

Estelle Poingdestre and Jane Staffieri

Right. So I'd like to start by asking you, How did you become part of Greenham and when? So maybe Estelle, could we start with you?

Estelle

Yeah, yeah. Well, my mother, Mary Patchet was at erm, she spent some time in Bradford at the university there and she was involved in peace studies. And erm, she, I think it was her who first let us know or let me know that there were, there was, you know that there were things going on. Actually, I might have that wrong. What happened was, I think in the early '80s, we had a leaflet came through the door called protest - Protect and Survive. And I remember reading it and seeing adverts on the TV, which talked about the impact of a nuclear war. And what they told every household to do was to kind of barricade yourself in the house and get under the table and, erm, you know, put, put suitcases full of clothes on the top of the table. And erm, you were meant to fill the bathtub with drinking water. And you were meant to stay there for two weeks, until the radiation had died down when you could then kind of emerge. Well, I remember being really kind of erm, this is this, this is unbelievable, you know, there was going to be a titan attack from possibly Russia who was seen as the bad guy then. And erm, and so I remember being really frightened. And I can remember saying to my husband - because we had two small children at the time - I remember saying to him, 'Oh, my, you know, this is awful. What are we going to do about it?' And he laughed, and he said, 'Well, we're going to bend over and we're going to kiss kiss our arses goodbye!' Which was absolutely and totally flippant and really upset me. And it made me think that I was the only kind of person in the family who would save us. And so I, I got together with some other women who, including my Mum and Jane, Jane Staffieri, and we were part of a women's group at that time that was organised by Jane. And I think we kind of thought about how we, what we could do. And then - I'm sorry to go on for ages, but, but then what happened was we live in Portsmouth, or we lived in Gosport at the time, but our area was a prime target for any weapons that were going to come to this area - to, to, the UK. So and we found that Gosport Borough Council was building a bunker. They were going to spend thirty-thousand pounds to turn an old battery, which was built, I think during the - well, god knows I think it was - I can't remember when it was. But anyway, they were going to spend thirty-thousand pounds to actually refurbish the bunker so that all the kind of local kind of Chief of Police and the head of the Council and various medical people would be able to hide there. They had space for fifty people. But we were left with this Protect and Survive, which actually seem totally ridiculous. So we started protesting outside the Council offices and outside number two battery, which was the bunker. So I won't say any more now in case, because I don't want to take away from Jane because we were both living in Gosport. We were good friends at the time. Yes.

Thank you. So Jane, how did you come to be part of Greenham then?

Jane

Well, as part of, as, as Estelle said, part of the peace group. And I think in 1980, I had my first daughter, and I used to get up in the night because I, you know, was aware of the dangers, you know, in our area, especially. And I remember, I used to be so worried I used to get up and just go and look in the cot. And, you know, I'd be listening for aeroplanes. coming over. And I think that, you know, that pushed me into it even more having, having the responsibility of a child to bring up and I found a lot of - in Gosport, there was, we had our Peace Group out, we had our women's group. So there was a lot of support and like minded people, so that we could get together. We would have, we would have meetings sometimes, you know, in my garden, we'd have, we'd have our meetings. And so there was quite a lot of support there. And enthusiasm. And of course, there was Mary, Estelle's Mum. I was very friendly with her. And she was a very strong woman and an activist. And so that's how I, I got into it. And I was very keen to get to Greenham and get involved with it.

So how long were - did you stay at Greenham for Jane? And which, which gate were you at?

Jane

Oh, well, I didn't actually stay there very long because I had a child to look after. I remember, I think it was, I think it was in 1981, at the end, in the winter. I did go up there with a tent and with my daughter. But she was very young. She was only a toddler. And erm, it was freezing cold. And I can remember ice on the tent when I got there. It was the Blue Gate I went to. And I can remember ice on the tent and it was very difficult because in those days, we didn't really have disposable nappies. So we had terry towelling - which I think is much better for the environment, actually. But so I've kind of very quickly had a problem of changes of nappy and so on. And I had to actually, I had to go home because I just, it was too difficult the logistics, you know, of a young child. So after that, I would visit Greenham and got involved in some actions there as well. So that that's, so it wasn't actually staying there long term. I can't say I did that.

So what about you, Estelle did, did you stay there long term?

Estelle

Well no. I'm very similar to Jane, we, we were coming from Gosport, we were, you know, we were, we, I stayed overnight a few times, but never stayed long term. I can remember driving a three-hundred, three-hundred and thirty weight van up to Greenham so that we could stay the weekend and sleep in the van. But no, I never, I never stayed the whole time. I was there at every action and at different times, I mean, all of the big the big gatherings really, but not long term at all. Just couldn't do it because I had two small children as well. And, and commitments so at home, really. But gave them my support wherever possible. My mother, on the other hand did, I'm not quite sure how much time she spent there, and she certainly stayed a lot longer than I did.

But I can't really tell - my mother died three years ago. So actually, I've recently completed an archive of all the papers that she had in her possession. So I've got all the paperwork up together for Greenham, and, but and a few photographs. But not, I can't tell you how often she stayed it was erm, or how long. But she was active.

And so Estelle what was life like in the camp? Could you kind of paint a picture for us of your experience of it?

Estelle

Because mine was all concerned with action, or the action I have, I can remember and I can't even remember I think it was the Main Gate, and certainly I've got pictures of it. There were massive rows of police officers across the front of the gate. We were all surrounding, we all sat down in front of the, to blockade anything coming in and out and I can't because my memory is poor. I can't remember whether that was the 1983 or 1981 or, whenever it was. But I think it was around the time that the, they were bringing the missiles in. But so we I've got some photographs of as all sat down in the road, the police pulling people up and dragging them away. And, you know, women arm in arm like this across the, across the front, trying to stop them and the police are pushing them forward and moving them away. So yes, I didn't - my memory is that at time is, you know, women holding hands around the base. We all put things onto the, onto the chain fence. We put our children's pictures and our baby's socks and stuff. But yeah, it was generally sitting down at the front. And of course, I was taking photographs, because I was taking photographs, I don't appear to be in the action, but I was there! (Laughs) I never, never get recognised.

And, Jane, what about your experience of being at the camp? Could you paint a picture for us?

Jane

I remember when it was very cold, and to keep warm, we'd sit round a fire. So we'd all sit and sort of be freezing in the smoke. And, you know, they were people, obviously, it was everyday life, there cooking, you know, people organising food, cooking over the fire, that kind of thing. And all ages, all ages there. I do remember the cold and it was quite hard, a hard life. And quite often the, the police would come down and take away all the tents, you know, take away equipment and everything. And then you'd have to start all over again, you know, finding tents and equipment. And they, they did these hits to try and discourage women from staying there. So I do remember the cold days particularly. It wasn't, it wasn't an easy life living like that, you know.

What was the relationship like between the women and the local residents and the police and the military Jane?

Jane

Well, I don't think we were very popular with local people, because I can remember trying to go in to a pub and they just wouldn't have you in there. You know, they, they didn't want you around, you were just trouble. As far as my experience was. I think that erm I mean, I, I wasn't there every day for a long time. But I think women did try and have a conversation with the guards along, you know, inside. They tried to engage with them and talk about, you know, peace and, and what, you know what they were doing. So, there were attempts made to put across, you know, our views. So erm, but, you know, at the same time, obviously we were a thorn in their flesh (Laughs) because women would go, just go for a walk around the base and then when nobody was looking just cut a hole in the fence. (Laughs). And if you went for a walk around the fence, you'd find these odd little holes around, you know, in the fence. So, so they were on the lookout, but it was a, it was quite a large area to cover. It was a huge base. So they couldn't have guards everywhere. So but you know, women would take their opportunities and go and do a little bit of cutting when they could.

And Estelle your, your experience of the relationship between the local people and the police and military?

Estelle

Well, I think we were seen as a blot on the landscape really. I think we were, we, I mean we were categorised in the press as dirty, rebellious, I mean I've got some newspaper cuttings from the time and you know, the Mail and various other papers categorised us as women taking over the world, women, women, you know, women being difficult. Women not at home cooking their meals for their husbands. It was a very erm, patriarchal time. Well, not that it's that much different now. But it was very much the case that women were meant to be at home cooking meals, you know, kind of looking after the children and women who went off to Greenham were seen as transgressing normal female roles. And, you know, I can remember people telling me when I got back to Gosport, oh, you must be a lesbian. And you must be - so the whole of the view of us was not that we were doing a good thing, or that we were, we were nice people. We were categorised as being dirty, hippies, lesbians, difficult people all round. And erm, and, you know, I think that came across. I can remember talking to a police officer who was stood in front of me when we were holding hands around the base, and he was in front of me. And he, I was saying to him, 'We're just trying to protect our children.' And he said, 'Yes, I know, I'm on your side, really, but I've got a job to do.' And, and, you know, I think - I never came in contact with any locals, I just came in contact with, you know, women at the base. So - but I do know that those women's suffered terribly, you know, they would have raiding parties at night where, you know, groups of young men would come and throw bottles at them or, or, you know, set fire to the edge of their tents or things like that, awful things were done. And, of course, we were seen as very kind of the lower end of the, of womanhood, you know, the kind of rough women, because we were putting up with these conditions. What they didn't understand was that we felt so strongly that we will be, we will be prepared to

put up with any conditions. And, and so yeah, I didn't really come into contact with her the locals because when I went up, I would take food, I would bring, we would all load it up in the van and come on up. And erm so yeah, I didn't come into contact with the locals very much. But I do know the general feeling, you know, the press were just awful. You know, really making out we were helping the Russians, we were, we must be, we were all kind of erm left wing anarchists and that kind of thing. Whereas in fact, all of us were really women who were concerned about the future of their children and children all over the world. Not not just UK children, but Russian children. I think there was a phrase, oh, I think it got made into a song, The Russians Love Their Children Too. And various things like that, that kind of, you know, we would, we were just seen as bad guys. And, and I mean, the whole point about this was that the, that the, the American cruise missiles were not to be fired, particularly by this government, but they were to be fired by whoever America was, you know, out of favour with. So you know, if a missile was sent, theoretically, from the UK to Russia, well, they're not the Russians aren't going to send a bomb to America in retaliation, they will send it back to, back to the UK. And the first port of call would be Portsmouth and Gosport, you know, naval military towns. And that's why we were there - not for any real political reason other than than that, but because we cared for our children.

Did you want to say anything about how you were represented in the media?

Jane

Do you mean in local papers?

In local papers or the general media at the time, that we've heard a little bit from Estelle about that. I wondered if you had anything to add?

Jane

Well, I think, I think we were covered - the local paper, you know, if we did any demonstrations locally, they, they did, you know, allow us to speak and give our point of view in the local paper. So we would always tell them that we were doing a demonstration and they'd come and interview us, journalists would come and interview us. And that was, you know, that they, it was fair, they would, they would certainly report what we said, you know, they'd quote what we said. So I would say that was quite, you know, quite fair. But I think the general attitude towards the Greenham Women, as, as Estelle says was, you know, they should be, they should be, what are these women doing? You know, some of them have left their families as well, because some women did. And so they were criticised for that. Some people left their families to stay in Greenham full time. And it was a very different I think it was a very different time, then, sort of the attitude, the roles that women had. And yeah, I think it has, it has changed. Not enough, obviously.

Jane, I understand that you and Estelle's Mother were cutting wire, would you like to tell us about?

Jane

(Laughs). Well, there was a, there was a plan to surprise the soldiers at the base. So Mary, you know, and I, we went, it was very carefully and secretly organised. So nobody was told about this. You know, some of, some of the demonstrations when people joined around the base, the police were told that this was going to happen. But this particular action was not told to anybody except the women who were involved. So I remember the night before we slept somewhere else. We didn't, we didn't arrive that day. So because we had to discuss the whole thing, what we were going to do erm, and the plan was to go, to actually work in twos. So I worked with Estelle's Mum, and we had to practice this - one of the pair had to be standing with the other one on the shoulders, standing on the shoulders. So Mary was a much bigger woman than me, I'm only little.

Estelle

(Laughs).

Jane

So what we did, we stayed I can't remember where we stayed that night. But a group of women, quite a big group of women, we went to the base and we went to a little copse of trees. And in that copse we, we all practiced getting on standing on the shoulders of our partner because we were going to, to reach up with our bolt cutters. And the netting on the fence was kind of held up by little pieces of metal down the sides and along the top. And the plan was to cut these little bits of metal to release the netting to pull the whole fence down. So all of us practiced this at a given sign, we were all going to rush out from this little copse and rush out to the fence, jump onto our partners shoulders and start cutting with the bolt cutters.

Both

(Laughs).

Jane

It was a real, it was very well done. (Laughs). At the given sign we rushed up to the fence and we got cutting, you know, with the bolt cutters. Complete surprise. The soldiers were on the other side. And they had put barbed, rolls of barbed wire on the inside of the fence. So they couldn't get to us to stop us cutting. (Laughs). So then they had to contact some some, or go, contact other soldiers and come outside. And of course by the time they came round, we'd, we'd managed to cut, you know, the netting away and we pulled huge areas of the fence down! We just pulled it down! And people got over the top of the, jumped over the barbed wire. And I was cutting. And I was, and a policeman came up, pulled me down quite roughly, and arrested me. And we were taken away by the police vans. And there was a lot, there were a lot of us, and so taken to the police station to be processed. But that was a very successful action. You know, it's, it was erm, they just weren't expecting it. (Laughs). And it was very well organised. It had been thought through really well. Yeah.

Did your did your mother have any stories to tell about that action?

Estelle

She was, she was immensely proud of Jane. She, because of course, Jane was on her shoulders and Jane was the one who got arrested, my mother didn't feel she could be arrested. So stayed this side of the fence. But she was immensely proud of Jane. You know, she thought that it was a marvellous thing to do. Yeah, she didn't tell me many stories about it other than that it happened and that Jane got taken off to court, by the police, and appeared in court. And, and of course, Jane gave the most marvellous speech in her defence in, in court. So Mum spoke about that. But generally, I think the whole situation was, you know, Mum was involved in, she didn't speak about it very much. And, you know, she didn't tell me particular things. Or perhaps she did, and I didn't remember them, you know, things - it was a long time ago. I think it's forty years, isn't it?

Jane
Yeah.

So Jane, how were you treated then, when you were arrested and appeared in court?

Jane

I was erm, I don't remember how long I was actually in the, at the police station. Because there were so many of us, you know, that they had to process and, and so obviously, we'd damaged the fence. So they - what I do remember about being at the police station was the joking and laughing and there was some very witty women there, who were making comments and kept our spirits up. I was, I had, my friend was trying to find out what had happened to me. Because when, when we did this action, we'd have somebody who would try and take responsibility for us. So try and see what happened to us, you know, and I remember my friend Belinda, she was outside any myself and we managed to have a conversation. You know, she's and erm, so we were, we were given bail, after this action to be called back to court to give our, you know, to defend what we did, and give the reasons for why we did it. And so that wasn't, so I had, I was allowed on bail. And then I didn't go to court until the following year. That was, this was in October, this action. And then ...

Estelle

Which year Jane?

Jane

That was in 1983 we did the action. And then 1984 I think it was in then I was called back for my case to be heard with other women as well. And there were quite a few people in the public gallery then that came to see women defending, you know, what they had done. And then I refused to pay the fine.

It was it was thirty pounds fine. I think it was twenty pounds for the damage and ten pounds costs. So and after that, so straight away after the hearing I was taken to Holloway, went to Holloway. Which was erm, yeah.

What was that, like Jane?

Jane

I remember the police van was horrible. You had cubicles and handcuffs inside, cubicles inside the van, the prison, prison van, which is a bit claustrophobic. And so that, then we went to Holloway. When we got to Holloway, all your belongings are taken from you. I remember that, that one of the Greenham Women that I was with, she made a little bit of a protest at the prison. And they dealt with her, quite just, they had these cubicles in the prison, and they just put her in there, locked her in there, you know. And I can, they were - I would say that they were, took your confidence away from you. That's what I felt in the prison. And I can see how people get institutionalised very quickly. They're very sort of, they were very abrupt and unfriendly, the officers. At first I was in with, about, I think I was in with about eight other women with bunk beds, and erm, all kinds of women. But I talked to some of the women there, and they had, you know, they had children at home, but they had taken credit cards and things like that. It, it seemed to me that they shouldn't have been in prison. It wasn't, you know, they ... I mean, and when they were in prison, they were learning more skills as well, you know. I did, I felt very sorry for the women who were in there, because obviously I was, I was only in there for a week, you know. But, you know, obviously, there was some, some women who had drug problems as well. But I just thought it was, and you know, the way that they weren't allowed to have their children there. But they shouldn't have been in prison, really. I felt, then, you know, that. It was only about, they hadn't done anything physical, or hurt anybody. You know, they had just, it was more like fraud, you know, and still stealing cards and things like that. And I just felt it was so unjust, really, because I don't know where their children went, what was happening to their children while they were in prison, either, you know.

How did friends and family react to the fact that you had been to prison?

Jane

Well, my family actually my partner and his family, they wanted me to pay the fine, but I didn't want to pay the fine. So they didn't really agree with that. And also, obviously, I had to leave my little girl at home, but she had her Dad there. You know, looking after her. But, I mean, obviously from, from the Peace Groups and the women's group and everything. I had lovely cards and letters sent to me. There's, I've got one still from Estelle.

Estelle

Oh have you!

Jane

I've still got it. Yeah. (Laughs).

Estelle

I'd like to see that some time! Yeah.

Jane

Yeah. So I had lovely, you know, I felt that people were supporting me, you know, I didn't, I didn't feel alone. It was quite interesting, actually. Because the second part of my, after a couple of days, they put me in just with one other woman in - shared a woman, a cell with just one woman. And she used to go out and she, I think she she used to go and help with cooking and stuff like that. I think she'd been, she was long term, a long term prisoner. I think she had - I don't know whether she'd robbed a bank or something. But she was already planning her next robbery!

Both

(Laughs).

Estelle

And there's Jane in prison, because she won't pay the fine!

Jane

She was quite a character. Yeah.

Estelle

Yeah.

Jane

But yes, I remember I, when I came out of prison, they gave me a bit of money to get home, because I didn't have much when I went in. And it felt a bit strange to be outside again, you know, to be free again, only after one week of being locked up. Because you were sort of locked up in your cell most of the time, except occasionally go for half an hour and, you know, for a bit of exercise. But most of the time in your cell. Yeah.

And how long after that experience did you go back to Greenham?

Jane

Oh, I can't remember. (Laughs). I don't think that's that stopped me, I sort of kept going back.

So what learning do you think there is for how organisations and conflicts are managed today, in terms of the Greenham experience?

Estelle

Well, I, my mother attended lots of non-violent direct action groups. I've got posters that mum went went on. And it was about how to, how to make your protest, not, non-violently. And I'm not quite sure where that was taken from, I

don't know if it was taken from the American Civil Rights movement or where it's come from. But it was about actually sitting down, not moving, not, not nothing violent. But actually just saying, I am here, and I'm here for, for this purpose. And I think, actually, that it's, it was a great move. You know, the women who I've got photos of actually protesting, they look like a force to be reckoned with, even though they're just in their summer t-shirts, and their summer dresses or their shorts or whatever. But you know, there's all the heavily armed guards and police behind and around them. And the women are in there kind of summery clothes and they're sat on the, on the, on the, on the main road leading up to the gate, and their, their arms are linked or across, across the base. It's incredibly powerful to see those things. And actually, when you think about the nature of protests, and, and particularly what's going on at the moment, I find it very difficult that, you know, there's a threat to anybody who protests and makes noise or, you know, they're not even talking about, they're not even talking about, you know, today being anything violent. They're actually talking about being too noisy and causing disruption. You know, I find that very difficult because I think that we, we behaved in that way, non-violent direct action, hundreds of people descending on Newbury, you know, from all over the country, and we were there for a purpose. We were non-violent. We weren't like football hooligans, you know, who or anything like that. We were women sat quietly doing our thing for the most part. Of course, you got, you got the fence cutters and the people who ran in and sat on the silos and did teddy bears picnics and things. But the majority of people there were non-violent literally just sat and protesting with their bodies. I remember as I just have to say this because this was such a powerful memory to me. You know, those women, we were being lifted and carried away and, and, you know, kind of manhandled, really. But we set up the chance through you. The we were, ululating I think you call it or keening we made noises that were terrifying. And they were being part of that terrifying noise, you know, so that I suppose was our 'disturbance' as you'd call it today. We were making noises, you know, like, '(Wails.)' You know, really loud and really powerful. And it sounds almost, well it felt archaic in a way in that it was a, it was a sound from the heart and the guts of, you know, that people had made over years and years. You know, I can imagine wars being fought years ago between tribes and them making that noise. And there we were making that noise. It was so powerful, I remember it even today. It hit me in the chest a bit like a huge bass noise. That - and you know, that that was, that was the limit of our violence, that we made a noise, which was incredible really.

What about your views on what could activists learn from the experience of Greenham today?

Estelle

Well, I think the, you know, being completely non-violent, you know, and, and erm the strength between the women as well together the strong the strong support between us. And I think, you know, you've still got that in the movements today, where people, you know, support each other. And I think

the, the non-violent direct action, you know, is is a way of demonstrating with, and which sets an example, you know, I, and erm, yeah, I think we had that solidarity, you know, the solidarity between, with numbers. And I can, you know, remember, sitting in front of the gates at Greenham all sitting together, linked together, and I, I still think that people can do that, that they can still, and it's been shown the latest, you know, in the demonstrations that we have, you know, that the young people now, erm, in fact, they, you know, in the latest sort of demonstrations in London, you know, about two years ago, now, isn't it? For, for the planet, people were erm dancing with the police weren't they? So, this is, we want to have a relationship and engage with the people with with all kinds of people. And it doesn't get us anywhere, if, if we use, you know, violence, it just generates more violence. So I think the way we did things is an example. And I think it continues and it will continue, that people will get together and support each other, and try and engage with the people who, who don't think in the same way as us. I do feel, you know, when you look at erm the police, you know, when they, they have to control a demonstration, they are different people as well. And it's very important to remember that they are individuals. And I expect quite a few of them do, you know, support some of the demonstrators that they're having to control. And I think it's very important to remember that, you know, they are individual people, and with their own view, with their own views, and not to, to treat them as a block, you know, and they vary in their attitudes. It's very important to remember that.

And so why do you think it is that the suffrage movement seems to have been celebrated in so many ways, and yet Greenham hasn't received that kind of celebration?

Estelle

There's a question!

Jane

(Laughs).

Estelle

Goodness me. Yeah, that's a difficult question. I suppose with hindsight, I mean, I'm thinking about at the time of the suffragettes I, you know, I guess that's the same things were said. You know, these women's should be at home, what are they doing out, out in the street doing, you know, doing bad things? I suppose the same things were said then. And I guess that it's with hindsight, that they were - well, I mean, they're celebrated now. But we don't know whether they were celebrated at the time, or ... I think they were seen as a nuisance and a disruption to the country and a challenge to authority. And perhaps, and certainly, we were seen in a very similar way then. But I think that it's really important that we recognise that work that women, ordinary women had done, have done at Greenham to enlighten the population. It, it - yeah. Or to make a change within within the system. Yeah, yeah, I don't really have the answer. But perhaps now is the time that, that celebration of

Greenham Women should happen. It was certainly, in, in Portsmouth at the university, there's a, there was a lottery grant to actually recognise some of the activism of women of Portsmouth. And so perhaps this is the time for that to happen. But yes, I think we were just seen as a bloody nuisance at the time. And of course, the media was most definitely against us in general. You know, we were just seen as lefties, and commies, and anarchists and all those other things. So we faced an awful lot of prejudice. Yeah, what do you think Jane?

Jane

Well, I suppose suffrage means, you know, for women to get the vote, affected every woman in a sense. So it was, you know, it was very important to every single woman, whereas, I mean, obviously, the cruise missiles would have would, if things had escalated with the cruise missiles, that would have affected everybody as well. But I think that this was that they, the suffrage meant in law, every woman having the vote, so that was, in a way giving more power to women legally. Whereas Greenham was a something happening over there. And some people just, you know, they could just ignore it. Whereas suffrage, you know, and, and the vote had an effect on everybody in the, every woman in the country, you know, they and so maybe that's, that's the difference - that erm, it wasn't seen as a majority issue, you know, in terms of women. Whereas the vote was crucial for the future, you know, of our democracy and women's democracy. So ...

Estelle

I suppose, as well, I'm thinking about the time, we had a female prime minister at the time, which I suppose at the time of Greenham, and I suppose that, you know, that, that was seen as a great step forward. In that a woman was in the highest position of power. We had the Queen, and we had Margaret Thatcher and, you know, I suppose, in the, in the timeframe, it was erm - I mean, I suppose it might have been quite a frightening time for lots of men who kind of saw women in positions of power, wives going off and doing their thing. And, you know, I remember at that time, we need to remember that we weren't even called by our own names. We were I was, you know, Mrs his name and our surname. We, we weren't even, you know, called by our own names, which was bizarre, really. I couldn't get hire purchase. And yet we had, you know, two female heads of state really. And yet us, us women, you know, on the ground floor kind of thing, we had very little rights at all. And, yeah, I'm not quite sure what I was gonna say about that. But it seemed that, I think that that would have made it more frightening for ordinary people saying, 'Oh, well, we've got a, we've got a Queen, and we've got a female prime minister, and, and so what do you want to be going off and doing that for kind of thing?' We did face an awful lot of hostility. I think it was, and, you know, the men who were at home, looking after the children faced hostility from other men. 'How were you - and you know, why are you letting your wife go off and do that? What's wrong with you? Who wears the trousers in your house? Clearly not you!' There was a lot of hostility, I think and yeah. If, I

think in the timeframe, you know, it's important to recognise that. Anyway, I'm rambling now, so I'll shut up. (Laughs).

My last question, I think, is looking at the present time, why do you think it's important that Greenham is remembered by subsequent generations? What should we tell them and how should we tell them?

Estelle

I, you know, I've got grandchildren and my grandchildren are learning history. And, you know, and this is part of our history. They wouldn't have, you know, if we had kept quiet or if we just allowed things to take their course, I think it's important for the children to be able to see that we were effective in our time. You know, that you can make a difference in the world er, if you choose to do so. I mean, my grandchildren are incredibly proud of me because I've spoken to them about what I've done. And I've, of course, I've recently during lockdown collated this archive history. And they're, they're all, 'Oh did your grandma? Oh, did you?' You know and I tell them about Jane climbing the fence on great grandma shoulders and they, do you know, they're like eyes wide open! (Laughs). You know, it's almost like we are seen aa suffragettes in a way by the grandchildren who, who have had, you know, don't, they're not taught that in history. That's not part of their history. They learn about the First and Second World War, but they don't really learn about recent history aertainly you know. So why, yes. Yeah. So it's important for that for grandchildren to know, it's part of the history of women. And I think the history of women is, is neglected quite a lot. That was one thing we used to talk about in our women's group, Jane, wasn't it. About how, you know, women were written out of poetry, women poets, er women who wrote books, you know, there's very few - I mean, much more recently, we've seen a resurgence, or, or a surgence, really, of women's history and women's impact on the world. But so, you know, it's important to recognise the 1970s and '80s as, as being part of the history of the world.

Jane

So, can you say that question again, because there was different parts to it.

Yes. So is, why do you think it's important that Greenham is remembered? And how should it be remembered and what should be included?

Jane

Right. Well, we did actually succeed, I think, in closing the base. The base did close. So it, I think it demonstrates that people can come together. And women can come together and achieve a goal, which they did. You know, they didn't give up until at last that that base was closed. And we, there, we were less vulnerable because of that, because the cruise missiles were moved, you know, and that base was closed down. So it does, I think the message is it shows that people can get together and change government policy. And sometimes, you can't change government policy by writing to your MP and through elections, you know. Sometimes your government is doing

something really bad and you have to, you have to get together to stop it doing that, and to change the policy. So, I think that's, that's a message that we, that base was closed down, you know, because of the actions of those, those women. And we were a part of that as well, of course. But erm yeah, because it is very difficult to get change. You know, I mean, I'm, now that you've got your where people are online, and you can send your emails and to your MP, etc. You know, I think the media, you can get things going online in a way that you couldn't before. So a lot of, a lot of movements are gaining strength through, through going online, you know, I mean, during this pandemic, there have been a lot of meetings of people, Zoom meetings, and actual demonstrations online, because people can't get out into the streets and demonstrate. So that's another, that's that's another change. So, a lot of things have gone online, it seems. (Laughs). I'd like to, I'd like to, to quote from Margaret Mead, who said that, 'Never know that a small group of committed individuals are making a big change in the world.' And that that's what we were Greenham Women were doing at that time. We changed the world, I think.

Finally, is there anything else that you would like to say or that you wished I'd have asked you? The floor is yours.

Jane

I think you've asked a lot of interesting questions. (Laughs).

Estelle?

Estelle

I can't think of anything except that it was joyous. It was absolutely joyous. We may have been protesting, but we felt the feeling was that we were all working for the same goal. We were joyous with it. We were delighted with it. And yes, so many women suffered so much at that time, but we were all there for the same purpose and that was to protect our children and protect future generations from, from the, the damage that could be caused by cruise missiles. And, you know, you know, the chanting the singing the - it was just amazing. It was such a good feeling. I feel like I was part of something - and only a small part. My mother was, and Jane were much bigger. But I was a part of, of a fantastic, truly joyous experience and for the world. And that's why I'd like my grandchildren to know about that. Because, you know, it's so important that they understand the power of people, the power we have if we, if we, if we take control or try to do something about it.

A wonderful note to end on. So, Jane and Estelle, I'd just like to say thank you so much for so eloquently sharing your stories and your experiences. It's been a real pleasure to chat with you.