldn't go beyond. And some of them did, I think at some point, because I found a letter that's protesting about men going to near Greenham from Yellow Gate to Cruise Watch. But they were called the peanuts. But we all communicated with each other using CB radios. And I think that that was just quite amazing, because CB radios was something that truck drivers use, and sort of country and western people. And it was just like a whole, a whole new world. And in fact, in the end, some of the truck drivers, and some of the country and western people who would hear us when they got on our channel would actually give us information. And I remember once, it was just before the INF Treaty was signed on, maybe after - it was one of the very, very last convoys. And we were in one of the clapped out - we had a collection of

clapped out cars that we could use between us. And the gear lever came off the car and we were like oh no and we were trying to get to - anyway, a junction where the roundabout, where the convoy goes. We were coming up from Southampton, Bullington Cross. And we were just standing there, three of us on the side of the road thinking shit, we're not going to get there with our hand spanner. And then this lorry driver came past me said you go into the convoy and we said yes. And we climbed in and he dropped us off. And then he gave us a lift back afterwards to the to the ruined car, which was somehow fixed or whatever. Yeah, I mean, this... I don't know. I mean, I don't know how, if you want to know about Cruise Watch, or...

You've just outlined quite a bit about it. Do you want to say anything more about Cruise? Because it's still going, isn't it?

No, that's Nuke Watch.

Oh, that's Nuke Watch. Oh, yes. Okay.

Yeah. Cruise Watch was focused on Cruise Missiles. And some of us who are involved in Cruise Watch did actually go and look, go down to Portsmouth and do work around Polaris, which was then the submarine system before they brought in Trident. But I think what is interesting about Cruise Watch is that so many, like the same woman that we knew in London, or from Essex or from various other places would just suddenly turn up and you'd be at a roundabout and they would be there. And so it was, it was, it was embedded in sort of certain parts of the Greenham Women's support groups, the London women's support groups. And the other networks and it's also it is thought that one of the women who was in one of the London support groups was the one of the spies that was at Greenham, you know, this, this whole thing going on about undercover police. And there was definitely an undercover police woman at Greenham and women from camp also used to go out and do Cruise Watch and go out and track on Salisbury Plain as well. So it was - I would say not all women - but the whole the whole promise that Cruise would melt into the countryside, which is what the government's position was in a statement by Michael Heseltine, it never happened. There was never one convoy between 1984, and whenever the last convoy was 88, not one was, wasn't tracked, or stopped, or spotted, or found, or whatever. And I think actually, that's quite - I mean, it did make it very, very difficult for them to actually deploy the weapon system. And I think that's, that's actually quite significant. And possibly part of the reason why there are very few, or none probably, land based nuclear weapon systems in in current - I don't know, maybe Russia has them. And, you know, in between. So you have the INF Treaty in 1988. And obviously, there's a whole range of factors or from 1987. Anyway, the whole range of factors why it was signed, but I think that people who have access to people in high places tell us that Greenham had a very significant impact on that. So that's good. You know, it set out to do what it and then the, the land was returned to the commons. So when, when,

I was gonna come on to that and ask you a bit about what happened after Cruise left. And I mean, my remembrance of it is that there was everyone thought that there were, the job was done. And we got, had, there was a news blackout, and a lot of women stopped coming. Do you want to address that a bit?

News blackout?

Yeah, I mean, even CND said, Oh, the Cruise have gone, the women have gone, you know, job done.'

That's not the case at all. That's not the case. I mean, there's a whole load of stuff. I mean, I got some files here, there's still stuff - first of all, it doesn't all go away after the INF Treaty. I can't remember exactly when the missiles went - '91? It took three years before they were all taken back. I might go in my file and have to correct this later. But, you know, the missiles were still there. Convoys still went out after the INF - we were still chasing convoys, the support still went out. And nobody's - I don't know if we ever got to the bottom of why the convoy support still went out. But that's probably part of the whole sort of winding up of the military operation. So first of all - and then there's the whole stuff about the silos having to remain as part of the agreement. And I don't know when the inspections stopped, I think they have stopped now. So that there was a whole sort of thing that carried on and I know that, I know that the missiles were not the sort of focus for all women who went to Greenham. Because by the end, it's become its own sort of thing and its own culture and its own network. In a quite, a sort of, lot of other reasons for going there, really, rather than just focusing on nuclear weapons.

Yeah. So you're, you know, you've talked quite a bit about Cruise Watch, and that was a mixed thing. But it was an example of a lot of spin off things that came out of Greenham. And for me, one of the key phrases right from the start was Greenham Women are everywhere. You didn't have to be,

Yeah, it's quite, it's quite interesting, because I've been helping do some work on a book about Women in Black. And certainly an awful lot of women who were in London Women in Black, were very, very focused on Greenham Women are everywhere. That was there. And London was super full of brilliant Greenham Women are everywhere, groups. And I think that -an awful lot of contacts and network, I mean, I think in a way - I mean, obviously, it's a generation thing, and it doesn't - but I think in a way that still exists. I know if I go to Hebden Bridge, I will see X, Y, and Z. I know if I go to Glasgow, I will see A, B and C, I know that they, that quite a lot of women will still be involved in some sort of peace or political work in in one way or another. Or working in, you know, sort of going back in a way to the origins working against violence against women. I mean, I think there's very strong links between quite a lot of women who were at Greenham and organisations against violence against women. And that whole sort of broader thing around - I don't know what you call it, you call it social justice, refugees, poverty, you know, all of those sorts of issues. I think there's a whole load of women who went off and did some-

thing after that was sort of, not directly inspired by Greenham Women are everywhere, but knowing that there are these networks where women know each other, and they know each other because of Greenham. And it, and it will be sad, because we know that, you know, a significant number of those women are now dead. You know, who sort of died in their sort of '80s or some of them younger? I mean, we try to I mean, I suppose Aldermaston is a Greenham Women are everywhere theme because it was set up - I mean, that's it, that's very much in the same vein. I'm trying to think of things that are sort of different. But I think it was quite a powerful thing at the time. And I think it was a really good statement because it avoided guilt tripping women who thought, oh, well, I can't go and live at Greenham for various reasons, but there are things I can do from where I am. And I was reading the other day about a Greenham Women are everywhere Greenwich group, who went and protested at the Imperial War Museum in 1980 - something about an exhibition that didn't include anything about Greenham and then Women in Black in on those 10 years, 15 years later, went to the Imperial War Museum and protested about an exhibition called Women in War that didn't have anything about - it had something about Greenham Women but it didn't have anything about Women in Black. So the Greenham Women succeeded in getting something about Greenham into the collections, including this beautiful photograph of all these Greenham Women outside the Imperial War Museum. And then the Woman in Black managed to get some Woman in Black t-shirt and various other things into the Imperial War Museum after their demonstrations where it's about continuity, I thought was really quite nice, even though is involving different women but they were both women from Greenham Women are everywhere sort of stuff. And I suppose some women who wanted to carry on living on the land were able to do that through various net, I think they would become a much wider network. I mean, I don't know, you, you learn far more about it and whether it made it safer for women to travel because if you - or to be travellers, because you think about it, you know, in the middle of all of this is Battle of the Beanfield, in the middle of all of this is all of the anti traveller legislation, and the beginning of, you know, all sorts of subsequent repressions that we have seen against protest, or against people being in large groups where whatever. Because when we were doing Cruise Watch on Salisbury Plain the convoy was there and, and the, the day after the Battle of the Beanfield, I can't remember who I was with, but we went down to see what had happened. And it was just absolutely, you know, people forget that they were called the Peace Convoy, there was a lot of, you know, there's a bit of snobbery around in Cruise Watch, because there's a lot of nice middle class people in Cruise Watch who were not friends with the traveller community. But actually, all of those really significant things were going on around the same time. And if you think about it, this has nothing to do with Greenham Women are everywhere, well except it is because they were involved in Women Against Pit Closures, you know, the whole Thatcher government attack on the miners. And the whole thing around the miners strike was also happening at the same time. And one of the things that came together was, I think, in 1984, mostly, basically was very significant year because it was called 1984. And it certainly happened. And, I mean, I think the

worst thing I remember, I'll go back to the other thing after. But the worst thing that happened that I remember was that one of the first, either the second or the third convoy went to a place called Longmore Ranges. And various things happened, but which were all pretty appalling - particularly because they didn't have proper military. They had reservists who were just very nervous, and essentially civilians with guns, who held 12 women in a pit on Longmore Ranges, for I don't know, hours and hours. Now as and when a question was asked in the House of Commons, about the women who were held in the pit in Longmore Ranges at gunpoint - Hesletine I think was the Minister of Defence at the time said, 'There is no pit.' So that was the sort of - and it's quite hard to remember how I mean - I was looking at something that I've written around that time, how fucking frightened we were, that there was going to be a nuclear war. I think it's quite easy to forget that now. But when you get this - it's 1984, and you get a government minister say there was no pit. It's, it's actually quite sort of chilling. And the thing that happened to us was for some reason that I'm not going to explain because it's so mad - four of us went off to Salisbury Plain to see if we could find a grave that had been dug. These things happened. And, and we didn't, and we were driving across Salisbury Plain in my 2CV green 2CV small car four women quite full. And then we got chased by a tank. And eventually, the tank caught up with us. I ripped off the bottom of my vehicle crossing a ploughed field, and we were taken to Devizes, police station, and we were taken to the court in the morning. And we were banned from Wiltshire. And we were escorted out of Wiltshire by the police. Exactly the same as what was happening with the miners with the miners strike. And that sort of repression, systematic repression of protest of anything that was against the government is in the way I think that people forget how, you know... Because at Greenham we managed to get away with lots of stuff. You know, and you managed to do quite a lot of serious things without huge penalties being placed on people whereas in the States people who are doing similar stuff, and in Italy, women who are doing similar stuff - because they will you know, there was a peace movement Europe and across the world and in Australia, you know, there's a lot of stuff going on is, it was actually a great time of political repression and the beginning of the narrowing of protests that, you know. We will see Priti Patel in a few weeks time coming out with another series of repressive bills and changes to public order. But it was, it was that beginning of a Public Order Act, so actually attacking people's right to protest. So I think, I think that was a significant time. And I think the brilliant thing about Greenham was the creativity and humour and sometimes fucking mad ideas that women had that in ways subverted that and made it very, very difficult for the police, for the authorities to actually deal with it. And I think that, you know, that's one thing that I think yeah, I think that's one of the sort of strengths of Greenham.

Fascinating, I've been fascinated to hear what your, your, what your sort of perspective of on it because we are, in our lives, have sort of intersected quite sporadically over a lot of these similar things. But let's, let's say adieu for now. 10 o'clock again tomorrow?

Yeah, that'll be fine. That'll be fine.

Well, I've got my, the end of my list that I sent you. And - but there are things that as I say that you've already covered, like any comments on class, age, race, religion, diversity at camp. It comments on the split with Yellow Gate, how did, how did Newbury react, residents react to your experience, in your experience, which, I mean, one woman I've interviewed, she thought, oh, everything was fine! No problem.

(Laughing) No! I remember there was one pub that we could go to, which was off the double donut roundabout.

Yeah.

I remember one night. I had, they had seven of us in my 2 green 2CV. The small people crouched in the sort of wells of the car. And we used to go there and, and play - they had a pool table. And it was like the only place I think that you could, you could go into apart from the cafe in town. I can't, know what the cafe was called.

It was called the Empire Grill.

That's it the Empire Grill, you could go there as well. And it was okay.

Yeah.

And then this pub. And I think the reason that the pub was quite important was because it had a jukebox. And so there are certain songs, that when I hear them, I think of Greenham straight away. So there's Sade, Smooth Operator.

Oh, yeah.

There's Phil Collins, I hate to say Something in the Air. And, of course, somewhat's the name? Nothing Compares to You.

Sinead O'Connor!

Sinead O'Connor! You know, there were those sorts of you know, anthemic sort of songs that - there's, there's probably a few more, you know, and then I hear them, I'm immediately sort of taken back to camp. Which isn't, I mean, one of the things that didn't come yesterday was singing, because I'm not, I'm not a singer. But I always enjoyed the singing. And I think one of the things I didn't talk about yesterday was the whole thing that sort of stayed with me really - and still stays with me is that idea of just being outside and sitting around the fire and talking, and maybe there's some singing or maybe somebody is playing something and that you're sort of aware of just, aware of being very much outside. I mean, you know, sometimes it's awful because it's

like 4 o'clock and you think, how long is it before we can go to bed? Those sorts of evenings that just, you know - or where you're so cold on your back that, you know, you think you're never ever going to get warm, really. I think yeah, cold backs and cold bums and uncomfy and uncomfy chairs. But that whole sitting around the fire thing is, you know - I don't think I'd ever done that before. I mean, it was in the girl guides, but I don't think we were allowed to do that then. And I think that's just so, such an important thing for sort of learning and listening and exchanging and you know, and planning and just doing various things. But I think that just seemed very important. And you know I carried on doing it ever since really.

I sort of see it as a sort of conscious, default consciousness raising environment because, you know, we took, we - especially once it got dark, you know, some really intimate, difficult things were broached, sometimes very personal things. It wasn't always politics, which we often disagreed with. But yeah, I think it is - it's a, it's a sort of really, archetypal culture.

Yes. And I think, I think that, that whole personal thing is, it sort of resonates with something because I was thinking yesterday and I was walking the dogs I was thinking about, I was thinking what we hadn't talked about. And then part of that was about being outside, and how amazing it is to live outside and what you hear and what you see. And, I don't know, just being aware of the environment that you're in, you know. Whether it's something like you know, going swimming in one of those really deep pools round by Emerald Gate, which is so deep that it's so cold, you know. I'd never come across a pool like that before, apart from sort of controlled access, you know, where you where you'd go, and it will be hidden sort of depths, you know, and that sort of, I don't know, the magic of how things change over the seasons and stuff like that. And that you're just so you know, and in winter, how fucking freezing it is and how cold, how cold, cold it gets. How cold it is. And I remember one of the first times that I went to Greenham - I went with my friend, Mary Alexander, and we both used to go to jumble sales an awful lot. So we both had matching pyjamas and so we went to bed with all our clothes on with our pyjamas over the top so we could still wear our pyjamas! (laughing). And, but also, so going back I think what struck me last night is what I hadn't talked about was the fact that we were doing it as women. And that there was a space for women to do things together, and be powerful, and be strong and get strength from other women and learn. You know, even if you thought like, what somebody was saying about the sort of, you know, configuration of your car and what it would be like, and attaching leads, and things that were a bit bonkers. It's just like that sort of diversity, really, of thoughts. But the whole, but that it was women doing stuff in a whole load of different ways and feeling and feeling strong and feeling powerful, and that the space for that is just being cut away from you know, it doesn't happen now. There are so few, you know - so that was just like a fuck off big space for women, really, and I - and historically, that is incredibly important. Because it's part of a time when, obviously, in the 1980s, there was a lot of - you know the GLC was funding lots of women's only groups. And there was lots of women's stuff going on. I

mean, it probably was a sort of, you know, a parody of the, of the sort of - not the separatists women's movement, not necessarily, although some women were separatists - and not necessarily the lesbian bit of the women's movement. But just generally women did things as women together, and it didn't really matter that much where you were on the, you know, on the spectrum of, I don't know married heterosexual and and you know, separatist lesbian or whatever. It didn't, it didn't really seem to matter. I don't think that there was a you know if I think about the group from Southampton, you know, there were quite a few dikes, there were quite a few women who were married. There were quite a few women who were heterosexual but single, but you know. There were women who were much older. There were women who are much younger. I think that's sort of quite unique, really.

I would, I would call it autonomous women's spaces.

Yes. That's the word autonomous, which they still use in Serbia. You know, the Women's Centre that deals with violence against women is called the Autonomous Women's House. And it is yes, it was about autonomy. And in a way, a sort of invincibility, a sort of power I think, from from being - I was just walking last night and I was just thinking. I mean, it didn't - the whole sexuality thing didn't really seem to matter. I mean, when I first went to Greenham and I was having some sort of vague affair with some bloke. And then I started seeing this woman, but it wasn't - I don't know if it was because of Greenham. You know, it's like, I don't think I became a lesbian because of Greenham. But it was, it was easier - do you know what I mean? I mean, it was around the time of the - who, who wrote the book about political lesbianism because I remember the, I remember quite a few women who were political lesbians that, and that was a thing fairly sort of early on. That was around the same time. But it was just it I don't know, I think, I think - it wasn't a completely uncomplicated time, you know, I know that lots of awful things happened at camp as well. But when you look at the overall social phenomena, yeah, it's a different social structure, it's creating a different, a different thing. And one of the things I used to think about because I used to be an archaeologist, I mean, I know, there have been excavations that have been conducted around somewhere near between Emerald and Blue, I think of a camp that was there. They found some milk bottle tops thus proving women weren't vegans or something, I don't know. I'm sorry, it's too close, you know, you don't need that you've got the, you've got this sort of information, you've got information of all the stuff that's been written by people, by women who were at Greenham, and stuff like that. And if you look at it in strict archaeological terms, what you would have is this big defended fortress, full of the weapons of the patriarchy - because you get the bunkers leftover and unless they were burial burial chambers of important men, because that's how archaeology works. And around it, were these little tiny camps where you'd get these female things left behind. And that archaeologists in the future would interpret it as a site where women went to worship these male objects of mass destruction. Because, you know, in archaeology, people make up theories that suit them like Stonehenge and stuff like that, you know. Can be anything and I

think, oh no, this is what the archaeologists will think it is. Because in terms of the sort of, you know, you've got the hard stuff inside and then you've got all this sort of tiny little remains in you know, outside where all these women come and pay tribute to the, the great God that lives within. Anyway, we've got historical context. Yes, make the (laughing). Yes, anyway, so yeah, that that was the sort of things I was thinking thinking about that. And also about yeah, also about not having to be clean. That was really nice. Having been an archaeologist, I spent quite a lot of my time not being clean. So it was something that I quite sort of enjoyed, really. I remember Hazel saying about her journeys back - I think it might have been from Aldermaston to Worthing, but it might have been Greenham as well, but when she sat on the train, people would avoid her because of the smell of the woodsmoke. But I love that smell. I just absolutely love that smell. Again, it's like the music. It's one of those things that sort of takes you back. And even if I'm sort of, you know, sitting at a little fire now, although it was in a bowl-y thing you know, you still have that - yeah, I think I think a lot of the important things about Greenham - senses, not just the head stuff or the politics. But what you could see what you could hear what you could smell, you know hearing things. You have to use your sense of hearing, you know, when you're laying in a ditch somewhere, you're listening. Or you hear a rustle, and it's some birds coming up rather than the police coming from somewhere. Yeah, and a lot of being close to nature as in lying in ditches. And peeing, you know and peeing outside which a lot of women had real problems - a friend of mine who will remain nameless, we had to go and practice, for her to learn how to pee outside, because it really freaked her out.

Especially after dark. Being in being in nature after dark, a lot, you know - we've got an even more urban culture now. But for urban dwelling women, it was right, really scary out in the dark. I've always felt safer at night out in the countryside to be honest.

Yes because - and also you learn to walk in the dark. I mean, you think you can't see anything, but actually, you can, after a few minutes, your eyes adjust. And, and you can walk in the dark and I mean, we did spend a lot of time either walking inside Greenham in the dark, although Greenham was quite well lit. I mean, there's, there was quite a lot of - you had to avoid the lights in a lot of places.

Floodlights.

Floodlights, and various other things and, and stuff. You know, especially if you wanted to go to the silos or the vehicle watch or somewhere like that. And erm - but on the Plain, it was completely dark. Completely dark until you got to where they'd stored the convoy. And my most scary moment was walking into a cow in the dark. Because there was this big, warm, fleshy thing. It's like, oh my god! What is it!? I still remember that. Because you couldn't see them, you couldn't see them. They were just, they must have been brown

cows or something like that, rather than sort of Friesians or something. Yeah, that was really scary. Most scary moment walking into a cow in the dark.

Better than walking into a ditch in the dark!

Yeah. But I was just thinking about those things when I was yeah, when I was going for a little walk last night, it sort of reminded me, you know. Of how it can be lovely to be somewhere which is a site of sort of militarism and destruction because of its beauty. And that is such a strange juxtaposition really. You know, you're somewhere horrible, and yet it can be very beautiful. So that was one thing. Did you want me to talk a bit about WATFY because we were going there, and Women in Black?

You've you mentioned it. I mean, I - and I know that you were involved with quite a few other smaller things, but, that were offshoots of Greenham like wasn't there a boat action on Southampton water?

Oh, god yes Sea Action!

Were you there?

Hmm!

I mean you don't have to talk about everything but um.

No, I think, I think probably Sea Action was quite scary because I'm hopeless on boats. And we did go to I mean, there was a women's boat.

Yeah.

And I think at some point, we didn't always have it but at some point, we got custody of it. And I had, still had a green 2CV and had to carry, drag this inflatable because I actually had a tow bar and having oh - did they pay for me to have to, because nobody wanted to actually drive it. That was, that was scary with a tow bar but we used to take action mainly around Portsmouth or Gosport with US, either US military massive aircraft carriers that were coming in, or to do with the nuclear warheads which were being brought into Portsmouth because they, before they started taking them by road, as they do currently with Trident, they actually used to take them by sea so that they come from Coalport all the way down to Portsmouth, and then they'd go back up to be serviced. And so it was also associated with that. So if submarines were - and submarines would come in as well. And we used to have to wear wetsuits. And there was somebody who used to go to every single jumble sale they possibly could, and get the wetsuits so that there were always wetsuits for everybody. And we did do training at Calshot training centre. So, I mean I didn't have a clue what to do with boats. I was absolutely petrified most of the time. And when I met my current partner, who likes doing things on boats, I just thought, this relationship really isn't going anywhere. Be-

cause I can see she's completely enjoying herself with this, and I think I'm going to die. So I was really scared. Yeah, all I can say is that we did lots of actions we,

Well here we are Sian, love conquers all!

We also did some very, very foolish things. And I remember one particular thing at the, I mean, at the - a group of women in the women's boat at the Portsmouth arms fair, where four of us who didn't have a clue what we were doing really were zooming around. And it was great, because the arms fair was actually on an island. And it was possible - I didn't get onto the island, but some other women did manage to get onto the island and into the arms fair. But we were trying to do that thing. And they started buzzing us with, one of those - you see I'm so technical, one of those planes that goes up, and then it pushes a lot of air down to make it go off. Anyway, it was just like we were being blasted with hot air from this plane above in order to get rid of us. And we were boiling. And the water was all turbulent. And somebody, who shall remain nameless, who I didn't really know at that time and her friends were just laughing. Because we just couldn't we'd just stupidly gone under the, under the path of this massive aircraft, which could have, we found out later, could have killed us. But anyway, we were so stupid. We didn't know. I mean, you know, there were some people who really, really knew what they were doing. And we relied on them. Yeah, sorry, but it was just, I mean, there's a lot of things we did that were very, very risky. I think that we had an awful lot of confidence about it, you know, that we thought, we can do this. And I think there's, there was a very high amount of adrenaline involved. You know, like in actions and yeah, in any action, I mean, it's a high adrenaline count. I think that's what kept a lot of interest which was quite good. I don't know what happened to Sea Action in the end - I was the treasurer of Sea Action, and I was sorting out some paperwork. I think, I think I don't know. Yeah, I don't know how that finished. You'd have to talk to somebody else who's involved in it.

And also, that was, I mean, I remember this is something that really came out of Blue Gate, but it was the peace tours. And then years cycling, and then then a year when we used vehicles and I did that one up and met you up at Menwick in Scotland.

I think the cycling ones were a bit later. I think they came out of Aldermaston, the first Women on the Road for Peace on bikes - the photo is outside the gate at Aldermaston. And then there was a few there was a couple of those I think maybe three, two or three.

Yeah, just around sort of Hampshire.

And as far as sort of the arms fair place, Farnborough where there's a lot - I think that was the sort of, going up towards London. I went on the - I didn't go on the first Women on the Road for Peace tour. But I went on two others and

yeah, that was great. That was such a good idea. It involved that sort of Greenham network but also involved an awful lot of other people who'd been to the Greenham. And it was, especially after Greenham was sort of not so much the focus, when it was the sort of - the missiles had gone and there were fewer women coming to Greenham, but there were still a lot of Greenham Women around the countryside. So it was very easy to make contact with them - or I think sometimes contact if there weren't any Greenham Women around would make contact with CND groups or whatever - so that we had an itinerary. We went from base to base, we were very rarely anywhere more than one night, which was very good in terms of escaping although quite complicated if people got held overnight. And it was, it was very targeted, I think, in terms of raising issues, and broader than the nuclear issue, but around the sort of military, the militaristic nature of Britain and the number of sites of militarism that were around. And I think in some ways, it gave a lot of you know, local groups were quite pleased that somebody turned up to do something. Because, you know, in the sort of early '80s, I remember there being a map produced which showed 182 military sites in Britain with US whatever. And that focus, you know, back when there were peace camps absolutely everywhere yeah, had just gone away. And so though there were very, very few, very, very few camps - and also, you know, people went and gave - sometimes people gave talks to local groups or local groups came and visited us for supper. And when we went to Porton Down, I will say that the Salisbury group nearly killed us all, because they made us a very nice TVP stew with chocolate in it, like some sort of, you know, South American version of a beef stewed beef recipe. But they made it with TVP, which in those days was not as highly processed as it is now. And a large number of women, some women were very, very ill, and other women were not quite so ill. One particular woman I know was going to go and do a talk somewhere but had to turn around and go back. But it seemed ironic that we were being poisoned outside Porton Down. I mean they were very kind. And they didn't mean to do that. But it was really really bad (laughing). But yeah, and it was - I mean, obviously, you know, there were certain people who'd get left behind or who'd left their guitar behind and you'd have to go back sort of a long way and find them. It was, it was it was good. And I think it was a really good thing to do. And that sort of network - there was a mailing list for that network, which sort of came from the Green from Greenham's mailing list. And when we started doing, Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia which emerged really out of the, emerged out of the Greenham network, but very specifically out of the arms fair in Portsmouth because the Yugoslav government was there. And at that time, it was the 11th biggest arms producer in the world. And it was clear that the the war was, was, was was about to happen, or that various wars were about to happen. And it's sort of, it sort of arose from a discussion around there and I think a discussion at Blue Gate at some point. And we had this sort of, war is menstrual envy thought. And I think the initial idea was just to take sanitary towels. But obviously it got more refined than that. And so basically, with the exception of a few sort of added Quakers, essentially, it was Greenham Women. I think, yeah, all the way through from '92 to '99, which was the last convoy, the one that went to Kosovo. All of the women who were

involved I think, there was one woman who wasn't a Greenham woman. Anyway - but she was involved with stuff up North. It was, yeah, it's quite interesting because I think that it had an ethos to it that I never encountered with any other - apart from the odd group that you'd meet, who were doing things with respect for the refugees that we were taking stuff for. And I think that came from the fact that I suppose all of us had spent a lot of time thinking about war, and what would happen. And, you know, what we understood by war. So I think there are a number of principles. One was that we worked with everybody. We worked in every ethnic group. And we worked with women who were trying to bridge those divides. We didn't work with nationalist groups. And there were very many nationalist groups. And very many women, women, nationalist groups, I mean, who would blame everybody else for everything. So it was those women who were doing sort of transversal politics, and women who were trying to keep the links between the different countries. Women who remained in contact and still remain in contact with each other. You know, I mean, that's the really lovely thing about it, is, you know, I was at a Zoom meeting the other day, and there was a woman from Croatia, then there was one from Belgrade there. You know, they've known each other and been in touch with each other and, you know, all the time since '91. And are part of that same grouping, you know, it's just really, really, that sort of commitment to working across boundaries. And also a commitment to, you know - we wrote to UNHCR, and various other people, and asked them to send us some just general guiding principles about taking aid and they didn't take any, they didn't give us anything. We, you know, we just discovered that it was a whole world of corruption and awfulness. And so everything we took was new. As far as I remember - I think we made some exceptions when people asked us for shopping trolleys, or something. And everything that we took was what was asked for. Or if we got offered something that hadn't been asked for we would bring and say 'Do you want to have this? Yes or no?' And if we people didn't want it, we would sell it. And we'd do car boot sales to get rid of things. We'd also sell - we did a big thing around underwear for women, which was supported by Cosmopolitan, and the Women's Institute. And also that network of Greenham Women everywhere. There were Greenham Women in different groups around the country who would raise money, and then go to their local market and buy a big box of knickers and send them to us. You know, it was just - or like, somebody might send us a pair of knickers or something. So that, so that - we really, really tried very hard to make sure that what we were taking would be needed. Because we would go to refugee camps where we would meet women, you know, sitting in the sort of sheds, in refugee camps, and there'd be 800 teddy's you know, and they'd be strung up on the walls because people had bought stuff that they didn't want. And I remember meeting one group that I thought, god, you're doing the right thing. It was a group of hairdressers driving around in the van, going to refugee camps and cutting hair. I just thought yes, that's what you, you know. That's what you need, to be doing doing stuff that is, you know - or people who would do the same with fruit because people weren't getting nutritious food and they weren't getting good meals and people would just go and go to a fruiter and load up with a big lorry and then just drive around and see who

wanted it. There was a group in Croatia that did that. And that just seemed appropriate. And I'll just tell you one moment, which is one of my favourite moments is when we got given loads and loads of, they very generously donated us I think about a tonne of washing powder. And we were working with a women's laundry in Packrats Across Boundaries, where Serbian and Croatian women were trying to work together. We gave it to the women who did the laundry in Packrats and they said, 'We can't take all this we just really can't.' They said, 'Go and give it to somebody else.' And then we went to another camp, which was very temporary that had been, people had just moved in to workers, construction workers cabins because there was nowhere else for them to be. And we were taking sanitary towels and basically stuff like that. And we said, 'Is there anything else you need?' And this woman said, 'We really need some washing powder.' And it was like, magic truck moment. And we opened the back of the truck. And we said, 'Take it.' That was really nice.

I think also we should mention the rape, rape crisis training.

I think that obviously, you know, aid is useful, but it's just papers over the cracks, really. And the the commitment that we were able to do, because of the funds that we were able to raise and the generosity that people had meant that first of all, we were able to fund people from Dublin and somewhere else to go and do training. I mean, this is because - right background, for people who don't know, allegations of rapes were made by a group called Trešnjevka, which is one of the nationalist women's groups, a Croatian group who found this out from a lot of the Bosnian women who are fleeing to Croatia as refugees. And it gradually became more widely known. So we actually ended up working with a different group on it, because they were using it for the nationalist project. And then we found some women who weren't doing that. And so from that beginning of providing - and it wasn't just training in counselling women who have been raped because a lot of women were still very, very reluctant to actually even mention the rapes, but trauma counselling generally. And a lot of them had lost their families, their sons or their husbands and their friends. There was - it extended into bereavement counselling, and wasn't - they put together a really, really - I wasn't involved with the organising of that - but the programme was really, really well put together. But yeah, so there were quite a lot of offshoots to it, which weren't just about taking aid. But also was about keeping in touch with those women's groups. And, you know, I know now how much they appreciated - and it's quite interesting as far as Women in Black are concerned, because I've now met Women in Black from Italy, who used to go there and do the same thing. And Women in Black in the Netherlands who also took convoys of aid, we never saw each other while we were doing that, but we're all still, you know, that in a way is a little bit like Greenham. It's an experience that a lot of women went through, and somehow has held that group - some at a length some very, very close together. And, yeah, again, it's like a space. Yeah, it's coming back to this sort of space for women thing, really. To sort of, you know, nourish each other. And I mean, I'm part of a Women in Black lesbian group now,

which has got women from about 20 different countries, and we have a Zoom meeting once a month. And I think it's really important. Somehow, just this sort of knowing and understanding and looking at, looking at where women are at now, who've sort of done all these years. You know, we're all about the same age, and like talking to women in the US about what they've been going through for the last, you know, year especially, and women in South Africa who are dealing with Covid, and what that's doing and stuff. So Women in Black, for information purposes, is one of the organisations WATFY was in touch with - Women in Black was, is an anti-militarist group, specifically against war and violence against women. So against war, against militarism, and against violence against women and sees the continuity between all of those. And I think for me, meeting that group in '92 was when all my politics fitted together because at Greenham there was like women, and there was nuclear weapons. And there was internationalism, and there was non violence. But the militarism that constructs everybody's daily lives wasn't a sort of big thing on the agenda. That whole infrastructure that makes war possible that gives consent for war and violence and stuff like that to happen. And there's clear links between violence in the community, violence in the home - and the violence of militarism wasn't actually part - and it may be mainly that I didn't meet the women who were thinking those things. But I wasn't thinking those things then. The women who were Women in Black in 1992, it was just like, all the pieces had fallen into place. And it all made sense. So that - and also the, the transversal politics and working across boundaries, the not making a difference, not having enemies, you know, and working within what, you know, the other communities that were in the war with you. So yeah, I think I think for me, that's

And am I correct in thinking that that Women in Black actually was initially, initially between Israeli and Palestinian women?

Yes, originally set up in the Second Intifada in 1988, then women from Italy, went to Israel and Palestine to give them support, they brought the idea back to Italy. Then when the war broke out in Yugoslavia, they went to Yugoslavia with that idea, and it was picked up, especially by women in Belgrade. And then during the war, all these different women's groups would go to visit different organisations. And although they weren't called Women in Black in the other countries, there was this network of pre war feminists who, who identified clearly as feminists who identified as non-nationalist, a lot of them identified as Yugoslav, because they didn't want to be a Croat or whatever. And then they had a series of conferences, some of them during the war. I went to one, last year of the war think. And then those became more and more international, because they started off being like, of women from the region, especially refugees who ended up in Belgrade, and they got bigger. And so from that, you know - say a woman might come from France and go home and set up a Women in Black group or like Laurence went and stayed with Women in Black, I think for about six years, you know, so the network grew. And now I would say there's Women in Black, mainly in Europe, but also in South Africa, in various Latin American countries. And the most recent group

is a group in Armenia, which I suppose is Europe, but it's sort of central, Central Europe. And so that, you know, that has been really difficult this last year where Armenia and Azerbaijan have been at war. And some of the members of the group have lost family, brothers. I mean, you know - and so in a way Women in Black has been able to support them and send them in a way well, we were doing but not directly - but actually send money so that they can actually support the refugees. And I think there is a hope that there will be a way of bringing Azerbaijani women together with Armenian women to make that cross - but that that's something that's being discussed for a possible zoom conference later in the year. So I suppose yeah, I suppose it's all sort of ongoing. It feels a bit difficult now under Covid, and stuff like that, where there's not that sort of immediacy of being able to actually do things.

It also reminds me of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which yes, was, they were, they've been around for a very long time unlike Women in Black. I mean, they were - no they weren't that link - that movement was already there at the beginning of Greenham, wasn't it?

First World War. Yeah, yeah. Because it brought together women. I mean, one of the things we're doing in this book that is being written about the history of Women in Black is looking at the antecedents. The influences and what you know, and obviously, Greenham is one and WILPF, is one of the others and there were many WILPF women who were part of Greenham. And there were many WILPF women who also continued to be part Aldermaston as well. And one of the interesting things now about WILPF is that they set up this organisation 10 years ago called Voices of African women, which is something that, you know - we talked about the sort of whiteness of Greenham and the, you know, generally the whiteness of the peace movement. But there are women within that group who are working within WILPF, and influencing Women in Black and also doing joint vigils with Women in Black in London. You know, to sort of bring these things much closer together, because, you know, I think, really, they're, they're, you know, we're living in such a fucking racist society that it is racist not to actually address those structural issues, or at least try and shed light on things, which are, you know - I think, I think that because this is about violence in the community, and it doesn't really matter whether it's violence against women or violence against men. There is a violence within communities, that is being directed disproportionately at people of colour. And it's not just, it's not just a physical violence, you know, it's like a some sort of structural violence, which, you know, affects outcomes for women's health and affects all sorts of things. So there's, there's so many interlinking things and there's things then that interlink with, with the need to sort of address the issue of of climate change and the climate emergency. Yeah, it doesn't stop really.

I - so you're, you're beginning, you know, you're telling us now quite a lot about the, your continued involvement, and it's obviously gone on throughout your life. I mean, one of the, one of my sort of concluding questions is, how did your, how did your

involvement with Greenham change your life? You know, what impact do you feel it had on your life as well as in a broader cultural meaning as well?

How did it change - I saw camping as the way of delivering politics. I loved it, you know. Yeah, camping, direct action, all of those sorts of things. It just, yeah, doing things and actually, you know, physically challenging the boundaries of, of militarism, you know, but that's what you do. You went and you went at the edge of it, you didn't march up and down, in fact, in London, walking back and forth going ban the bomb. You went there, and you did something that would undermine that institution. Or would, you know, and I think, I don't know, maybe yesterday, I didn't mention, you know, the sort of amazing creativity and humour with which Greenham did it, the inventiveness. You know, you had to invent different things to do and you'd spend hours and hours doing really stupid things like making fairy outfits for small children so you could have a teddy bears picnic or something inside the base and put the small children over the fence. I don't know. Just, just that sense that you don't actually have to do politics you know in a particular way. That, there's all sorts of ways of doing - and I miss it. You know, after I left Aldermaston there was like a big, big, big gap, really. Because that is the way to do it.

Yeah.

And, you know, it's not something that's going to reinvent itself again, which is, you know - I mean there are different ways of doing politics. And, you know, there's, there's a sort of legacy as well that, I think, that maybe isn't appreciated from Greenham. I mean, on a very simple level, all the CB radios that we used for Cruise Watch we gave to the anti-roads, protesters who were up in the trees around Newbury. And the same people or some of the same people who'd supported Greenham started supporting the Newbury tree protesters, you know. And there were certain things I mean, yeah, okay, maybe at Greenham we didn't dig tunnels, but there's certain elements of how you take direct action, how you have, how you do things. That there is, I think, a sort of legacy, you see it in all sorts of protests, and particularly environmental protests that happen now. You know, there was a lot of thinking that went on. And some it might have seemed a little bit tedious. And obviously, you know, there were very, very diverse opinions about stuff. There were certainly very diverse opinions about stopping the convoy. You know, but those debates were had. And I think that's the important thing, that there was a lot of thinking around what you should do. A lot of planning. There was consideration about what is safe, what is harmful, you know, that what you would not do, and what you would do. And of course it would vary, but I think that those sort of discussions are just like really, really important. And I think that maybe, and I'm probably generalising here, it was easier for women to have those discussions about non-violence with each other. I think it was 2000 that some of us spent the night on top of the silos on New Year's Eve, and we watched the fireworks and we could see fireworks from five different places. It was amazing. It was just like we had our own orchestra of fireworks going off. But it was just the best decision. It was such a wonder and it was just re-

ally, I mean, I'd been on the silos before but it was just that sort of, yeah, these are back now. These are proper land and we can see all the rest of the land around it. So it's lovely. That was really, really nice.