

Tanya Myers

So let's start at a kind of beginning point that makes sense when talking about Greenham and your whole experiences. So, perhaps, if I just ask you first kind of how you came as an individual to be part of this thing called the peace movement?

Ah, you mean broader than Greenham itself?

Yeah.

Okay, I won't dwell on it too much, because otherwise you'll get a life story. (Laughs). But I was born into a family who were very politically aware. And as much as they could be, I guess, in the '60s, um, they were politically active, as much as they could be in a middle class village in the southeast of England. They were both members of the Communist Party. And, you know, a very different notion of what communism is, than it was, say, in Russia or in Eastern Europe. It was a socialist vision, I guess, really, they embraced. So my early years growing up, there wasn't so much about meetings, because it was that - that didn't really happen um, in my early years - but there was literature, and books and thinking and attitudes, and they were very progressive about everything, really. Um. And then when we moved to Brighton, I was about 14, that's when the meetings would start to happen in the house. And I now look back and realise that, you know, there was a seminal moment when I was about maybe 11, when a very influential friend in my parents' life - we used to go walking through the peaks. And he asked me one day 'Tanya, what do you think of television?' And it sounds crazy - that's 1968, something like that, 1969 maybe when I was asked that question, but for an adult, who was a professor, you know, to actually fall out of step with the other adults and decide to walk alongside a young girl, and ask her opinion about something was significant. And this man was also one of the Communist Party guys. And I just remember that feeling of the empowerment of somebody being actually interested, in my opinion about something. And I say that

because it sort of becomes significant later on. So in teenage years, the house was always full of activists. My father, a diabetic, became quite ill - he had a number of heart attacks. And by the age of about 49, which is obviously young, he decided, after he found himself driving the wrong way down a motorway, to stop work. And he trained himself in public speaking, he became - they become members of CND. Um. And what I forgot to say was that we've got loads of photographs on the very first Aldermaston walks, that would have been in the, I think the my first one must have been 1962, something like that, because my brother is in a push chair, as well - in a pram. So I would have been maybe about 4. So yeah, 1962. And there's photographs of the first CND marches. So from a really little, you know, tiny tot, in a sense, I was sort of embraced in the peace movement from that aspect as well. And my father learnt how to do public speaking, and started to go around the country speaking at - largely at Women's Institutes. And so he did this extraordinary sort of change. And my mother was always fundraising in a very sort of active more directly, actually, with the Communist Party than CND - that was my father's tack, really. So I guess it was just normal. It was, and it wasn't until I got - I got extremely ill. I had tuberculosis - I went off and travelled around the world, as many of us did. In those days, it wasn't maybe quite so common, but I was lucky. I went to India and Afghanistan and I started to - I was there literally, just before the Russian invasion in Afghanistan, and we'd been stuck there for a while in curfew. So that there were sort of events travelling to Israel as well. I'd gone to Israel and stayed in Kibbutz, and I was on the West Bank. So I was watching the Israeli planes, you know, flying over and hearing the bombing, and it was just this sort of awareness as you travelled around the world that you were constantly moving into these zones, really where people were living real conflict. I can remember the the gun - sort of seeing a gun on a - sitting next to a woman on a bus, going from Tel Aviv and thinking, oh there's something pressing in my side. And it was the woman's, you know, what if they - one of those powerful sort of machine gun things. And it was that thing of awakening from being a middle class, you know, idealistic um, hippie, really, I think I would have called myself a hippie at the time. So, yeah, so I thought, you know, travelling was really important. And then I got

tuberculosis and basically sort of nearly died at sort of 22. And I think it was that life-death, I haemorrhaged in both my lungs, so really sort of almost drowned, really, in my own blood. But that experience - coming through that experience, made me value life, I think, in a very, very different way. And it's around about that time that I then met, I went to Greenham. So I have to sort of understand that, for me, my very particular journey, you know, just honouring the journeys that all the other women were doing at the same time, you know, around me - that's really when I think, you know, in a - there was a yearning, there was an absolute hunger, to feel change, to see change. I was also on very strong medication in the first few months after tuberculosis, and I used to have these terrifying dreams where I'd wake up, and everything was just like, blinded by light. And I, and one time, I think I was living in London at one point, and a lorry must have gone over, you know, one of those sort of bump thingys, you know, some little island or something. And I remember hearing this sort of bang. But at the time, I thought it was an explosion, I thought, you know. And it's interesting, because we look decades ahead, and we look at 9/11, you know, the sort of the, I can understand how most probably the next generation has this sense of, you know, slightly alert, slightly on edge, the tension of fear, you know, apprehension, you know.

Was there a feeling of that already, in the kind of mainstream um, around nuclear weapons and military presence?

Yeah, absolutely. There was an extraordinary writer - EP, Thompson, had written an article called the Cold War. But in it, there was a whole way of thinking about things as well, about understanding the other - how we create the other, and the fear of the other. And often what, what was really I think, happening is our political thinking was getting much clearer. We were understanding how, in a sense, the west was manipulating the notion, um, in order to retain - it's always it's - it has been - it still is divided, and rule, divided and rule. And I think, you know, it wasn't until I got to Greenham that I really went deep, much, much deeper into the understanding of what patriarchy, and then really understanding the link between capitalism and patriarchy. So, in a

sense from - I'd also been ever so lucky and gone to - after travels and a year at Aberystwyth University, which was also wonderful - meeting extraordinary women everywhere and friends. Um - other friends, then I got - I went to Dartington College of Arts. Dartington is also significant as well, because it was there that I met a dear friend, Babs, who was also at Dartington. And it was she who basically took my took me by the hand in, I think it was in 1981 it would have been - the first winter I guess, at Greenham.

So that was when you first came to Greenham in '81?

Yeah, yeah, and it was very cold! (Laughs). But I remember - I just remember her saying 'Oh, there's a group of women' - we were actually visiting another theatre company at the time. So we were sort of hitchhiking around, really. And she said to me 'Oh' - we had the choice of either going back to Devon or hitchhiking on, and she said 'Oh, let's let's go up to see what's going on at this peace camp.' (Laughs). And in a sense, it wasn't such a crazy thing for me to think about. I had been aware of peace camps. I had been aware, you know, partly, you know, my activities with CND. Also, um, you know - I'm trying to remember - I did a weird thing when I was about 16, of going into Brighton High Streets with balloons where I - I god knows why - I didn't even know I was going to do drama or anything at that time. And I'd written messages of, you know, love, (laughs) love, peace, everything - as this teenager. And I used to go out on a on a Saturday after my Saturday job and give out these balloons, and these little messages for people - sort of dressed up. I mean, I used to come back and mum would say 'Where have you been?' 'Handing out peace', you know, but it was that - I only say that story, because inherent there in that teenager was that desire to do anything, to do something. And and I think also to be brave, to not worry about what other people thought of you (laughs) - do you know what I mean? Something in there was already saying you have to step out of the mould, you have to be prepared to, to stand out. It certainly wasn't an ego thing. I don't think so anyway, you know, it, you know, I didn't tell anybody, I didn't - I don't think I told my school friends or anything about it. I'd just go to school, and it would be like, you know,

that's what I do. Yes, so, of course, we're talking about are we 19... I think that the sense of the nuclear threat was capitalised upon by the media, by the west. I mean, that was obviously our perspective. I didn't have the, the, the, the, you know, the Russian or the East European perspective. But it was, it was deliberately fuelled, you know, the whole - it was how the west in a sense, created its sense of identity, and rationale, and how it argued to its own value systems, you know, that sort of in terms of how it justified itself. Yeah, we had to, the Red Devil, the Reds under the beds. And there was a sense of real - you were cranks. You know, I mean, we're not thinking that far back, also, think of how pacifism was treated as well, you know in the First and Second World War, there's still this sense of, you know, one's honour to the nation one's honour to - and we've just come out of the Second World War with this, you know, with, in a sense, where we'd been fighting fascism, where you think also there was this unity of a new thinking - well, you know, the birth of the NHS, the fact that free, you know, everybody should be entitled to health care. I mean, and there was the birth of in a sense, the real - the government of the Labour Party, of course, as well. Um. Maybe very different to what we understood it to be in more recent years, but, you know, it was a, and then the '60s was a great explosion of hope and potential. I mean, that's more, I sort of missed the '60s, but you know, you got The Beatles, you've got flower-power, you've got a hope, and revolution, you know, the students incredibly, you know, really active militant students, closing down the universities, you know - sit ins, you know, about not having a drinks machine in there (laughs) in the canteen. I mean, anything, you know, I mean, there were much more important things, but I think also people were looking out, there was an education system that was evolving, which was embracing the working class and opening its doors, you know, to, to a youth, really, it was a youth revolution, wasn't it, really, I'd say, in the '60s, and, and, of course, that became the generation now, which is in its, you know, we call it the charmed generation really, that got their pensions and sort of, you know, in a way fared quite well, according to the changes.

So as a young person then in 1981, I suppose, even before you got to Greenham, what did you think that it might be?

Um, I suppose I can't, I - at the time, I was, I was very, I'd really woken up to feminism. And that was what had happened at sometime when I'd been in in Aberystwyth, I'd sort of started to read literature, find poetry, seek out new ways of thinking and looking at the world through the feminine perspective. And I also think it was to do with the fact that I had a very sort of polemic rather, pragmatic childhood in terms of the way discourse happened in the house. And a very suspicious outlook upon anything religious or or um, spiritual. Now, I totally get that, I really understand that, um, my grandmother moved in with us and was a sort of mystic, and was always very superstitious, you know. And so I found myself sort of caught - because I think as a child, there is always this sense of mystery, and a sense of what is the spiritual. So, I think I was quite hungry, that yearning feeling was also this, this feeling that there's something more - there's something magical - there's something, you know, so I found myself on this sort of seeking quest. And I think, you know, the question of feminism and the question of Greenham are, and the question of spirituality are very, very - are inseparable. So it's a very, it's an important shift, I think, with the, with the feminine, feminist politics, that I was waking up to maybe from the age of 17/18. The personal is political. I mean, the first time I heard the personal is political, it was like (gasps), it was like, wow, so actually, my personal struggles have a significance. I have to understand how they relate to the outside world. So it's not just about changing what's out there. It's about understanding my own inner domain, and how the two relate. So I think in a very sort of like, scrabble-y sort of way, I was one of the, you know, millions of women at that time, who I think there was like, like a zeitgeist in a way, there was this sense of, you know, we were not alone. And whichever way you turned, you'd find women - you know from other countries and whatever, there was this real sense of a - yes, so literature, reading, poetry, everything became very important. So I think when you talk about 1981, and you talk about going to the camp, I was already - I'd already become empowered I'd say, as a young woman, to be seeking a language for myself. And also I had decided I was become

by 1981, I had decided I was going to be a theatre maker. So this is, you know, I'm talking about age of 22, really, I knew these things. I knew I was going to be making theatre. And I knew, I wanted to understand what it was to be a woman. I already knew I was fighting, in some way, a status quo. So it was quite natural to go to the peace camp, because it was just like, the next thing to do. (Laughs). It wasn't like oh, I'm gonna, you know, bah, bah, bah, bah, it was just, it was there. And other women - and like I say, Babs said 'Let's go.' And I went, and we were only there - I can't really remember that first visit. I remember being bowled over by it. And I remember it being bloody cold.

What was the overall thing you were kind of bowled over by?

Um. The seriousness of it, actually. I think when I got there - I don't know what I was expecting. I thought maybe I was thinking of a sort of cozy group of women, you know, around a fire. And actually when you got there, it was really hard. It was hard. You know, first of all there was obviously Main Gate - what later came called Yellow Gate. Um. And it was muddy. And it was, you know, bits of plastic - it was, it didn't look very pretty at all. Um. And, you know, you sort of, and there was definitely a sense of welcoming, but you didn't have somebody there going 'Oh, hello, how are you? Who are you? You know, life was plodding on already at that point, you know, there was a sense of activity. But the thing about the camp also is that it was a sense of waiting, you know, that yes, there were things to be done, there were always things to be done, there was water to be fetched, there was, er, you know, the fire to be looked after, there was food to be prepared all the time. So, there was washing up to be done there was talking to the press to be done. There was - but there was reading, there was discussing all, you know, new, new women arriving all the time. So, you could always be busy, but you, but, in fact, I mean, this is my own personal tendency, I wouldn't say that every woman would have done the same. My tendency is to find myself in a situation and think, how can I be useful? That was my conditioning, my training and that's how I - so I find a way of being useful, and then I feel safe. And then I find a way of relating and connecting and finding out who, who people are. So

I guess that's what I wanted to do. But there was a sort of energy of curiosity amongst all of us, who were we? How were we? You know, but it was also really cold. So a lot of energy was just spent in surviving, actually, it sounds daft. But you know, going to the - finding somewhere, you know, going to the toilet, washing, you know, when you, when you stayed - washing, um, finding food, shopping, organising - all of that stuff. You know, just on a very mundane level. Um. And there was always discussion going on, and decisions to be made. And I think the first thing that really hit me on that first visit was I was immediately involved - there was a woman, I'm trying to remember, there was a caravan there. There was a woman and quite often - and obviously, you could make the caravan maybe a little bit warmer. And the women who'd been there, I'm guessing, er, you know, right from the word go, there was a sense that this was where they would meet and talk about things, you know, really core questions, but everything always seemed to come back to the camp, you know, back to the fire, which was literally only a few, you know, 100 metres - not even that maybe 60/70 meters away or something. And it was interesting how right from the beginning, I realised it we - decisions were made by consensus.

Interesting. Yeah.

You've heard consensus?

Yeah. Yeah. Collective kind of decision making.

Yes. And it can go on and on, and on, and on, and on, forever! And it can go on and on and on and on. And you can get up and walk away from it and think, oh, I don't know about this, you know. Because of-course, it is a very interesting and it needs to go on and on and on, and it involves people's personalities, egos, um, opinions, um, but learning that process of consensus, and listening and understanding and respecting that process of consensus in itself was consciousness changing. Because you'd go, you know, a) you'd be listening to opinions that you'd never heard of before, you'd be listening to information and knowledge that you'd - facts that you'd never been aware of before. And the most

critical thing I think, aware of your I'd say I - sorry, I'll go back to I, I would become aware of my own prejudices, my own preconceptions about a person, or about something that somebody said, and I think if, if anything was most probably one of the - and it's still there, I think anybody who considers themselves chooses to consider themselves a Greenham woman will say so, because they still are. Because it was a moment in time, and a place in time, where we became sort of who we were to be. I sort of - I so much of myself was forged over those 2 and a half years, really. Um, it and continued to be - it gave me the basis of - it was like it was like being in a cauldron of transformation.

What kind of changes did you witness in the others around you?

Oh crikey, on so many levels, really. I mean, I'll just say this now, because it's just jumped into my head is that one thing - that I feel will relate to this project, I'm sure - and I won't be the only one to say we were always very wary about sort of being heroines. Because we weren't, we weren't. We just happened to be women who were driven, and cared enough, and were driven and wanted to do something about it. And then I think what happened, in a sense, by taking action, because we were driven we knew something had to happen, um is that the care and the bonds that developed you know, between, between women were so strong and enabling - and in a sense, the actions I think at the camp, were almost like rites of passage. They themselves tell the story actually about what was happening within each of the women, within the conscious, the wider consciousness in a way, I think, of what was happening for us as individual women. So I always want to keep you know, saying this is my perspective of it, you know, there will be thousands of women out there who will have another story to tell. UM. And each story is equally valid. And, in a sense, woven together, reveals the web, you know. So I think it's extraordinary what what you're doing. Um. But there's just to be wary of the notion of somehow the, you know, that we were somehow special, or, you know - what was so special about it was how it differed, how unique, how we learnt to listen to each other, and respect each other from such different backgrounds. And, yeah, also, you know, for, you know, and that that was really amazing, we

learned, because so much of our culture, you know, was dependent upon dividing us, actually. I mean, that's the notion of patriarchy is, is that women perceive each other as 'other', in a sense in so many ways, and we are divided in every, you know, you've got the mother and the whore, you've got the, you know, doesn't matter which way you look at women, they are somehow polarised between this or that, this or that this or that, this or that. So, yeah. Um. Sorry, I can't remember - you asked something a minute ago.

It was about...

How other women changed.

Yeah, I was interested in, in both the changes you witnessed in those kind of around you - the ones you can just observe, but also within yourself, you know.

I noticed the changes really, really quickly. Um. There was always a part of myself that felt like I lacked courage. I was slightly shy. So while I was there, you know, once again, finding this thing as sort of being useful was sort of my way through. But I remember seeing some of - Green Gate happened actually, a bit later. I can't quite remember the timing of everything. But I do know, I ended up spending quite a lot of time at Green Gate, but Green Gate must have been after some of the big actions. And that in itself, is significant. Because Green Gate became actually like the women's camp, I feel, the real women's camp - for me. That's where I used to go, you know, when I did finally, you know, sort of come up for months at a time, then I would go to Green Gate

What was it about the personality, if you like, of Green Gate that drew you there?

Oh, it was, it was like a world - it was, it was it was in the forest for a start. So Yellow Gate - Main Gate was the meeting point between the world - it was the main gate into the base, or one of the main gates into the

base. Um. But it was also the face of great Greenham meeting the world, you know, so it was where the press would go. Greenham was - the Green Gate was much more private. It's um, it was there was obviously another big gate there. But actually when you entered it, you entered it through the woods, and there were two - there was like a sort of, I'd say that was like an inner sanctum even to Green Gate. So there was like the outer - where we built the benders. You know what benders are?

Yes.

Yeah. So if you were lucky, you know, you found - you'd find where the buses, and I can't remember even what the wood wood was, but as much as possible, you'd be working with the, the twigs and the foliage and everything that was already there. So you'd sort of bend it and weave it and whatever. And if you were organised, and I don't think I was - I think my first bender, I completely was totally crap! It was really awful. I woke up in the morning and there wasn't a bender, you know what I mean, it had all sort of gone (makes escaping noise), all gone to pieces. But I remember somebody had given me some wool, I think so I tried to sort of weave it, but it was a bit of a failure. And, but actually you did get quite I mean, I still make benders now I do benders with the children now.

Really?

Yeah, I get I got quite good at it. But um, but of-course in some of the other gates, you couldn't have benders, you couldn't have a bender. You know, after after a while once the main gate was established, you couldn't have benders there because there was no foliage. And so you had to put up tents and things like that. But generally I stayed in benders. And so you'd have this outer sort of part of Green Gate, which was lovely. We still used to meet, and there'd be a fire and, and everything. And, you know, I just always have this particular memory of coming in one day, and there was a woman called Jude, and she was sitting on a chair. And I think Babs was there as well at that one. And I

think it might have been where I met Eleanor and Thoma for the first time as well. And I think Jude was having - Jude had this long sort of mane of hair. And I met her on a few other sort of visits. And then, and she was having it all completely, like, cut off, and with like, sort of like a Mohican bit, you know, sort of, like a dinosaur (laughs), sort of trail at the top. But it was extraordinary, just watching the hair cutting ceremony, I felt like they were ceremonies, and there'd be music, and people would be talking, and there'd be mirrors hung in the trees, which would always be sort of beautiful as well. Um. And hair brushes and things like that. (Laughs). So you'd walk through the woods with these items of toothbrushes and things like that, sort of literally hanging from trees and things, because that's where they were living and spending time.

So was the hair cutting quite a common thing? Women together?

Yeah. Yeah, the hair cutting was very, very significant. And I think the reason I most probably remember it is I didn't have my hair cut. You know, for me, I'd always worn makeup - I'd worn makeup at school, I'd worn makeup at college. And actually, I would arrive at Greenham wearing makeup. I mean, by the evening, I wasn't, you know, I mean, not, not because I'd taken it off, just because it just became irrelevant, it just irrelevant. But I would still leave Greenham and put on makeup. So there was this part of me also that felt that there was a significance amongst the women who had their hair cut. And those that didn't. And I'm not saying that's a, that's a good or bad or a whatever - I just think it's fascinating, you know, and I was one of those women that didn't have my hair cut. Babs, was a very close, I was close to, she had her hair cut. Um, and yeah, so but then when you walked - got to try and remember this, right - you carried on walking into deeper into the woods. And it was like there was a clearing, but it was like a lower, slightly lower down, um, dip into the forest. And it was sort of magical down there. And women had put their benders there that were really installed into Green Gate. You know, these were not benders that were going to just be maybe for a few nights or, or transitory, they weren't. The women were living there, there was a community at Green Gate. And actually, what happened was, I think, for the women who were coming and going a lot

more - of which I was - there was a respect that you didn't go down you. You gave, you allowed women their space. And I think there was a level of exhaustion as well, you know, coming from the actions, but also from the women at Main Gate who would need to come maybe just to chill out, just to have some space, you know? So how we began to sort of create spaces, I think where, yeah, where you could just be, became very important - that had to happen. But I loved it at Green Gate.

The claiming the, the use of space overall is very interesting, I think, because I think a lot of attention has been maybe paid to the kind of divisions between the different gates - I don't know if you felt that?

Yeah, absolutely. There was Orange Gate and Blue Gate and Violet Gate. I mean, I knew, obviously, who was at Blue Gate and you knew who was where, but I guess you tended to be, you tended to be rooted in the moment, really - you tended to be rooted with whatever was happening around you. And, and rooted to the stories and the conversations around the fire, especially. And once again being useful, you know, so when I was there, I would be the, you know, do we need water - do we - and later on, and once again, I can't quite remember the timing of this. We had Anna Furse, who runs Athletes of the Heart, she's actually - she runs the MA course at Goldsmiths now. But she had a theatre company. Um, that I used to - sorry, eating a biscuit! She had a theatre company called Blood Group. And this funny little black van, black CV wagon. And we'd gone touring across Europe with it. And she gave, I'm not too sure what had happened in her career. But at that point I was running - I wouldn't say running, what do I mean, running? Fiona Wood, and myself, we were sort of resident, we were resident basically, in the Greenham house in London. So there came a point where as the political actions grew, and actions started to happen also in London, and there was also organising of certain actions also from the London place. Um. This, this house became also significant. I think, for some of the women at Greenham, they didn't necessarily - I never really quite understood why we had the house, to be honest. (Laughs). And I was there! But it was very significant, it offered a protected space, especially for the women coming from, um, from

Holloway prison. Um. It sort of became like a halfway house. But just going back to this car, I can remember turning up with this CV, this black little van, and she was called Tulip, this little black CV, very cool little, little van. And I think Tulip lived at that camp for I think at least a year. And used to bring women, you know, up and down between London and the camp. And also it was useful for, you know, water, carrying water, and going out and doing the shopping runs and things like that.

So just picking up on that, on the kind of day to day of it all - the kind of you know, getting the water, getting the food, getting the shopping. How did you survive - how did you get resources like that?

There was a standpipe. I just remembered there was standpipe. Now how they have a standpipe, I don't know.

For the water?

Never questioned it. I mean, right at the beginning, there was a woman called Barbara, who had a house - I only went there at nighttime's actually - I went there about three times. And it was always at nighttime. And I remember we used to go to - if we needed things, quite often there might have been a big shop or something, and things might have been taken to Barbara's. But then we'd pick them up and then take them back to the camp. Um. And also there was - if certain things had to be done, I think maybe phone calls and stuff like that, or printing of things, photocopying of things, because of-course you didn't have mobile phones, you know. For actions, I think if I remember rightly, we had walkie talkies, er, for the actions, which was pretty cool! (Laughs).

And was that kind of communicating messages between camps and between groups...

Gates.

Between gates, sorry.

When you knew that there was movement going on inside the base, and you needed to alert, um, you needed to alert women at another gate.

(Edit in tape).

So I was wondering if we could talk about the actions a bit more. So what were the main ones that you were involved in, let's say?

Okay, I might just have to do a list here in my head.

That's fine!

Do you know what I mean, and they may not be in the right order. But I do remember very strongly - because I was, I was sort of strongly involved in it, in also something that happened during it, which is the Dragon - raising the dragon. And that I'm guessing, and I have a poster for that in France, I've just realised - which I managed to sort of salvage and stick onto a piece of old board. Um. And I think that says June 21st, anyway it's June, I think - that one. I mentioned to you earlier, the one where I was an egg. I went over (laughs), over the fence with about four other women, I think.

Were you all dressed as eggs?

No, no, no, I think two were teddy bears. There were a couple of teddies, there was a rabbit. It was so funny, so funny. So scary. So so so so...

Going over the fence?

Going over the fence. Yeah, yeah. But, you know, in a weird sort of way you think, oh, this is the scariest thing in the world, but it was the funniest thing in the world. I mean, I could just still remember watching, I think it must have been - it might have been Babs, actually - I just remember watching this rabbit running off down the, running off down

the runway, once they'd gone over the thing. And I was inside this egg, and I had these two little slit like things that I could see through, and that was all. And as I was trying to orientate myself, I couldn't see anything. I just had this big foam egg over me. So I must have looked ridiculous. It must have - just two little legs poking out the bottom, you know, and I was running this way, and then running that way. So I mean, anybody from the outside seeing this rabbit suddenly may come down the runway, followed by an egg that didn't know which way it was going. The two teddy bears - so funny! And you sort of, you don't know what's going to happen. The likely - the strongest likelihood is you're going to be arrested. That's the expectation. And you don't know how you're going to be treated. You're inside the base, actually, your in a sense - it's American. You're thinking how are the laws going to be different? How are we going to be treated when we're taken, when we are arrested? So you know, in all of that, but there's just this adrenaline that's going (makes fast noise). So, um...

What was the thinking behind making it um, so kind of absurd? You know, the costumes?

Yeah, I think it was, here is this big thing - here is the nuclear war - here is the nuclear threat - here is you know. There were two things one is this is fucking stupid - I do not, I am this is this reality is not my reality. Okay, it doesn't scare me. That's number one. But two, I think it was actually to show how easy it was - if this was supposed to be our national security. And this is where these missiles were going to be housed. If an egg and a teddy bear and a rabbit could like, get in there, then. Yeah, right. Okay. Cool. You know, so I mean, and, and also, just for the fun of it, there was another aspect to it, which is the, the sort of the empowerment, really of it, of just going, do you know what, we can. Because we can, and what would make it most funny for us? And the more absurd in a sense it was, the more empowering it sort of was as well, because there were lots of other actions, of-course, which were not absurd, which were not funny, empowering, maybe, but not - that had a different sort of spiritual nature, I think to them. These were crazy. And

these had to be planned, obviously. I remember making the egg and that took, you know, I had to make the materials and make it!

I didn't even think to ask you about how you made the egg! (Laughs).

Yeah, so you know, had to go and get the costumes. So these were not like, ooh, spontaneous actions. These are actions that you think - you need to be sitting around the camp, and going actually, okay, and you'd have to decide when, and you'd decide where, you'd decide what time, and then you'd think about the costume, you know, so, yeah, and they were fun. They, you know, it was boring, a lot of - it could be quite boring sitting there, you know. So inventing actions was also a very, you know, it was a creative thing to do.

And a lot of the main, really large scale actions, were very creative as well, weren't they?

They were extraordinary. Um. I think the other one - I'll go back to the Dragon. Of-course, the, you know, the one I think that just took everybody's breath away, because I just think it just went way beyond, you know, I'm sure there will be women at the core, who will be going, I never doubted for a moment. But actually the call for 30,000 women to come and Embrace the Base. And there were way more than that - I think there were like 50,000 women, I think who actually turned up, you know, it was huge. Um, nine miles of military base. I mean, my own mother came to that. And, and friends of my mother, and you know, that somehow caught the imagination of women, right the way you know, across, across the country. And also internationally, there were women from, from other countries there as well. And that was just and when the coaches just kept on arriving, kept on arriving, kept on arriving. It was just I can remember standing - I can remember standing and thinking, like, you know, where am I going to be? Actually the significance about that one as well was I was pregnant. And er, I knew I was pregnant then. And so the, the fence coming down was huge. Because I'd always have this, this real deep sense of fear. I became pregnant in the summer of '83, middle of, middle of the summer of '83.

So not too sure where that takes us in terms of actions and whatever. But I do know I was pregnant - we were in the House of Commons, so this - actually I can work things out a bit around the pregnancy really, because I'd separated - Stephen, who I'm with now, we are partners, and we have two daughters - at the time we had been together but actually we'd separated. One of the one of the main reasons we separated was because of my time at Greenham.

Really?

It became untenable. Yeah, I couldn't, I couldn't see any sense in our relationship. I couldn't and there was no doubt that I loved, I was in love with him. I don't think any - I even now, you know, I'm 60 now - at the age of 20/21/22, I was in love, but I, I couldn't, I knew I needed space, I knew I needed to look at the world in a different way. And actually, that had to be more important. So we'd actually separated and we'd and, and come together for a brief moment. And it was just after Thatcher had been voted back in, I think, and I just thought - it was this awful sense of despair. And, um, and there was there was one sort of crazy evening by a river. But I didn't know I was pregnant obviously, until, 'til later. And I actually spent all of the pregnancy, basically at Greenham. I was either at the Greenham house in London, or I was, ironically, I was working in Soho in a pub as well. Can you imagine the - this weird conflict or, you know, combination of realities going on. I was working in a pub called French's in the middle of Soho. But that was to earn some money. And then, um, yes, so I was either at the Greenham house or I was at Greenham all the way through that pregnancy. And, so there was a number of things that happened there. There was when Heseltine made the announcement in the House of Commons, it must have been maybe late November '83, maybe something like that. So I was about what, 4 months / 5 months pregnant or whatever. And we did the keening. It was spontaneous. That was absolutely spontaneous. A number of us had got into the, the upper chamber.

At the House of Commons?

It was at the House of Commons. Yeah, the balcony. Yeah, you know, where the, you can come in - there's an audience at the top.

There's a viewing balcony up there.

Yeah, that's right. And I think there were about - I can't remember how many there were of us, maybe 5/6 of us, something like that. And so we were all up in the viewing thing. And as he made this announcement that, you know, we will shoot to kill, shoot to kill. And that it had been decided that, yeah, it was a national - that Greenham women were a national security. Which, in a way, I suppose, you know, we'd been pushing for, in a weird way, you know. But in that moment, and she was making - it was Thatcher that was actually making - and I can remember, at that point, I don't know where it came from. I don't know who started it. But it just came this (makes keening noise) - the keen came at this extraordinary power of voices. We all, we all stood up and this sort of wail all happened at the same time. Of-course, the security guards are like really, really, really quickly - I think it was Jo Richards, the MP who sort of rescued us, because we were being quite mal-handled. And, and one of the other women who was with me, I can't remember who it is, I'm so sorry, whoever you are, was saying 'She's pregnant. She's pregnant, don't hurt her. She's pregnant.' And that's when Jo Richards - I think it's Jo Richards got into the lift with us and said 'Look, I'm going to, I'm going to escort you out of the building. I'm not going to let anybody touch you. Don't worry, you know, and she basically saw, protected us, and saw us out of the building. And there were other things - we got very good at doing actions in London as well, which sort of mirrored, or sort of, I think they were significant to Greenham as well. There was one we did, because also, I'm noticing that Extinction Rebellion are using these methods now, and I think it's fantastic, because you have to understand how the laws work. So as long as you keep moving, as long as you don't stop, you're actually within the law, you have to be moving at a certain speed. So we did these really, really slow - we stopped, we closed Westminster Bridge, to draw attention once again, to what was being discussed in in the House of Commons. And but we did all of that dressed up with like, war paint.

And, you know, it was sort of extraordinary face paints and sort of costumes and things like that.

Was that around the same time as that would have...?

Yeah, that would have been around about the same time, and also in Grosvenor Square - this was to do with obviously the American, you know, what was happening, sort of yeah, making the message clear. I think there was a visit happening to the American Embassy. And what happened was all the women, about 25 of us, I think, turned up with brooms, dressed up, sort of in quite elaborate costumes, and we swept the streets, in rhythm. And it sounds a bit mundane. But actually, you know, now we have flash mobs, now we have, you know, in terms of like street theatre or whatever, it was such an, it was a, it was, I remember weeping actually. Because as we were sweeping the square, it wasn't just somehow here we are, and look see us - it was actually remember Vietnam War. Remember, you know, slavery - it sort of felt, it sort of felt like when we were doing it, it was like a purging or cleansing of something on a much deeper level. It became ritualised in a way. And I think that's what a lot of the actions had at their heart - it's like we were somehow - we were, we were, we were awakening, I think, sort of magic in a way, a ritualisation - the power that ritual has to make changes in ways far beyond what maybe we can rationally work out. The very nature of doing something where a group of people are all believing deeply, and moving as one is also - you know, it can be terrifying. This can be both good and bad. I'm not saying everything imaginative is necessarily good. But I know, the intent behind what we were doing was definitely in terms of, you know, this is a ridiculous world, but it's not, you know, all of these - the existence of these cruise missiles, the demonising of these women, at Greenham, or anywhere actually, was absolutely counter to the happiness of the world, you know, the health of the world. So there was this, it became more and more a sense of this is a fight now, this is a fight. So when you're away from Greenham as well, this is a fight, this is not just something that's at Greenham - this is, this is, you know, we're all, wherever we find ourselves when we walk away from Greenham we're, we're engaged in our everyday lives you

know, with this fight. Um, the one - when the - the Embrace the Base was extraordinary, actually. I can remember because, of-course, any of us were only in one place at a time - you've got a nine parameter, nine mile perimeter fence. And you only know what's going on in your little bit. So I remember there was um, and what would happen is you get like, they call it like a Mexican wave now or something, but you'd hear this, you know, this, this (makes ululating noise) would be going around. So you'd hear it coming towards you, you know, along the fence, and then you'd pick it up and then, and it would it would carry on. So you knew in a sense, what we were learning to do was use our voices, also to connect, and also the weather. What started to happen, and this became quite remarkable is we started to - I really felt that we started to you know, in the midst of with the Embrace the Base, the weather had been absolutely awful. And there was like this sort of extraordinary window of time where it stopped raining. It just became incredibly calm. It was as though it was saying, alright (makes fast noise) 'Okay women get together, do it now!' And hen it was all over, it was like, you know (makes raining noise), down came the heavens and everything again. But there was this sort of window of time over sort of maybe, what, 6/7 hours or something where the weather just was so kind - winds had been blowing, and it calmed down.

Do you remember who you had either side of you when you're embracing the base?

Absolutely, absolutely. And I remember in that moment that I saw Fiona - this is important for me, because this is when I started the Buddhist practice, I started chanting.

Did that start at Greenham?

The very first, I have no idea what she was doing - I just suddenly saw Fiona, you know, literally in front of the fence, while the other women had started to cut, with the bolt cutters. I just remember seeing Fiona on - she was actually kneeling, and she was chanting. And I'd heard her chanting before, because we'd shared a house, the Greenham house,

but three of the women were suddenly actually chanting as well. So I went, okay. So I found myself (makes chanting noise), because I had heard it before. And I was pregnant, like I said, and then I can remember the faces - as I was chanting I was looking through, and other women were actually cutting - I mean, we all cut, but I just remember this was where it started, because it went on for quite a long time.

How long were you there for?

For the cutting, you mean?

Yeah.

I think we were there for - that was almost like the whole day. Because we were all gathering, and they didn't know what was going to happen, obviously. So there was a sort of soldier presence, it was like they knew something might be happening, because there'd been other activities as well before. But they, they sort of were just like, there. And there was the fence between us, do you know what I mean. So it was like, they were the other side, we were this side and women, obviously, maybe more women than they'd ever seen before. So you know, but I don't think they expected us to cut the fence down. I really don't. And I can remember chanting. And I remember seeing, I think it was somebody was cutting, and I can remember seeing the faces of the soldiers through the fence, and the look of fear - the look of fear on their faces. And in that moment, I thought they're boys, oh my god, they're boys, they're just boys, they're boys doing a job. And, you know, I don't mean sympathy for them in that sense, but just, just the sympathy for them as people, you know. And I could see, and I stopped chanting - I'd been chanting for a few minutes or something. And I remember going over to them and, and I started to talk to one of them through the fence, and said 'Please, there's nothing to be frightened of. Really.' Because bits of fence, you could then see, and you were hearing this (makes wailing noise) - you know, you were hearing the sounds, obviously where fences were falling, and ours was beginning to come down. And you can see they were sort of like didn't know what to do, because they'd be standing

there with a bloody gun in their hands. You know what are they going to do, shoot us? In a sense, they had orders to, to shoot, you know, but were they going to do it? They had grandmothers, young women, you know, anyway, I started talking to this guy and said 'Look, I'm pregnant.' And, and, you know, I said, 'I'm here, because it's so hard to bring a baby into this world. I feel awful. I don't want to feel awful. I don't want to feel guilty about giving birth. I want to think I'm working towards something that my daughter will feel proud of. She'll go, my mum was working towards making it a better world for me.' And I said 'That's what I'm doing. You know, that's why I'm here.' I wasn't very articulate - you're too, emotionally to be properly articulate, really. But I can remember him listening and nodding. And then I noticed that there was an older woman a little bit further along from me, who was doing the same thing - was talking to one of the soldiers. And there was another guy who was actually much more relaxed, maybe than the one I was talking to, who was just basically saying 'Okay, okay.' And he was actually sort of calming them down. And when the fence actually came down, there was nothing between us and them. And it was remarkable. I mean, it was just - what do you do? Do you know what I mean? I mean, what could they do? Nobody - so in a sense, it was like that was women, that on that occasion we did not go charging into the - there was no need. There was no need in going over the fence. One thing is, you know, dancing on top of the silos - I wasn't at that one. I know where I was for that one, because I remember seeing it on the television - I was at my parents house, actually. And I remember seeing the dancing on the silos. I must have been pregnant then, actually. And um, and just going 'Oh, my god, they've done it!' (Laughs). They've done it, because it did look extraordinary.

Yeah, I've seen that.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I remember sort of literally, I think jumping in a car, or getting a lift or something the next day - because I remember watching it on the television and just going 'I've got to be there!' I can't - everything felt so insipid, actually. Real life - when I found myself at dinner parties or going to the theatre, and I'd sort of float in and out of

this sort of other world. It just all seemed meaningless, really. I really struggled to, to - yeah, yeah. I found it really difficult to sort of connect with it, actually. And most probably behaved a little badly, or ungraciously, maybe at a few dinner parties. But I think what it alerted me to then, because you know, often delightful people, lovely, lovely people who were genuinely curious about what was going on - because everybody I think, knew that there was something very significant going on, but they, you know, some of them thought we were stupid. Some of us thought we were mad. Some people thought, you know, but, but there were a lot of people who I think were going 'Amazing. It's amazing what you're doing.' And then you got into that slightly irritating thing where you just felt no, no, no, no, no, don't tell me how wonderful I am. What are you doing? What are you going to do? I'm not doing - you know, what I'm doing is - I'm not doing what I'm doing to be some sort of - it's back to what we said right at the beginning - I'm not doing this to be some sort of heroine, I could be doing something else with my life, actually, thank you very much. Sitting in, you know, with cold fucking feet, and you know, worrying about having a baby, and sleeping in a bender, where it was, I think it was outside the Orange Gate that I'd gone back when she was really small. And, and they used to call the vigilantes used to come around on on motorbikes.

And these were local residents?

Do you know what, I never really knew who they were, you know. I think there were young guys who mostly just thought it was really funny to come and throw stones. And so what they'd do is you couldn't actually do it through every gate, but I'm pretty sure it was the Orange Gate - might have been the Blue Gate, but I think it was the Orange Gate. They'd drive past and then wherever they could see a bender, they'd chuck bricks, rocks, you know, whatever. And I can remember somebody had lent me their bender, actually. And I was in there with Lily as a small baby. And I just remember that - I think that was one of the most frightening nights of my life. And just thinking can I do this, actually? Can I expose the baby to this level of aggression? I'm not sure I can. I'm not sure this is right. Um. Yeah. So I think it was after

that, actually, that I became, you know, I decided I had to find another way of becoming active, in a sense, of doing this. And I think it was around about that time, this would have been 19... this would have been late, this would have been '84 I'm talking now, would have been most probably like, May or June of '84. I think it was around about that time I thought I need to - I need to make theatre. I need to do something in the outside world. I did go back, I went back on a number of occasions, and we did these wonderful walks. I can't remember quite how or why, but we used to do these walks - maybe they were walks between the camps or something. I think I had baby head then, you know when you just had a baby. And er, but I do remember Lily being sort of put on trains - getting on and off trains as part of this walk, because it was obviously quite a long way - we had to go quite a long way. I was with Thoma, so if you ever interview Thoma, you could ask her about about the long walks that must have happened in the summer of '84. But I can't remember - I remember we got wet and cold, and used to arrive at - oh, the funny thing as well about actions was that there was in Newbury that had a toilet, I mean, they were so fed up with us. My god! Because you could go to the (tape cuts out), and have a proper toilet, and wash - because they have sinks. And you could get and chips and ketchup. And, you know, a lot of the women were vegan, you know, as well as veggie, veggie or vegan. So you could get, you know, your baked beans, and your chips in there. And you could thaw out if it was really, really cold, you know. So if you heard that there was a vehicle or something going via Newbury, sometimes you'd go 'Yeah! Me, me, please!' And then you'd get - but then we got banned.

No!

Yeah, got banned. out when the word to across the, you know, basically across, across the country, I think, most probably to say, you know, do not go to the... I think they got really fed up with us, really.

Did you, I mean, the vigilantes - it's an interesting word, isn't it? Because it always gives them some kind of status, that I don't feel they have wanted in any way, because they, you know, were terrorising you. What

was your relationships like with other, I guess the other residents as well?

We were not popular. I mean, I guess the you know, the often the attitude towards anybody, you know, whether it be Gypsies, Romany, um, that notion of people being - they thought we were, you know, a nuisance, really. Not everybody - I mean there was a lot of local support as well. Crikey, we wouldn't have been able to, you know, the magistrates courts were so busy! (Laughs). Be interesting to look at the history of you know, what was going on in the magistrates courts, really at Newbury as well, you know, so many people were being arrested and charged. And some of the court cases were hilarious. I never actually went inside a court case - I did, I was outside, I remember waiting for women outside, and also giving lifts for women, so that when women came out of the court, out of the hearing, we'd be going 'Yay!' Sort of welcoming them. And that would happen again, when we had the Greenham house, the first Greenham house in London was at Caledonian Road. And I remember visiting that and coming backwards and forwards, and it was a very homely, very lovely, lovely place - not far from Kings Cross. But it was Petherton Road, which was the road that I almost had the baby in, actually. And we were there - both gifted from Islington City Council. So you know, I think I might have mentioned that on the phone, when we first talked.

We did speak about that, yeah.

Yeah. But I would really like to know who at Islington Council, who was there, in 1980 whatever. And was supporting, you know, are they still in government, for instance, now? You know, who were they? Because whoever was making those decisions, and offering those havens in a way for the Greenham women. What started to happen was the, the more - as women were then being charged and sentenced, choosing obviously, to go to prison, in a sense of privileged position to be able to - choosing to do that. They were meeting women inside the prison. So what started to happen was that women were coming out, for whatever other reason that they'd been in prison, were coming out of the prison,

sort of sort of sharing their stories. I mean, I think it wasn't like oh the Greenham women were politicising the women in prison, that would be totally arrogant and untrue. But in a sense, there was a mutual raising of awareness going on. I think, for those, the women that went into the prisons were totally traumatised by their experiences inside the prison, but also sort of empowered, you know, it was a real insight, it was a real shock awakening of actually what was going on within the system. And so I remember opening the door, and there'd be a woman on the doorstep saying 'Is so and so there?' Is Caroline there, or is..'. And I'd go 'No, she's not.' And she'd go 'Oh, I've been told I can come here and find a bed.' You know, so it was quite strange because there was sort of like an expectation from these women who had maybe never been to Greenham. But who had got this expectation that they'd arrive at this house and be sort of looked after. And sometimes it wasn't always easy, because you had women coming who were very troubled, you know, so we, it almost felt a bit like a sort of social, social, Social Care Centre in a way. But what happened was that, you know, you could say 'Here's a space, here's a mattress, here's a blanket', and you know, sometimes women would just disappear and sleep for like 3 days. You know, and Fiona and I basically kept the soup going, and the fires going, and we used to go foraging. That's how we lived - we foraged in London. We got the wood off the skips, we got went around the markets picking up the vegetables from the floor. We you know, we were early days foragers in the city, you know, learning how to make things that nothing. We had no electricity. We had no hot water. We had water - but no hot water. No gas. Yeah, no gas, no electricity and no hot water. So we would - so everything was, it was sort of strange because it was like we could create warmth by literally using the old fireplaces, and we could boil up - there must have been something, because we were boiling up kettles - I can't remember how we did it. Was it was over a fire? Maybe it was, you know, one of those little Calor gas stoves - we must have got something sorted out mustn't we, otherwise it wouldn't have been able to make the soups and things. But I can't remember quite how we did that now. Have to ask Fiona actually, when I see her. So that - Petherton Road, I think, was an important part of the Greenham story, which most probably is a sort of peripheral part, but it's actually - it is

important, it's connected. And, and those - many of those women I know for a fact, then went down to Greenham. So we were like, a halfway house between - so there was a whole - once again, it was part of that politicisation, really of what was going on. And the other thing about that sort of politicisation, you talk about actions, because there's the big actions, and then there's these other actions - was that we'd go out and do these talks. And er, and often this was coordinated, once again, from the Greenham house in London. We'd have like a booking book. And of course, we had a telephone. So - which was, you know, different from Greenham, from from, you know, we didn't have mobile phones or anything. So we'd get asked for public speaking. And, er, and I remember this, the first thing about public speaking and having a voice, the first time it really hit me was, it must have been about Christmas time.

The first talk you ever did?

No, the question about being empowered to speak.

Right.

And I'm wondering whether it was in '81, or '82. Might have been '82. I know I spent, there was one point where I was there, and I was there over the Christmas and New Year period as well for sort of an extended - because I was still sort of finishing my degree up until '83. But I wasn't at college a lot - I was away a lot! But I did my dissertation about direct action, and everything. So I just, I drew everything into, into, into actually what I was working - and about vigils, actually I think I did my dissertation on the power of the vigil. But I remember sitting there and Michael Foote, who would have then been the shadow leader of the Labour Party arrived, and he a little dog with him and, er, and sat down and there was some press around as well. And it was really cold. And I was just chopping up carrots. And yeah, and they said, somebody came over to me and said 'Oh, you know, Michael Foote.' 'Hello, would you like a cup of tea? I'll make a cup of tea.' And, and somebody said 'Oh, he's come to no...' That's it, that's it - no Michael Foote happened to be

there, but there was somebody else from the Guardian or something. And they said 'Oh they want to do an interview.' So I said 'Alright, I'll make a cup of tea.' And I went off to the caravan to try and find one of the other women, and they said, and they were in a meeting, actually. And I said 'Oh, there's some press'. This is what's making me think it's 1981. I'm thinking this is actually, maybe the first time I went there, when it was really cold in the winter. I'm thinking this is really early days. Yeah, this is right at the beginning. Because it doesn't add up to how I feel being at Main Gate and going to the caravan. So I think this might have been actually my first visit there, yeah, I think this was my first visit. And I remember going up and saying 'Oh, The Guardian, or - is here and they want to interview. And oh, by the way, Michael Foote's here as well.' And they said 'Yeah. So?' 'Isn't this an opportunity to talk to the press?' They said 'Oh, god', you know, there was a real sense of, we do this every fucking day, we're tired of it. You know, it's like, we're not there - you know, we're not, we're not a commodity. You know, there was a real sense of frustration. And that was the sort of, I remember sort of thinking, oh, right. Okay. Right. I sort of get that. And, right, lesson number one. We're not a commodity, we're not there, just, you know, to be there just when somebody happens to turn up or whatever. And the second thing was, it was the woman - I can't remember her name. She, lovely woman, I was ever so fond of her. And there was a lovely Japanese woman called Hero. And she was sort of smiling at me. And this other woman said 'Well, what why don't, you know, why don't you talk to them?' I remember thinking I've only just arrived! It was my first visit. 'I can't!' 'Don't be ridiculous, of-course you can.' And I remember this feeling of, oh, my, oh, my god. And that's the beginning of - that's the empowerment, really, that was the empowerment.

That's, that's kind of amazing to kind of turn up into a space and instantly not just be welcomed, but kind of trusted and...

Empowered. You were empowered. And then you learnt to empower other women. So that there wasn't a right thing to say, because I sat there, I can remember in that first interview thinking, but I - what's, you know, what should I be saying? And actually, the whole point, and this

really most probably sums up the Greenham the, you know, the Greenham experience for many, many women - not all women, I think there must be certain women who were exhausted forever through that experience. But for myself, I can remember thinking, who am I? Why am I here? What am I learning from this experience? And I didn't have to be anything other than myself. Wow! You know, isn't that empowering, really. So that the next time it happened, you know, you saw the press, and I saw, you know, somebody who was quite new or maybe a bit shy, I would be thinking, ah, let's give that person an opportunity to be able to talk - to tell her story. So it became quite sort of intrinsic I think - the encouragement to, to listen to another woman's story first, first and foremost, to listen. Um. To become aware of our own judgment processes in the listening. I'm not saying we didn't do - we all do it, don't we? You know, but to become aware of it. And then actually, to find that - what started to I think so, you know, it didn't start - it was already there, but what was awoken was this power. Power. The moment where I was changed for ever, which goes back to voice - this voice thing was the Dragon, the raising of the dragon, which was summer, and I think it was most - that must have been summer of '82. And we'd all been preparing and making pieces of you know, banners and things. And I still to this day, don't know how the fuck it all got sewn together. I do remember a lot of time was spent, you know, hair, and wild sort of wild women costumes and, and sewing around the fire - obviously evenings and evenings and evenings sewing these banners together. But I can remember when spontaneously we moved away from the Green Gates into a clearing. Sort of to the right, if you've got your back to the gate, the right - it seemed like a big sort of wasteland. And I've got a photo of this somewhere actually as well. And there must have been 40 of us - 40 women, at least, all linked arms. And we do look like we've just come out of the Amazon jungle! (Laughs). Absolutely amazing. And I can remember as we moved forward, it was that same feeling of being like in the House of Commons really, you know, when that keen happened. I knew something in me motivated me to sing, really, this voice to emerge. And as it called, I knew I was - . this is why say it's spiritual, I knew that that voice on that particular day, reached the universe, sort of there and inside myself - it sounds a bit

wanky, really. But it was so extraordinary. And in that moment, all the other women echoed. They echoed the call. And I could remember for about 10 seconds, maybe or something like that, that this call, also supported by the echo of the call from the other women. The energy that was being created was just absolutely extraordinary. And then the call was in quite naturally, the call was taken somewhere else. Like, like a sort of (makes whooshing noise), they were like - it was almost like a serpent call in some sort of way, and then the echo came, and this extraordinarily hour, at-least, of - I mean, this was of such a powerful, I think, ritual. It was never planned. Nobody said 'This is what we're going to do.' It just happened. And the calling and the sounds and the voices that came out on that particular evening, was just phenomenal. I know, that changed me forever. I know that changed me forever. Um. And whenever I perform whenever I do sing, er, well, you know, I mean, as an actress now, I always - some part of me always goes back to that moment that goes that was my voice, that was - that something was born, enabled to be born at that moment in time. And then what is really spooky and weird, and I don't think we were stoned (laughs), don't think we were stoned. Was that when the day - the the Embrace the Dragon, Embrace the Base - that day, we looked up into the sky. And at first we thought we were, well I just thought oh, I'm imagining it. And I saw this (makes whooshing noise), and I was thinking, how did they get the banner up there into the sky? You know. And I went to one of the women next to me 'Look!' And she went 'Fucking hell!' And then one after the other we were going 'Oh!' You know, it was like the sky was dancing with these lights. And I still to this day don't know - was I stoned? I don't think I was stones. But we were so high on that energy, I think somehow we were collectively elucidating, or collectively perceiving something, that was remarkable, you know, and I know it was real. But I don't know how it happened, if you see what I mean - that was the only experience I would say that was sort of almost like - that's the one experience of Greenham, which I would actually say was tangibly weirdly whoa! You know!

You used the word magic really early on. Is that what you kind of...

It did. It felt like we had the power. That ritual had the power. And it wasn't orchestrated by any one person. It wasn't led. You know, it was it was the circumstances was such that this could happen. And I think in a way that sort of sums up Greenham in a way - was this sort of collective awareness that if it wasn't for each other, it wouldn't be happening. But also is that for the, for the women that were there with all the struggles, and the sacrifices, and the you know that they were making, we were making, is that there were millions of women who would be there, if they could be there. So, in a sense, we were privileged to be there. And I think that's why it feels really important that there's no sort of heroi... 'Oh aren't these women fantastic?' It would always turn around and go 'Yes, but what are you doing? It doesn't matter what I'm doing. I'm doing what I'm doing. I wish I could do something. I wish I could do something better, you know, but I'm doing what I'm doing. Because that's what I'm doing. What are you doing?'

Do you think there are any lessons to be learnt from how, how Greenham was organised? That kind of collective decision making that we talked about, that kind of group of consciousness?

Consensus takes time. And I do think in the world that we've got, you know, aided by social media and technology, and du du duh, it is that time is a strange moveable feast, isn't it? But we expect to do things quickly. But it may well be that there's different ways of making - of finding consensus. And that consensus is not a theory, consensus, there's not a particular way to find consensus, or create consensus. I think each - the time now will be finding its own way. And will know - it will know. Because it will reflect - the actions will reflect. The reason it became women-only is key, I think, most probably to this question. The fact of it becoming - the moment it became - I think when I first went there, maybe when I was very, very first there, it wasn't women-only, because I do remember seeing some guys around, or maybe they were like delivering things or something. But I can remember on one of the first big actions being quite strict with Stephen at that point and saying 'No, no, no, you can't come.' And he offered me a lift, actually. And I said 'No, I don't even want a lift there with you know, we're getting there

on our own in some sort of way.' And it became - it was sort of working on a number of levels. One was that there just tended to be violence, if men were there, it seemed to be provocative to violence - more likely that it would happen. And, by the very nature, taking away the fact, you know, even even, you know, later when I was pregnant, what irritated me was the notion of women, the fact it's a women's camp, and we're all nurturing and we're all maternal and caring - we're not you know, we're witches, we're hags, we're powerful, we're as much destroyers as creators. And, you know, I felt Greenham was also about that - it was refusing to say, we fit into this sort of niche that everybody wants to make us into this - or we do, the culture, you know, we, we put ourselves into these sort of niches. And we're all of us more than that. Um. But what I felt about the Greenham space was that you were - because of the intensity of the context, you - and the reason you were there, you could be looking at the smallest thing going on in your life. And it was like looking at it under a microscope. It was like it was sharpened, it became dazzling like a diamond, you could see things so clearly, you could see the inequality, you could see the injustice, you could look at a situation and go everything in terms of this (laughs) is, is clear. So your thinking was being wrought and wrestled with, and then of course you had dialogue, your dialogue with so many different perspectives and different women. The question of gender, sexual identity, the question of fluidity about sexual, you know, I never felt - I sort of desperately wanted to be gay. (Laughs). It sounds daft, and there was one moment there was one moment where I became completely obsessed with one - a beautiful woman, with the most piercing blue eyes, but I couldn't do it. You know, and I kept thinking, if I could be gay, everything would be alright. But actually, you know what I mean, there was sort of things even within that context, you'd want to sort of fit yourself in. But I sort of, yeah, yeah, I just came to accept that. Nope, that's not me either! As much as I'd like it to be.

But I kind of questioning it even, is something that people sometimes don't do their whole life - to question that.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. But there was a sort of liberation with, I could sort that there was a liberation in a sense, you know, especially amongst my lesbian friends, my dear, you know, all my closest friends really, were lesbians. And, and I there was a part of me, thought I wish I could sort of - but I had to face the fact that it wasn't, it wasn't natural to me. So there's a few things we've not mentioned, which is like the linking with the miners' strike. Which, of-course, you know, with other movements, it was was important, and the financial, you know, the whole thing of chequebooks and the Greenham common account.

So yeah, with that, you mentioned, and when we spoke earlier that you're a signatory for some of the money coming through.

Yeah. I think there were four signatories, if I remember rightly.

So could you just say what that is - what the role of a signatory is?

It just meant you signed the cheques, and you had to have two people to sign a cheque. It was as simple as that. I've just remembered, actually, I've remembered visiting the Greenham - there was a Greenham office. Oh, I'd completely forgotten about that! There was a Greenham office, but going way, way, way, way back. It can't have been though, could it. It can't have been though, could it? Maybe I've got that muddled up with a feminist magazine. No, I just remember, I just - if it comes up in anybody else's interviews, I just remember a room, like on the hundredth floor of a building, it's somewhere near Brick Lane or something. But there was this room, we - and it was full of boxes, and boxes and boxes and boxes of stuff. And I'm just wondering if that room was a sort of precursor of the, of one of the Greenham houses in some sort of way - where things were getting printed. Because of-course, we did have material printed. You know, there was, there was, I don't think I've got anything anymore - maybe if I sort of rooted around in boxes I'd find things. I've been amazed, actually, I even had a piece of the fence that used to used to be in my daughter's playbox. So she'd have her Lego and things like that. And bits of the Greenham fence! She used to be sort of, if ever was building a house or something, it would be like

part of the garden. That sort of thing. That looks familiar, oh, it's part of the Greenham fence!

That's a quite beautiful, like, literal kind of representation of that legacy that you've passed on!

I had no idea where it was it was never thought of - you know, it wasn't sanctified. I notice people these days have - you buy a bit of the Berlin Wall don't you, in little bags and things like that. No, never really did that. But I don't know where - there are artefacts, obviously. And all sorts of, and testimonials as well. Poetry, wonderful poetry. I've got the script somewhere. We came together, there were seven of us, and we formed a theatre company. And this was while we were going backwards and forwards to Greenham, and it was definitely in the later stages of pregnancy. So it was easier for me to be more London based as well. But I was still living at the Greenham house at this time. Um. And we were making a piece of theatre. I've got it, I mean, you're very welcome to have it. It was - actually got published in the Peace Plays by Methuen. But the thing is, is because it was very visual, you know, it looks a bit strange on paper, because it looks a bit sort of minimalist on paper. But actually we spent months improvising, and we called it The Fence, and it's called The Fence. And basically it's an exploration about being the fence. So the six - we basically worked through, workshopped, Riverside Studios were very generous - they gave us spaces actually to met and rehearse in for nothing, and sort of gave us free cups of coffee. And that was a real, that was a one hell of a journey, really hell of a journey. The women would either not turn up to rehearsals because they were at Greenham, or because they'd been arrested. Or because they were in prison, or, you know - so there was this, you know, things took months to happen, because for one various reason or another, there were all these traumatic things happening that were meaning that they weren't coming to rehearsal. So then they'd go through this, this traumatic experience, then come back, and we'd carry on working. So in a sense, what was going on at Greenham was also imbued within the production of The Fence. Minimal, minimal costumes, but it addresses sexual identity, it address that. And some of

the songs, some of the Greenham songs - 'Which side are you on?' Are in it, things like that.

Yeah. It really - the whole Greenham experience seems one of theatre to me, like the songs, the imaginative actions, and very creative ways in which things were visually explained. I just, um, why do you think so many people that were so creative, or did it attract that kind of person, that kind of artistic person?

I think when people gather together, they inevitably, I mean, what's, what's frustrating sometimes is the demonstrations, the typical demonstration, which you know, you walk in a line, you're corralled, you got police on this side, police on that side, and you have to sort of conform to the rules of demonstrating. I think, when, when, when things really become extreme, and you - and that is no longer, or it's not that that does not have its place, but something else has to happen, you have to find another way of finding a voice. It is so often about finding a voice isn't it. I think there's almost like a, you start to play, actually, I think literally you start - I think human beings have the ability to be able to create, come together, and play, and find ways of breaking the rules, because you have to break the rules, in a way, to be noticed. You have to - what you said earlier, you have to find ways of claiming space, which is not defined as yours. For all - often terrible, think of the enclosures, you know, if we look at our history, the common land was actually taken over by the aristocracy, and re, re, you know, it is disgusting, what happened, you think we're still living the effects of the enclosure systems, you know, you know, a few centuries ago. So, you know, where there is common land, and it's being abused, in a sense, somehow, I think, even in our DNA, (laughs) we, we know, we have to fight for these, these things. I think what, what I find so alarming in a way, is the sense of how we accept, what is - how we normalise, what should not be normalised, you know. So I think anything that brings us back to a sense of who are who am I, you know, what, where is my authenticity? Where is your authenticity? Where do we meet? Who are we? What is it to be a human being? You know, if the things that we're seeing don't match, then, in a way, that's when change will happen. So I don't think

it's like somebody is going to come along and be a leader, I mean, Greenham, I think that's what Greenham did. I think it was a, the Cold War - I mean, we're talking about 9, the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. So Greenham is happening within the, the lie, the illusion of the Cold War. So in a sense, you know, what's more real? But without the Cold War, in a sense, Greenham would not necessarily have existed. And how much of Greenham affected the fall of the Berlin Wall? They're not, I'm not saying one caused the other. But in the terms of that change of attitude, the ability for women to realise that as long as you don't give up, that was the other thing, and that went on for years and years. I don't know how well Greenham's been documented, right the way through into the '90s, wasn't it? Because it actually carried on.

Long time. Yeah, there were still women there at the turn into the millennium. And I think then the last women, if I'm - I might be mistaken, but I feel that the last woman left around that time.

I mean, they they won. I went back there with Lisa, you know, a dear friend of mine, Lisa Halse. And we went back together. I think we went back under this sort of rather strange illusion maybe about 10 years ago, because there was a sort of call out when to say, you know, Greenham women, and out of curiosity really, we sort of went down. And it's an art centre now. And they were showing a video. And there was just a handful of us, you know, there was literally about 20 of us there. And I thought, oof, and I looked at Lisa, and it was lovely. It was lovely. But there was nobody really I knew there. And then there was this, I'm sorry for anybody who hears this, and they organised it, but then there was this sort of little Peace Garden that had been made, sort of slightly detached from the art centre. And, and, and then somebody instigated that we all held hands, and 'strong as the mountain' - we were singing the song as were going around. And I have to say, I thought no, no, no, this doesn't feel right. This isn't, this isn't it, this isn't it, I want to be away from here now.

Did it kind of go back to that feeling of what you said earlier of being a commodity?

Yes. I don't know what it was. I don't know what it was. But I don't know. I, I think I just remember, a sense of awkwardness. It's like, you know what happened happened. And things changed, and we need to be still changing. I don't want to go, you know, actually, my life is the thing about Greenham meant that every day was Greenham in a way. So making theatre - I carried on focusing in my theatre, making rites of passage work that was about transitions between, you know, mother-daughter, worked with my study making theatre, even bringing my own mother and daughter into that practice. And that carried on, I carried on using theatre as a way of wrestling, I guess, with sort of feminine identity, archetypes, as well as stereotypes of women, as sort of perceived through the ages. So, in a sense, I guess the feminist awakening as a theatre practitioner was really rooted in the ritualised events, which I feel, you know, were, were Greenham I just feel so - I feel so lucky, mostly, to have met just the most wonderful women, you know, I still see their faces, you know, and I can't remember everybody's names. In a way we were, we had to look after each other as well. You know, we were each other's support system. I remember going to this going to give this talk. Public talk I mentioned...

Was that it that the boys college? (Laughs).

Oh, it's the poshest boys' school, I think in the country or something. And we got, and Vicky had run away, I think from home. Goodness knows. She was 15, I think, or 14, maybe when she first arrived at the camp, but I think when we did this talk, she was 15. Fantastic, feisty young woman who just spoke what she thought, and said what she said. You know, it's like, no mincing her words. And I was 7 months pregnant. I was huge, I looked like a walking tent, you know. So, between her and me on this stage delivering this talk to these lads. And I remember the reception was very polite, quite cool. But some of the teachers were wearing, some of the - they were all wearing these long capes and things - were sort of respectful. But these three guys came up, they came up, and they just were so respectful, so thankful. And they just said, you know 'We are just, you know', and one of them said 'My mum's

been to Greenham.' And I just looked at them and thought, it doesn't matter. There are three young men here, who are here, no matter where they go, or whatever, they have just connected. And let's hope - I don't know who you three men are out there (laughs), but I hope you know in some way that Vicky and I touched their hearts and, you know, made some sort of sense to them, really. I think that's all you can, that's all you can hope for it, isn't it, I guess. And then you carry on the journey into the world, and I'm very lucky to have the most extraordinary two daughters who carry on in their own ways, changing the world, you know, incredibly so. Um. And who also look back to that era in history, and, and my particular involvement with it, I guess, and they're proud of me for that. And I don't mind that, you know, they're not saying oh that - because actually, what it does is it empowers them. And if it empowers them, then that continuity is absolutely brilliant, you know. We're only, we're only just beginning really, you know, women rise! (Laughs). We are on a journey, we've got another few, you know, maybe another century to go, at least, you know, for it really to, really to transform.

I'm wondering, how does it feel after this kind of time has passed? We've kind of spoken a bit about the like, the nature of memory, and how that kind of changes within us all the time. But how does it feel to actually just talk about your experience?

Aww, that's such a lovely question. I feel, I feel quite, um, I feel quite emotional, actually, I'm surprised. I mean, because obviously, there are thousands of memories, you know, and thousands of things that are sort of clamouring for, to be at the forefront. So I'm sort of curious about the ones that have surfaced. I think what I'm feeling is this deep sense of love, actually, for the women. And for me, there's a real meeting point there, because the, the Buddhism, and the community and the way the Buddhism in, in the practice that I have, with the SGI, UK, it is a people's movement, it's a people's movement of Buddhism, and the way we have our district discussion meetings. To me there is there is very little discrepancy between the way we would talk, actually at Greenham, it is - it's about deeply respecting the person. And of-course, it's so diverse, you know, there are men, there are women there well, any sort of

gender, for goodness sake, not just men and women, it's, you know, there were people and I'm finding that I met that practice at Greenham. So talking about it now, I still feel that that somehow historically, is very relevant, you know, I feel a real sense of hope out of this movement, and, and that, to me, does connect to Greenham and very powerfully. So I feel hope I feel real um, and, and looking at the movement, I mean, there's so much going on, isn't there in the world now, there's so much change, there's so much fantastic action and awareness. I know we don't see it in the main media, but we never do. I mean, then the media mainly is not there to celebrate the real change is it?

Do you see, the kind of - I don't know if influences is the right word - of Greenham, but the kind of ways in which those people have branched out and worked in other kind of ways?

I think every I mean, around about the same time, or out of it also, out of that time, at Greenham, the Magdalena International, the women's theatre movement also started. So I think, and so I think, you know, whatever it is - I have to be careful though, because I was a young woman with a young child. You know, when I sort of, in a sense, moved, I would, I went through Greenham sort of centrally also pregnant, and out of it and had a baby and, and then sort of moved out into the world. That's a very particular journey, you know, for maybe a woman who'd come from, you know, a mining village or, you know, in her 60s at that particular point, or whatever, you know, there were women whose families were transformed forever, you know, who marriages broke up, and that was it, you know, but also amongst all of this, you, you have got the miners' strike and though, you know, within it, there was this other political dynamic going on in the country, with other people going through other journeys. But I think what was so specific about Greenham is that in the empowerment of women, and the power of women together to organise. The change is not just a, it's not just a, there's visceral change, of-course you can see - you can actually see the actions, you could see the images, the theatricality, like you said, of the actions as well. But the the real change, the real power, the magic of the change really was going on in the, in these individual women's lives.

You know, it's such an incredibly - I don't think you can destroy that. And I think it doesn't happen - I think there are moments in history when it happens. And I think Greenham was a special moment in history, that any of us involved felt very lucky to be there. (Laughs).

I just have one more question, one that we've, we're asking everyone. Could you explain why you think it's important Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations?

It's part of their story. It's part of everyone's story. I mean, you know, whether you look at it politically, spiritually, whatever, we're all interconnected. So the stories and the changes and the voices. It's, it's, it's part of a, a collective story. And I think, why it's important to consciously remember it, is that the systems that be (laughs), and the systems that we wish to transform, involve us awakening. And I - and that's me, that's you, that's everyone. We, we need to feel that things are possible. We need hope. We need to be able to dream, we need to be able to look and trust. And, in a way, give authority, our own authority, to our own voices, and the way we see the world. And that process of taking real responsibility, actually, for our lives and realising that that's the key in a way - when we all, when each person starts to do that, then there's another sort of change that's possible. And it's not about men fighting - it's not about pointing a gun at somebody, it's not. So I think it's not in, in a sense, in the, in the controlling system that wants to sort of retain its sense of control, it's not in its interest to make something like Greenham - it won't, it won't see it as important. It won't be important. It would just be a fly in the ointment, an irritation. So to, to give it importance, almost becomes radical. If we don't, it's like buried histories, you know, women, women become invisible, their actions become invisible. And by so they become silenced. And I think if we, if we're talking about changing, really deeply changing a world, there has to be room. There has to be space for these women's, for voices. You know, what I mean, they're not - yeah. And I think about, I was so lucky to have you know, I've got two beautiful, two wonderful daughters. And my eldest daughter's just had a little boy. And immediately the conversations were 'Right, we need some boys, you know, some boys

with new...'. the hope also lies in - the whole question about shaking up the whole question about, you know, the conventional gender politics, for instance, all of it needs shaking up. And I think there's just this sense of - oh, what am I saying? Why is Greenham important? Because to be honest, part of me thinks, well, maybe it isn't. You know, hey, we did this. It happened. And that's it. But I think the question is very good. Um. Because that's what's always happened in the past. We've been forgotten and silenced. And the truth is, is that we're all still there. We're all still making the revolution happen! (Laughs). We're actually all still there. Yeah. Yeah. It's - I want the young women, I want young women to feel - they do, I look at the young women I know, and the friends, and I think about, you know, the children of the children of the children of the children as well you know, in the years to come. Life's so short, isn't it? You know, we're here and gone in a flash, really. So you know, that sense of the legacy. Let's, let's do something to create some value.