

Becky Barnes and Helen Garland

So, Becky - what made you decide to join Greenham common?

(Becky) Er, well I was living in Kent and I was already involved in activism, um, and I was also living with quite a strong bunch of women. We went to Avebury quite a lot and the political climate was getting much heavier and more apparent, well the nuclear race, the patriarchal system seemed to be coming down pretty heavy, and I felt a need to actually go and really do something - if I wanted to see change, then I had to be part of it. And that was pretty much my reason for going.

And so Helen - what made you decide to join?

(Helen) I arrived at Greenham common, in the January and um, what made me arrive was the fact that I'd had a massive tragedy in my life, and so partly I was running away, but also like Becky, I was very aware of the political situation, and how we really felt like we were under this massive cloud of the nuclear button being pressed, and how the Americans were bringing the missiles to this country, and I wanted to do my bit really. I'd done various protests before, and um, and so yeah, that's - so it was partly running away, but partly because I wanted to be active.

So how did you two meet?

(Becky) Well we met at Green Gate. I moved to Green Gate um, in the February, my sister dropped me off in her van, and left me there with a tarpaulin and a bag, and I didn't know anyone. I was quite young - 22, something like that, and um, went - I'm not quite sure why I went straight to Green Gate - I think it's, I think we knew it was in the woods and it was, yeah it was bleak at Greenham, and I think the woods were, had a - because of the woods - had a slightly softer, more enclosed, cosier feel, um and I met Helen there that's where I met Helen. Don't know what else to say!

(Helen) Yeah, I went to the Green Gate because like Becky also - I didn't know anyone living there at all, and I went to the Green Gate because it was bleak, and it was quite hardcore, um, er, because there were camps all around the base - Yellow being the main gate, and then the Green Gate was, like Becky said, in the woods, it felt more kind of - a little bit more nurturing or something...

(Becky) Well it wasn't exposed, was it?

(Helen) It wasn't exposed to the main roads. Because I think all the others were, but then you know, we got a lot of vigilante activity at Green Gate. I think it was probably

around all the others as well, but because the benders that we built, or the shelters that we build were in the woods, it was almost like there was an invisibility about it, so we got a lot of - do you remember the rabbit intestines in your beds and all sorts?

(Becky) Rabbits, yep, and because there were a lot of mirrors put up - had been put up to mirror back the fence, and it was - another thing, although it was slightly kinder and more forgiving in the wood it was - not spooky, but there were a lot of - there was darkness, and there used to be squaddies who would come out and do these horrible things and put yeah, rabbit...

(Helen) ...and locals - I think it was locals that did that, rather than the squaddies.

(Becky) And mirrors were put up to sort of reflect the base, and then they'd get broken - you'd hear in the night, you'd hear these smashes and stuff - I mean actually what I ended up doing was - I was trying to find something to get involved with, and I wasn't massively into doing the big political thing - I neither had the inclination nor the intellect to get involved, because it was quite strident some of the camps, quite strident, um, and very political, and a lot of talking, a lot of talking, so I was trying to find myself a role. And I don't think they did - when I first moved there, which was February, so that's '83, I don't think we did have night watch, and then quite soon into me being there decided it needed someone, or a couple of people to do night watch - somebody to stay by the fire and stay up all night because of these attacks - so they could alert, and I fitted quite nicely into that role. I was quite, um, all that time I was living with people but I sort of felt quite solo, I felt like I did quite like doing stuff on my own - I don't know if that was my internal state at the time - maybe I was running away from some stuff as well. And I used to leave Greenham and do other stuff - other stuff with the Anti-Vivisection and go and do vigils, and I always used to go on my own, so the night watch thing suited me quite well, but you get burnt out, you get very burnt out - very tired, so what I ended up doing, which suited me, and it felt sustainable was I'd do a week on at Greenham and do night watch, and then it wasn't completely set - and then I'd do a week off and I'd go back to Kent, and sort of rest and recuperate - go back to my nice place where I lived, and go on and off, and did that for many months. But obviously you do get tired, because even if you're doing night watch you can't sleep because there's constantly evictions - we were going - was it round the left side - I'm not quite sure which camp it was?

(Helen) To the Blue Gate.

(Becky) Where they had - they ended up making their benders on pallets with shopping trolley wheels to push them. And they were - I think they got evicted like every other day - they were constantly, and we'd get a call - someone would run, we had no phones obviously, and we'd all dash you know - whoever could would dash

and go and help them, so there was constantly something going on. It was tiring. But there was nice stuff - I was talking to Helen earlier and remembering the Quaker women at Green Gate, who took their role as - they were the 'wood-ers', weren't they - they were constantly collecting wood and singing. There used to be a little bit like pixies - pixies in the wood singing. And there was a lot of cooking - lots of food, we never got hungry, that's for sure. Cake!

(Helen) Yes, lots of women came everyday and they would be bringing supplies, and joining and finding out, so lots of talking, filling in, um, yeah, just the day was full - that's for sure! And the squaddies - there was a period where the squaddies were not allowing us to sleep, so they got into the sleep deprivation thing, so all night long would be bashing and clashing and making massive sounds, so you just couldn't sleep. Um, that was one thing that they did. So it was very, very joyful - women coming together and supporting each other. There were lots and lots of levels to it, but a lot of fun. There was art stuff that happened, and um, then people would be going off to London to do protests. I was involved with the Pacific Nuclear Testing with an Australian woman - because there was a lot of women from all over the world that came and lived there, or stayed, or visited and they would bring their stories. Big discussions about - because obviously we were, what's the word? 'Non-confrontational' - so big debates about how certain women in South America - I think it was South America, would be armed, and with their protests, and how really in a way I felt - this is personal, that it was luxury not to have to be armed - that we really, really could do it without. And maybe they could, I don't know - I would not have been able to judge it, because they felt at that time that they couldn't. Um. So yeah, it was, it was...

(Becky)...very interesting times.

(Helen) Yes it was very active and very full-on, people would come and sing, um, and...

So how long were you there for, and what made you decide to leave?

(Becky) Well I arrived in that February and I think I must have been there about 8 months - probably about 8 months - into the next winter, or next autumn, I think. It's hard - it's a long time ago, it's all a bit of a blur. There was a lot going on, as I say I went back and forwards to rest, and to be honest it was scary, it was scary, it was bleak, it was bleak, it was hardcore, it was the frontline, it was constant, and um, at the end I decided to leave. There was a situation, there was an eviction which I think we think it was possibly at Yellow Gate, and a horrible eviction, and we'd gone round to help, and there were a lot of police and it was very brutal. Those were those ditches we saw in the photos, and they were pushing people in the ditches, and I was

part of a circle - we were holding on to a make shift bender, trying to hold onto it, and a policeman came behind me and basically put me into an arm lock behind my back - he was very tall and I'm quite little, and picked me off the ground with my arm behind my back like that. And I sort of screamed and said 'You're hurting', and he was like 'Good. Good, I'm going to break your f-ing arm.' And I was scared, you know I was scared and I think the next day I went back and I got the coach, went to Newbury and got the coach, and I always used to buy a paper, and there was a photo on the front page of The Guardian, and it was a photo of us - which I need to find, I have got a cutting - or if I did I've lost it, and suddenly it all became a bit real - there I was on the front page of the newspaper. Got onto the coach and - which I'd got loads of times before - and got attacked on the coach to London by a bunch of youths - girls and boys, who threw burning ash trays - these were the times when people could smoke on the coach - threw burning ash tray into my lap, pulled my hair, kicked me, called me names, and I went to the bus driver - the coach driver and asked him to help me, and I won't repeat what he said to me. And I got scared, I got really scared actually, I felt that I was being followed - which I talked to Helen about - I think I got followed um, back to Kent, and I just got the feeling, and I was pretty much sure - I do get followed by an authoritarian figure, and I got scared that I was going to be set up for something, because people were getting set up - a lot of people were being arrested, and I felt I was going to get set up for something that I hadn't actually really done, and I felt that um, I was also doing, as I said I think people were involved in other stuff, and I'd gone to the march at Aldermaston, which there was nothing untoward happened there - a huge amount of people and real diverse, a huge amount of people did the walk from Aldermaston, but the cities had started in London, and I'd gone there, and there was, there was just a feeling that you could just get picked up. I got the feeling, and also the place I lived in Kent, it was quite, it was community and by this time the state were fighting back against us - we weren't just a bunch of, you know hippies sort of making - we were seen as a massive threat, and I just felt that I was going to get picked up and popped into a cell and sort of forgotten about. Because as I said I was quite on my own, and I was quite an insular little activist, bobbing around doing my bit in the world, and we were young and I got scared, I got really scared actually, and I had to, I didn't stop being political - I didn't stop being an activist, but I had to come off the front line, that's how I felt - I had to come, because something was going happen - I had a bad omen in my head.

(Helen) Well it got very, very heavy, didn't it - with the miners strike, and you know - the authorities were at that state being very threatened by it, because I think

(Becky) They were plucking people off.

(Helen) They were.

(Becky) And I remember being at a Stop the City, which obviously is quite a different thing from Greenham, and being at the Stop the City march in London, and us all getting - I think it's called kettled, and we all just got shoved in, and it was really scary, and people had kids in buggies and stuff. And I had managed to climb up on to some sort of monument to get out the way, and I had an overall view, and the police vans - old fashioned police vans, and I could see them plucking people. Like you do. It becomes real. It suddenly becomes really scary when you see that actually happening - plucking people and them just going into the van and the van going off, and there being such an amount of chaos and confusion and fear, that no-one actually saw who went. Or where they went.

(Helen) I think that was the tactic also, because...

(Becky) Do you know what I'm talking about?

(Helen) Yeah, I do, because while that sort of thing didn't really happen to me, I think because I was solidly there, that's what we were hearing. And also because all the actions I did - I did while I was living there with the groups of women that were - on the whole - living there. And there were always court cases you know, and we were always being arrested. I just seemed to be very lucky I never got taken to prison, but friends of mine did - we were always visiting Holloway, because that's often where the women were sent, um, but I think the authorities were getting threatened, so then they started to do this fear tactic.

(Becky) Yeah. And it worked.

(Helen) To try and break it up more

How would the women have been treated in Holloway - if you went to visit them?

(Helen) Er, I think on the whole they were treated okay. And I think a lot of the other visitors - I mean I wasn't there, I only know this second hand, um, I think the other women inmates - you know there was, I'm not going to say admiration, but they knew that they were there for a cause, and so, as I understand, on the whole it was okay.

And how long were you at the camp for? And what made you decide to leave?

(Helen) I was there - as I said, I arrived January in the snow, and made myself a shelter. I left, I think - it is a bit sketchy, I think I left around November, so not quite a year, and I left because I was burnt out. Because of basically just living there constantly. I think periodically I'd go and stay at another Greenham woman's house - they were like refuges, but I only remember doing that once, going to stay with

somebody in Oxford. And I think I just really remember how burnt and tired I was, and um, probably that I needed to get back and sort my own life out, and you know - carry on doing the work in a more local way. I lived in Devon, so yeah, carrying on and just doing, um, you know marches and activism down here, and talking to people on that level.

And did you know anything about Greenham before you went there?

(Helen) I had heard of Greenham - to be fair I'd been up there for a day with a bunch of friends, and um, because you know everyone was kind of talking about it - well not everyone, but certain circles of women were talking about it, and so yeah, I think I went up to bring food and support, and to join - you know, walking round the base and cutting the fence.

Was it what you expected it to be?

(Helen) I don't think I had any expectations, to be honest - I just don't really think I did. I think I saw what was happening and then went back home and then just thought actually, I had this terribly big strong pull - I think I just needed to live there, and just be there on the ground. And like I say, I wasn't a big academically political person, otherwise I perhaps might have gone to the Yellow Gate, but I went to the Green Gate where it was very, very multi-cultural, and um...

Is that what attracted you to the Green Gate?

(Helen) I think so, I think so, and just like Becky says, it wasn't like it was a softer option, but...

(Becky) There were trees!

(Helen) There were trees and I think the fact that there were trees....

(Becky) Made a massive difference.

(Helen) Because there literally was the fence and the squaddies and, you know, roads.

(Becky) I don't know if we were seen as a bit soft.

(Helen) I think we probably were.

(Becky) Yeah, the softies, because the other ones - the camps, again looking at the photos it was so grim, so grim. But even at the Green Gate you can just, there's a sketch I've got in my sketch book, which is now my recipe book, and there's a very faded sketch of a cooking pan, cooking pot by the fire, and in that you can just see the fence. The fence was everywhere, wasn't it?

(Helen) It was. It was our daily bread wasn't it, basically, and the oppression...

(Becky) Sunday I used to, my constitution I used to walk the base. How many miles was it - about 11?

(Helen) I think it was about 11.

(Becky) About 11 miles - I used to walk the base. So that was quite a few cups of tea, and you used to stop and walk the base. I used to do that on a Sunday.

So did you know about Greenham before you went?

(Becky) I, yeah, I'd gone to art college where we had, I think we'd gone on a coach and gone to a couple of - maybe they were the beginning of Embrace the Base? I remember seeing a poster sort of calling Greenham women, and I had a, um, I don't know - I just had this thing, I wanted to get involved. And quite a few people around me didn't seem to be that interested, and I, yeah, I had a fire to, that burnt to go and do something, and take direct action. Because I didn't seem to, I didn't feel that I was making much impact on what I could do by doing what I was doing at home, and I got art college and stuff, I just felt, which is why I just got up and went. You know, if something needs doing, go and do it. And it felt like Greenham women were calling me, so it was like go and do my bit.

(Helen) It was a strong calling, wasn't it?

(Becky) A strong calling.

(Helen) And I felt privileged, because I felt in a way I could donate that time of myself, you know, I wasn't working at that point, and you know, I was able to give up my life and go as well.

(Becky) Yeah, I ...there was an amazing amount of diversity of women. I remember talking to a woman who was living in the camp, and she, she lived somewhere, say it was Gloucestershire - it was somewhere nice, she was a potter, she was an artist, and she was married, and her husband was a sculptor or something - it sounded like they had a lovely life - they had chickens and a small holding, and sort of woman I aspired

to be. And I think maybe she was middle aged with grown up children, and she was living, you know, amongst these grimy puddles and you know, and had gone down - gone down to Greenham to fight the cause with everyone. And I just felt a little bit of a fraud because I was a young, youthful punk who could really kind of had that whole, I saw it as a privilege to be an activist, or to shout about what I thought were the rights and wrongs of the world. You know, I was kind of foot loose and fancy free - I didn't have any responsibilities, apart from myself. And so I felt yeah, take responsibility for what you think, and I was quite in awe of women who actually were making massive sacrifices. I wasn't really making a sacrifice, as far as I could see - a few people said 'It's terribly noble what you're doing', and I was like 'Hhhm?' Just do what you do. When I met women who had - who were grandmothers - who had come from a long way away, people were from abroad and other parts of the country with very nice lives, very nice lives, and had taken a choice to live - you know - none of the structures, yeah in the mud, but none of the structures had wood bunkers.

(Helen) It was cold.

(Becky) It was pretty rough.

(Helen) Yeah, it was just bits of plastic.

(Becky) But we didn't feel - I don't remember feeling really cold - we ate a lot, and we wore a lot of jumpers.

(Helen) Lots of clothes. And of-course when the evictions came, even those little bits of those spare jumpers and things, they were all being taken away constantly, so you were being stripped constantly. That was the other sort of side of it that led to burn out.

So how and why do you think the decision was taken for Greenham to become a women only camp?

(Helen) I don't think I can answer that...

(Becky) No, I don't think I can answer that.

(Helen)... because I think, um, you know, because it was originally a mixed group that walked from Wales - as I understand. So why, actually I don't know - sorry.

(Becky) Pass. It made perfect sense to me.

Why did it make perfect sense to you?

(Becky) Well, okay this is - I'm not a political - I was sort of living on and off in a community type situation, and mixed sex community type situation, which ran really well - it was lovely, um, very supportive. And when I got to Greenham, I thought - I don't know about the other gates, but I felt at Green Gate that it was the most perfect anarchy I'd ever met. I'd ever been involved in. Which was the true meaning of the word 'anarchy' - of self responsibility. That it had that whole feel that you have when you're with a bunch of women, when you're with a bunch of women, friends, cooking food, and it's like intuitive. No-one just knows - you're cooking food with your friends and everyone just knows what to do, it's just a women thing. I mean maybe men have it together - I don't know. But you just have this thing, and everything gets done - someone has lit the fire, or someone has done that. You don't have to ask - it just gets done. We just seem to have this amazing knack - women together have this amazing knack, and I remember thinking that and remembering that, when I lived at Green Gate, that you didn't have to worry about things not getting done - there wasn't going to be some, someone was going to have the pot on, the kettle was going to be on, the wood was going to be collected. Things were going to get done, and it just happened organically, and I think that made it very strong and safe, considering how brutal it, the actual situation was. But we did it!

(Helen) And men did come and visit - not actually the camp itself, but men did come and support. Um, but why it was originally...

What sort of relationship did you or the other women have with the men around? You know, the military or the police, or partners, or bailiffs?

(Becky) Not good!

(Helen) Well it was individual - because of the anarchy nature, I mean there were no rules. It was absolutely individual - how a woman responded to any one of those situations. But essentially it was non-violent, and you know, I think there were lots of women that talked to the squaddies. You know, because some of them were really young themselves, and lots of debate - some were more open to that, some were not.

(Becky) I remember a couple of women who were there who were almost missioned - they used to go round especially in the evening - they used to go round and change shift. I can't remember their names, but there was a couple of women and they used to go and talk, have debates, and try - and I think they did actually, I've got a weird, vague feeling in my head somewhere of remembering - of them not breaking him down in a horrible way, but talking...

(Helen) Willing him round.

(Becky)... willing him round - a young lad, and he was really young - only 19 or 17, 18,19 - I don't know, but young, under 20 and him sort of breaking down and sort of going 'I don't want to do this anymore'. And them saying 'You don't have to.' And him running away screaming. (Laughs).

(Helen) Yeah, but obviously with the police and bailiffs, I mean that was, that was another story, I mean you know - it wasn't that there was any violence, because it was peaceful, um, but you know I think of the whole women tried to just be, you know - peaceable.

(Becky) But of-course we did get the whole thing, that...

(Helen) We got their aggression.

(Becky) ...we got their aggression, and there was a whole thing that you'd know we were - in loads of ways we were despised and ridiculed, you know we were all smelt of smoke and we were grubby...

(Helen) Dodgy lesbians!

(Becky)...ridicule and that's why - the situation on that coach that I said earlier, that's of being, which was quite hard when you're on your own on a coach, and being beaten up, that's pretty scary, and I got hurt - they did hurt me. But it was that taunting of how disgusting, and you know - fat ugly, shaven headed, lesbian, dyke-ish, you know, just to kind of break you down. But when you're with a bunch of women you're strong, and water off a duck's back. When you're isolated - I think that's what I was going back to - the fear of actually getting separated, and incarcerated on my own, and no-one knowing where I was was quite frightening. Because suddenly you seem very little, whereas when you're with a bunch - even if you don't know everyone, you've got this strength of solidarity. When there was Embrace the Base day, I don't know where you were Helen at that point? There was a big fire, and they had a big fire, and women were singing - I think someone had died, and there was a lot of keening and singing, and no surprise - it was a full moon, and everyone rushed from the fire. I can't remember where exactly it was, I'm not sure which part of the fence it was on - this massive bonfire, and everyone naturally, organically rushed to the fence. And we brought it down - just everyone rattling it. Not sure where that came from, or where it's going, but this surge of energy - what I was saying was being isolated, and then suddenly this solidarity of women together, and we can do it. And actually I remember - I do remember it really clearly, because I remember everyone running to the fence and pulling, and it just getting to - and the concrete posts, which were massive, just beginning to go!

(Helen) Loosen and...

(Becky)...loosen and then running obviously behind the base it's all flat, and there were LandRovers suddenly zooming up, and then them all rushing out with more, with...

(Helen) Razor wire.

(Becky) Razor wire - like massive, freaking out because we were actually bringing part of that fence down. Which is why we've all got bits of fence!

(Helen) Yep!

Yes, I'm fascinated by sitting around your kitchen table looking at a piece of the fence - did you actually cut that out?

(Becky) I cut that out, and what is interesting - this morning Helen arrived and we're chatting and looking at photos and the sketches and the, it's all got the fence in, most of them have got the fence in, and I said 'I know in my kitchen draw I've got a bit of the fence', and amongst my kitchen - in my kitchen draw, amongst very kitchen draw things like screw drivers and sellotape, is no other memorabilia, is all sentimental stuff, is a part of Greenham common fence. In 2019 I find that quite odd - why that is in my kitchen drawer! Why is that in my kitchen drawer - I haven't put it there as a kind of show, it's just in my kitchen drawer.

(Helen) And you also got your wire cutters?

(Becky) And my wire cutters, which my sister bought me for my 23rd birthday. Um - they're not those great big bolt cutters they're more discreet, so when she gave them to me that was the March, I arrived there in the February, so that was the next month she gave them to me, and they're not the big bolt cutters, they're wire cutters. To snip, snip, because you can put them in your pockets - the big bolt cutters, you had to have big coats for those.

(Helen) You did.

(Becky) Is that you're talking about the black coats?

(Helen) The black cardigans?

(Becky) I don't know.

(Helen) It was something like that, they definitely had a name. I feel embarrassed, I can't quite remember.

(Becky) Well it was a long time ago - all a very long time ago.

So, how did the experiences of the camp change your relationship with men or authority - as you look back over the years?

(Helen) How did it - um, to be honest I don't think I had a massive regard for authority before. To be really honest I'm not sure it changed a lot. To be honest. Um, other than I felt, you know, you know - as a group you could really, really change things. And that felt good. Um - relationship with men, um, I was um, I was always bisexual, so um, my relationship with men didn't really change, you know. I mean I ended up having relationships with men before and after, and um, and I have, you know, a lot of respect for men. But I er, there is just something very magical about being with women and there's a safety in that. Um, on the whole - not always, obviously. So yeah, I don't think my experience there actually changed who I became or what I believed - I think it was just a massive experience in my life. But, um, you know the, the you know, obviously has made me a bit who I am, but I'm waffling -
Becky?

(Becky) Same, I don't really, I don't think it changed anything. What was the question again?

How have the experience so the camp changed your relationship with men or authority figures?

(Becky) I don't think they, I don't think it - no, again, I, I think the experience of Greenham - same, maybe shaped me, and gave me a, gave me strength and wised me up to, to um authority, maybe, a little bit. But I don't think it, because we were part of Greenham camp - it wasn't that Greenham camp - everyone came into, that's I mean, there was always the first women that set up, but we were Greenham common women, so it would be like did you change yourself - we were part of that, so I can't - I don't really understand the question, sorry.

Okay, and so you talked a little bit earlier on about your relationship with local residents, and the fact that you thought they were doing horrible things. So could you tell me a little more about that - what was your relationship with the local residents?

(Helen) I think, um, we had a lot of local residents that supported.

(Becky) I was going to say that - there was a woman that came and she did almost meals-on-wheels.

(Helen) Yeah, yeah, that's right.

(Becky) Especially to the Yellow Gate which as really stark, and I think there was a couple of local women that used to provide dinners, because they were...

(Helen) On the verge.

(Becky) There was only a few - it was tiny wasn't it, and it was a really small camp, there was only about ten of them, fifteen of them, I don't remember there being many. Obviously I was only there for that short period, but they often didn't - it was very stark where they were, they were on just a little bit, so they didn't really have anywhere. They tried to make little places for them to hide their stuff, but they were so exposed - there wasn't anywhere to hide, so they often had nothing, they often wouldn't have any fire. And um, that was the camp that I said that they made - it was very genius that they ended up making their benders on a pallet, which then had trolley wheels on it. Sorry, I'm not trying to digress too much, but I remember there would be, there was a kind of local women that used to do - it was, they would be the Greenham meals-on-wheels, and they used to go and take food, or flasks of soup and stuff to make sure the women on that gate got fed. Um, I think it's like anywhere - there's a split isn't there. It's like any area of any region - you're going to get people who are...

(Helen) Pro and against.

(Becky) Pro and against. You're going to get you know, I think that's just the way - what's it called - the demographic works, isn't it?

(Helen) Yes, because people did come and offer their showers and baths, didn't they?

(Becky) Yeah, yeah.

(Helen) From Newbury, so that...

(Becky) I think they probably had, I think there were — I wasn't, because I said I didn't like getting involved in stuff, I think I felt enough involved enough. But there were Greenham women who were quite involved in the um, the local Newbury stuff -

politics and women's groups and used to go into the library - they were quite involved, and would make friends with families and stuff. There were people...

(Helen) Yeah, yeah. I made friends with some of the families.

(Becky) I think that happened, and then you're always going to get, and then there was the whole redneck element, so that's going to be....

So what was that about?

(Becky) Well that's you know, locals and 'filthy lesbian Greenham nutters', you know - we should all be...

(Helen) Banged up!

(Becky) Yeah, or burnt, burnt - incinerated, you know, and we were scum. But I think, you know, it's an opposite...

(Helen) Depended which side of the fence you were on! Sorry, had to put that in! Oh, I was just going to say the vigilantes were local men - on the whole, I think it was more them that did it. From my memory and understanding, that that was their protest to get rid of the Greenham women - 'let's make it as horrible as possible.'

(Becky) Yeah, it's not rocket science that situations like that are seen as, women seen as that, are seen as a massive threat - just a massive threat. That's centuries old. Centuries old, and probably still is - probably ongoing, women that...so that - the most basic tactic is to isolate people and then ridicule them, and then make them feel inadequate and dirty and vile, um, inhumane - is a way of breaking it down, but it's actually terrified that they're going to steal their wives and their daughters and turn them all into strident feminists - you know what could be worse for a lot of men? Or some men?

And what were the challenges of being a child on the camp?

(Becky) Well we were grown up.

But there were children there?

(Becky) Oh, yeah sorry - I was going to say we weren't that young! (Laughs).

(Helen) There were a few children there, but I don't think there were any children living there. In my memory, there weren't children living there. There were children who would perhaps come and visit, and um perhaps stay for short periods of time.

(Becky) I remember there being a van, and there was a woman with a couple of kids, and she'd come periodically. It wasn't really encouraged, I don't think, because I think authorities would have been um, down pretty heavy.

(Helen) It wasn't really a safe place.

So there weren't many children?

(Helen) Not that I remember.

(Becky) There weren't any children living in Green Gate when I was there.

(Helen) No, there wasn't. No. I think on big...

(Becky) I think a couple of people had some dogs - nothing to do with children, but I think a couple of people had some dogs, but it was just people, it was felt that there wasn't - you had...um, it wouldn't have been really responsible. You had to be ready to...

(Helen) (Finds a photo). Picture of a baby (laughs)! But she was a local woman, and she used to come in the evenings sometimes and bring her baby - so it was that sort of thing - visits and then away. And yes, I think some people did stay - like you say, in a van and with children.

What medical treatment was available at the camp - if any?

(Helen) Er, one of the women at Green Gate while I was living there was a doctor, she was from Australia, I think. But no, if you needed medical attention, you went to the surgery at Newbury.

So how do you feel about the way Greenham is being represented in popular culture - films and books and plays?

(Helen) I haven't seen much! I'd like to say I haven't seen much, and like I said earlier - I mean talking to the young people, I think a lot of people don't even know that it kind of particularly exists. I think...

(Becky) Yeah, even my children - my son sees it as sort of heroic thing I did a very long time ago.

(Helen) Yeah, I've seen some things online, but yeah, I feel it's under...

(Becky) Publicised.

(Helen) Under-publicised, that's the word.

So how would you like to see it publicised?

(Helen) By Scary Little Girls! (Laughs). I think it needs to be documented, and I think it needs um, it does, how do I want it publicised? Um, oh, gosh - I might have to think about that.

(Becky) Well I think an exhibition would be amazing - the photos and what, it's archives, isn't it. I've got some very faded sketches, as I said - in my recipe book - I cannot be the only person who has. Helen has turned up with a huge amount of photographs - I haven't got any photographs, so we're just two women. There were a lot of women there - there must be a lot of information and recorded information - not just verbal, anecdotes, and for that to be compiled is just incredible. It'll be great for the women themselves, but it's a part of history, it's a part of you know, part of the Suffragette movement - it's a big thing.

So why do you think the Suffragettes have had all that publicity and the women at Greenham common haven't?

(Helen) I'd like to know.

(Becky) Because we're still alive.

(Helen) Yeah, probably it is - it's probably to do with that. This is relatively recent history, um, you know we changed, we changed, you know the missiles did go, it worked. Um, I suppose because of the anarchy of it - you know the governments are not going to want that exposed, you know that actually if you really, really want to do something you can do it. You know that's the kind of essence, isn't it - of Greenham, of what happened at Greenham. Women believed it would, we were going to get rid of this oppression.

(Becky) Don't you feel, I don't know, I've been sort of vaguely following stuff with the climate change, and the children's movement that is going on worldwide.

(Helen) Yep.

(Becky) And I've just been seeing little snippets - I'm not following it massively, maybe I should, and I've got a slight feeling this is a kind of same kind of momentum, being picked up by - possibly ridiculed. Although, possibly ridiculed - children saving the planet and speaking up, and it's going worldwide, and I think - I'm not sure how I'm tying this together...

(Helen) Hopefully it'll snowball and something will happen.

(Becky) As Helen said, it made it happen and I feel that it is not, so this is you know - it's a weaker part of society, so women all together doing something fantastic and children do it. Are women on their own going to be able to disarm a base and stop a base? And you know yeah we did. Are children going to be able to save the planet? Probably yes, I can't think of anyone else who is going to. Children - let the children save the planet. I'm not letting the children save the planet, but leave it up to them. And it's a power movement.

So what tactics then, from Greenham, do you still seeing play in activism and politics today?

(Becky) Ooh, you're talking - that's quite intellectual. This is the sort of thing I always used to run away, these kind of debates! (Pretends to shout) 'What are you talking about?!' Yes. Jaws drop.

(Helen) (Laughs).

I was fascinated by what you were just saying that you're noticing in the world today that something is happening, and so you know...

(Becky) Well it's that thing - if you need something doing, you just got to go and do it - if you need something doing. Why did I join or go to Greenham was because I'd heard about it, I was already involved in um, well it's not politics, but I was already an environmentalist at ...

(Helen) At heart.

(Becky) At heart, and it felt like instead of talking about it or going on the odd demonstration, people were beginning to live it, so there was you know, and people were going to peace camps - it was a way of doing, getting things done, and I think there's also - from what I've seen, quite a lot of people involved in the environmental stuff going on now. To me it seems people are quite involved in doing stuff on a

grassroots ground level - getting on - clean up your own backyard, so involved in local politics and so on. Whether it's gardening projects - there's a feeling of that as well - of home grown stuff. I'm not sure if I'm making any sense, I'm beginning to waffle as well now.

So, how well do you believe the Greenham legacy is being relayed down through the generations, and if you don't think it's being done well, what differences would you like to see?

(Helen) Well in a way I feel it's like the question before - I just want to see it, you know, it'd be great to get a good documentation of people's lives and stories, and you know photos out there, logged, and um...

Do you think if that had been done it would have made a difference to where we are now?

(Helen) Probably not. I would say probably not! I just think it would be great to have it documented because people are still alive, because it is an, it is a long journey, isn't it - the Aldermaston marches. There's a, there's, it's going way, way back and this is just one part of a massive, massive story, and as you've just said Becky - the moving on with the children, hopefully you know, making big moves in um, you know, um, saving our planet, um, but it actually is only ever going to happen with the individual.

(Becky) Yeah.

(Helen) With the individual you know, coming from that place where they are driven, and I will use the word you now it's 'heartfelt'.

(Becky) And I think it's, I don't feel that it's anything lost even though maybe now, I mean I think there has been stuff documented, there's like with this project that it might seem, oh is it a bit late in the day? but I got told about the project from a friend who wasn't at Greenham - I got an email from a friend, from Kent, who I knew as a teenager, and said 'Do you know any Greenham women?', and she immediately got to me, and it's really interesting - the links, and the opening up, and me and Helen getting back in touch, as I don't think I've said this on this interview - I have Helen in my phonebook - way before the project, and she's down as 'Helen Greenham'.

(Helen) (Laughs).

(Becky) So it's not as if the legacy doesn't live - I have a bit of Greenham in my kitchen drawer. With Greenham it's quite weird - it hasn't died. And what I was going to say when I got in touch - so when I wrote to Rebecca about the project, said I was

interested, um, I didn't hear anything back because they had got - she and the other woman had got so inundated with responses, and Greenham women are everywhere!

(Helen) They are everywhere, and they want to speak out.

(Becky) Want to speak out, and have probably a lot of women have got little bits of fence in their kitchen drawer, or in their side table or whatever, you know - it's not like a dead thing, it's not a dead thing.

But as well as your bit of fence, you have a recipe book.

(Becky) I have a recipe book.

So are these recipes that you coked at Greenham?

(Becky) Oh, probably not actually - I don't want to be fake. I think we probably had one-pot-stew, didn't we - most of the time?

(Helen) Mostly.

(Becky) But there is a picture of the cooking pan and the fence at Green Gate, and (leafs through pages), yes - there you are, in rainbow pencil.

So how does it make you feel when you have looked at the the photographs together this morning, and looked at the pictures...

(Becky) One of me with my head cut off!

(Helen) (Laughs).

(Becky) But you did recognise my legs!

(Helen) Cropped, darling, cropped.

(Becky) Cropped! And a friend of mine who didn't live there - so that must have been - that photo must have been in Embrace the Base. And nice to see an old friend of mine that I have lived in that community years ago, who is a herbalist now and runs a whole foods shop and does lots of witch-y herbalism stuff, so you know. The movement lives on.

(Helen) And I think for me it's lovely revisiting the photos and the memorabilia, and talking it through with Becky, and just remembering people's names. I mean I don't

know probably anybody's second name, but I am slightly recalling some of the first names, and um, yeah. Was a big part....

(Becky) It's taken us a while, but we managed to actually muster which year it was - because I thought it was '82, and it's '83.

(Helen) It was '83, yeah.

(Becky) '83, you know - it's only kind of talking about it that you remember bits and bobs.

(Helen) And I've shown this album to other friends that have been, some of them who came to visit Greenham, and they've sort of said 'Helen, I never knew you had that album!' And I was like 'Yeah, I know, it's just been in my you know - on my shelf.' So it's lovely to revisit it, and um, and it is a massive part of our pasts, and I think - I think revisiting it and hopefully more young women and men that get to know about it, can only be for good. It's like I went to see a play about you know - what happened at the Bean Field, and um, and then there was a bit of a resurgence about that, and I thought 'Great, that happened, that was the police brutality - it happened'. You know I wasn't at the Bean Field, but I was, you know - I saw those vehicles and people traumatised a week later. So that movement is there. We don't know each other individually, but we do know each other. It's like Becky - I don't know Becky, but I feel like I know her.

(Becky) We feel reconnected.

(Helen) I feel like I know her very well.

(Becky) I feel - do you know how it makes me feel? I'm very proud to be a Greenham woman - I feel very proud of that and um, yeah, I do, I feel very proud to have stood up actually, to have been brave. You have to be quite brave.

(Helen) Yeah, it's true.

(Becky) Had to be quite brave.