

12th Dec 1983DIANA'S STORY

On Monday, when the clearing up and sobering up was taking place at the Orange Gate, Diana and Zuphie went for a walk to stretch their legs and look at the leaning, battered fence. Quite by chance they happened to have a pair of cutters each on them, although they really had no intention of doing anything except look. But, unbelievably there was a piece of comparatively undamaged fence, and not a cop in sight. The temptation was too great. Out came the cutters, and in no time at all a large hole appeared; then a police car. Diana didn't see the police and strolled away into the woods (or so she said). The story we heard back at the gate was that Diana was last seen running like hell with a large policeman in hot pursuit! Anyway, Diana and Zuphie got caught, had their bolt cutters taken from them, and were driven to Newbury cop shop. The ride was not pleasant as the security guards kept throwing open the windows of the vehicle, holding their noses and complaining loudly and rudely about the 'smellies' and how the whole place stank because of them. This didn't please Diana at all, but she was even more horrified when Zuphie muttered that they would have to turn out their pockets at the reception desk. Now Diana is a very well bred and brought up young woman and keeps certain functions as private as possible, so that morning when she had to change her tampon, she did in in the privacy of her bender, and wrapped the used one in a great wad of tissues, and left it in her pocket to dispose of in the shit pit at her leisure. Unfortunately she had either forgotten all about it, or had not found the time to do this, so she realised that unless she could execute a swift sleight of hand, all those unpleasant remarks about 'filthy women' and 'smellies' would be seen as true.

In the police station she and Zuphie were told to turn out their pockets. At Greenham Common women do not walk about with handbags, and therefore pockets are inclined to become rather cluttered. Diana borrowed Zuphie's gloves (she only had mittens with no fingers herself) put them on, shoved the offending object inside, removed the gloves from her hands, and left gloves and hidden tampon shoved up one finger, on the desk. It took quite a long time to empty her pockets and each item had to be entered by the officer. Quantities of tissues, string, penknife, two teabags (unused) bits of paper, pencil, two tampons (unused), money, etc, etc. By this time she was getting quite bold and

actually asked to have the two clean tampons back, but there was still the problem of the other one in the glove. She picked up the gloves, fiddled a bit with them for a moment, extracted the tampon, hid it in her now empty pocket without being seen, and put the gloves back on the counter. The officer was suspicious, picked up the gloves and tried to get his large hands into them, and when he found he couldn't, asked a WPC to check them. She made some funny sort of remark about 'was he frightened that a mouse would jump out,' but of course found nothing in them. The officer then asked Diana to read the list carefully detailing her belongings, but she told him he had forgotten to include the two tampons. Very seriously he added them, and then she signed the list. Signing anything took rather longer than usual as Diana had given her full name as Diana Greenham, and it takes a bit of thought to remember to add that Greenham in the middle.

To add to these complications Zuphie was going through the same procedure but had not given her proper name as she wanted to go home to Europe for Christmas and return to England later. She had already been arrested before, so this time called herself something like Shirley Primrose and Diana kept forgetting and addressing her as Zuphie, then changing it to Shirley. It must have caused a lot of confusion, but even more so was the fact that the policy of Greenham women is, when arrested give no information except name and address. Diana found she could not do this and informed us it was nervousness that made her talk all the time. She told the police about her family, her divorce, the fact that her mother and sister had both been arrested, and should she admit to previous offences against the MOD fence at Greenham etc etc. The police got pretty bored with all this, and when she was actually being charged, she was warned that there was **not** much space on the charge sheet, so she would have to keep her reason for damaging the fence very short. Diana thought for a moment and then at dictation speed said, 'I cut a large hole in the fence to make easy access for others.' This was not a popular statement to make.

The worst part of the afternoon was when Diana and Zuphie were shut away in separate cells. Diana felt very low with the four walls blankly looking at her, but when she examined them rather more closely, she found that other Greenham women had been there and scratched messages and names all round. These had

to a certain extent been scrubbed out, but many were made and cut with a sharp implement, and were just legible. The only tool that Diana had which would make any impression as the metal end of her bootlace, so she undid it, and scratched 'Di was here', and felt much more cheerful.

The interview with the inspector was a fiasco. Diana was still very chatty and didn't behave in the way that he expected or wanted. To make matters worse, his wife phoned and Diana enjoyed the one sided conversation, particularly as she was ~~xx~~ obviously listening with much interest, so he turned his chair round half way, talked as softly as possible, and screwed his body and legs as far from her as possible. As the conversation went on, embarrassment oozed from every pore.

"I'm sorry I'll be a bit late tonight."

.....

"Yes, you're right." (This was obviously in answer to a question about Greenham women making him work long hours.)

.....

"What's for supper?" Cheerful voice

.....

"Cheesy mince? But I don't like that if its the same as last time. I told you I didn't like it then." Gloomy voice.

.....

"Well, as long as its not the same I expect I'll like it." Very doubtful voice.

(At this point Diana was tempted to leap to her feet, grab the phone from his hand and tell the wife she shouldn't put up with such criticism and treatment from a man. Come and join the women and get liberated! Its a good thing she resisted the temptation, as I can't think what the charge for inciting wives from inspector husbands would be, but I think the sentence would be very long.)

.....

"Well, I won't be all that long. Don't forget to unhitch the horse." End of conversation. He turned and faced Diana again.

The bit about unhitching the horse was a real puzzle. Apart from being a coded message at which the mind could boggle, (was the wife meant to dress up in drag as the back half of a horse?) Was it to ask her to open the garage door? Had he really got a horse that heeded unhitching (in the pitch dark?)

Any clues as to the real meaning would be most welcome.

Eventually Diana and Zuphie were released after a date had been fixed for their court case. I should mention one other rather ludicrous happening. Diana had made a complaint during her hours of captivity about the behaviour of the security guards who had arrested them. She didn't do it in the normal way. She stated she was furious and nobody should have to put up with that sort of verbal abuse. She would write to the newspapers and tell them about. As a matter of fact she had met Jill Tweedie only the day before and would contact her about it. At this point Zuphie who was only half listening to the tirade, piped up and stated that she had actually slept with Jill Tweedie the night before, then said oh no, wrong Jill. I don't think the police at Newbury enjoyed their afternoon with Diana and Zuphie, and at times I can understand why Greenham Women are not popular with everyone.

Ginette.

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29th Dec 83 - 1st Jan 1984

My arrival coincided with a meeting round the camp fire, discussing a press statement to be put out the next day. The basic ~~xxxxxx~~^{problem} was that at the Orange Gate ~~about~~ £1,000 had been received in donations over the Christmas period and what should be done with the money? There were about 20 women in the group and after quite a long time when each woman had a chance to have her say without interruption, the majority felt that ~~the~~ a percentage of the money should go to women's groups world wide. A few felt that court costs, publicity, postage, and general living would eat into the cash received very quickly without giving ~~much~~^{any} away, some thought that Christmas was the only time when money was received in any quantity and reminded the group that last summer they were so short of money at Greenham that the office couldn't afford to send out letters asking for help for more. These points were well thrashed out, and apart from anything else, now that the telephone tree was in operation, if Greenham woman got desperate for cash, a call to supportive women would surely raise more. The details of the statement were worked out, Sian said that she would very much like to administer it, and we agreed that it must not be seen or thought of as charity, but sharing. The oppressed groups could be in this country or anywhere else in the world, but big organisations such as Oxfam ~~wouldn't~~ be considered as too much much money was wasted in admin costs. 50% of money given to us was also agreed on, and the next morning the statement was written up, once again as a group effort, and was taken to the press conference. It is quite interesting to note that not all the women from other gates agreed with what we had done, as they felt it made the different gates too autonomous, but accepted that we had the right to do this if we felt like it. The other gates had a much more general statement about the struggle at Greenham with the Government and police which is getting stronger ^{more violent} rather than less after 2½ years of ~~a~~ peace camps being there. It also stated that the camps will go on against military ~~bases~~ in this country, and also to increase links with women's struggle to end oppression, prejudice, exploitation and violence through the world.

Later that evening some of the women went off to tell the other gates what we proposed do, and after a huge ^{curry} supper, cooked mainly by Miranda and myself, a group of us sat round and continued the discussion. I have felt for a long time that Greenham Common

peace camps were more than just anti-cruise, and the women who go there are there for more than just that one reason. This time the discussions on oppression and also class privilege among women were brought up again and again. Perhaps I just haven't been there before when these discussions took place, or is it that now there are so many women coming to Greenham from different backgrounds and countries that this sort of talk is more common and relevant? Women on social security also say that their lives at the camps are so much easier than women they know who have to struggle for everything even in this so-called welfare state that we live in. Some said that they were definitely better off and had far better and more luxury type food than they would have if they were at home. Life is really easy there ~~compared~~ even with the cold, ^{lack of} and wet ^{facilities} and those of us from privileged middle class backgrounds had no idea how terrible real grinding poverty can be for women. Then the question of coloured women came up. A lot of those at the Orange Gate that night were from London and many belonged to women's groups there. They had tried at times to make contact with coloured women in their areas, but on the whole had not been very successful. Someone admitted that her group, quite without thinking, had suggested that two groups get together for a social evening, and said that the coloured group could do the catering for it! Not a popular suggestion, ~~the~~ and the evening ended up with white women only, ~~but~~ ^{unthinking mistake} it is this sort of ~~thing~~ which makes contact impossible.

Cleise said that she was on her own in Debbie's bender and I could put my things in there as there was plenty of room. She did have the most awful cold, but as almost everyone I knew in Deal had flu, I decided a few more germs wouldn't matter. Most of the residents were there including Margaret, Rebekah, Sian, Nicki, Ruth, Penny, etc etc and Miranda. I did confess to Miranda that I couldn't remember a word that she'd told me last time I was there when we went for that walk on the Common. I knew that she had been cross with me and that was all. She said that she couldn't remember a lot about it, except that she had felt better for talking to me like that. Anyway we laughed about it and decided that it didn't matter. Sally was ~~xx~~ having a couple of weeks holiday at home, and Diana was expected but was not there yet. I told them I had written up Diana's story about being arrested and they asked to hear it. I was very relieved that they enjoyed it, and told me that I must go on writing about the Orange Gate and happenings and stories

^{as} far as they knew, no one was doing it in quite this way.

We had some mulled wine, and two women offered to keep the night watch, as they said they were going off home the next day and could catch up on sleep then. This watch is long and boring, and also uses up a lot of firewood, but we all feel it is necessary in case they try to deploy cruise during the hours of darkness. The instructions for the watchers are rather complicated, but the main thing is to be on the alert and rouse everyone.

In the morning I decided that it was time I walked the perimeter fence. Nine miles is quite a long way and in the end 'waffle woman' Jan^{and I} decided to go together and get to the Blue Gate at 2pm for the press conference. In the end we didn't leave until about 12, as we felt that a lunch/breakfast was the best sort of meal to have. Actually in the end Jan took some beer and sandwiches with her and we ate these while watching some soldiers make a new camp for themselves inside the fence. I don't think they liked being looked at, but we ^{women} have plenty of that to contend with ~~the other way round~~. The first part between the Orange, Yellow, and Green gates was very muddy and a lot of balancing on bits of wood, and generally sloshing along rather slowly. We only stopped briefly at the main gate. They have so many visitors and people there all the time, we didn't intrude too much. By the time we got to Green gate we needed a rest for a while and sat by the fire and talked about the differences in the camps. There it is quiet and peaceful and I told them about the terrible noise at Orange with the soldiers shouting all the time and hurling stones at the benders to keep us awake. ~~They~~ Green Gate has its problems too, the soldiers use loudspeakers to shout to keep them awake, and as the benders are very scattered, the odd empty one has been vandalised, but whether by the troops or vigilante groups no one is sure.

We were very pleased ~~xxxxxxx~~ at one point to find that for half a dozen panels or so, there was no fence up at all, just posts, and a lot of soldiers inside the barbed wire.

There seemed to be quite a lot of walking to the Turquoise Gate, but there were only a couple of tents there and we rather passed it without realising where we were, and soon after that we reached the Blue Gate. Lots of women standing around after the press conference. Of course we were rather too late for it, but we stayed and talked for a while and I saw some friends I hadn't seen for a while. I should mention that somewhere on our

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her long friend

she got this name as she had spent all day on
the 11th serving free supplies to all who wanted them at

~~the camp gate~~

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journey we met up with Rose, who was photographing and sketching as she went. She is a painter and told us she had hitchhiked down from Sheffield on her own the day before, something she hadn't done for years. We talked quite a bit about ~~xx~~ joining forces on a book and she was interested in the idea. →

B By this time it was after 3, and we had only come half way, so Jan, Rose and I went on to the Indigo Gate where there was nothing at present, but talk of setting up a camp the next day.

At the Violet Gate it was nice to meet Carola again, and so we stopped and had a coffee with her and then the tall Dutch women appeared, They had been making a bender over the road on the common, as the strip of ground by the fence is only a few yards wide. This time they had come by car with another Dutchwoman, and were planning to stay a while.

Then on to the Red Gate where Jules ~~xx~~^{was} living. Women there were also in the process of making another bender, so the whole ~~area~~^{base} is well surrounded. It is rather cold and bleak on this side of the airfield with the narrow winding ~~xxxxx~~ road, I do think these are the gates which will be evicted first, as there are not really enough women living there to do much about security. I also think they could have trouble with local vandals, although on the whole it is the Main Gate which attracts most of the ~~xxxxxx~~.attention. ~~xxxxxx~~

It was getting dark by this time, so we went on home to the Orange Gate. Rose came with us, and when we got there I found there was room in a bender for her if she wanted to stay, and there were plenty of sleeping bags and blankets around. Her stuff was back at the main gate, but she had a lot of walking to to that night to get there. I think we all three felt we had achieved something by the walk, and it certainly gave me a new perspective on the size of the air base, and also on how much damage had been done to that fence. Most of the panels have been damaged, some only slightly, and some very severely indeed. There were practically no police on the outside, and the soldiers on the ⁱⁿside looked young, bored, and rather cold! Actually it had been a magnificent day, almost like spring. The helicopters no longer fly around all day, which was perhaps the biggest relief of all. I should mention that during our entire walk we were escorted by at least one soldier on the inside. He had his walkie talkie and accompanied us, reporting in when we stopped, and then we were sort of 'handed over' to the next man on his beat.

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Originally I had wanted my son Mark to take photos for me, but he decided that he could not come to Greenham as a man, and it would be even worse if he started taking photos. Of course he was quite right, but I hadn't thought of it in quite that way before he ^{said} mentioned it.

During our hours away, more women had arrived and gone, The population~~x~~ changes all the time. Then a group came from another gate and said there were going to be slides and a talk at the Friends Meeting House in Newbury, and all who wanted to come were welcome. I decided to wait as I was expecting Liz and Hilary to turn up. Supper was organised, coffee, and later on more mulled wine. I didn't really feel cold at Greenham at all this time, but it was interesting to note that the London women were the ones less able to cope with the wind and cold air. The smoke round the camp fire was as problematic as ever, but I find if you sit down low on the ground it is not nearly so bad. The area round the fire now is well sheltered by wind breaks and they do help to keep the wind away, but the smoke tends to swirl around inside rather badly.

Hilary and Liz eventually turned up, and luckily they had had supper on the way, as by this time there was none left. Hilary found the smoke almost impossible to bear as she had conjunctivitis, so they decided to sleep in their car that night. The women who had gone to the slide show came back and said that it had been very good indeed and the Meeting House had been packed out with a very appreciative crowd. I went off to bed quite soon with my 'hottie' and Cleise, who by this time was swigging quantities of hot water and garlic and obviously feeling pretty rotten. There must have been a change of soldiers inside the fence, as this lot were much quieter, and early in the morning I heard one of them reading out loud the notices painted on the fences, and he paused when he came to the one that said 'every six seconds a child dies'. His companion made a remark a moment later about how we ~~xxxx~~ spell 'wimmin', but at least they didn't shout and ~~xxxx~~ hurl stones at us.

We cleared up in the morning and then I tried to read a bit of Vanity Fair, but it's hard to concentrate with so much going on round. Cleise and Jan both wanted to catch the one o'clock coach from Thatcham, ^{and} ~~xx~~ Gabrielle ~~and wanted~~ to do some shopping, so I agreed to take them to Thatcham and get some milk, bread, etc, as the shops would be closed for a couple of days. On the whole the people of Thatcham seem to accept Greenham women quite well, although I'm still conscious of the wood smoke smell on me when I go into a warm shop. I made a phone call in a box with no door, and Gabrielle and I went back to the Gate.

Hilary was sitting in their car, her eyes still very

impossible

painful, so the camp fire was ~~out~~ as far as she was concerned. We talked for a while and had a beer, then I decided it was well past lunch time, so went and got some food. At that moment one of the tall Dutch women turned up and said that her friends had been arrested as they were helping to set up a new camp at the Indigo Gate and police were making arrests. We all ~~left~~ into cars and rushed over there. Two benders were being made on a very muddy patch of 'grass' verge, and a few women were standing around, but more and more arrived within minutes, and soon we were linking arms and singing, while from over the road members of the Newbury and Crookham Golf Club looked on in horror. I was very tempted to go over there and apply for membership, but I hadn't got my handicap certificate with me, and didn't think under the circumstances I would be very welcome! My handicap of 7 would be a good entry there, and all the women were longing for me to try. Perhaps another time I will.

Apart from building the benders, some women were ~~building~~ ^{digging} a small ditch with pick and shovel in the awful stony ground. It appears that there is some bylaw which states that if a fence or ditch are joined up round a dwelling it is much harder to evict, the authorities have to get proper permission. It seems very odd, and we weren't sure how deep the ditch should be, and in reality all we dug, was a little gully about 6 or 9 inches deep. Never mind, there were so many women there, the police didn't want trouble with a crowd ~~thaxxxxxx~~ ^{50 or 60}, so we went off after a while, although the decision to have the party at the Yellow Gate was altered to this new camp, so that it wouldn't be left too empty. that first night.

Back at Orange Gate we had another cup of coffee, and decided what to do that night. Margaret and I felt that we would rather stay where we were. We had to have a presence and watch at that Gate, and I'm a law abiding citizen who doesn't like to drink and drive, and anyway a little action in our area would keep the security forces on their toes. Margaret said she had been for a ~~little~~ walk to find out what the policy on arrests was, and how many police were around, but she hadn't had much joy, and would I go and check. Well, I went off towards the Red Gate, and didn't meet any police at all, and only the odd huddled soldier on the inside with his walkie talkie at the ready. I ~~stop~~ped a few times, and fiddled with the fence, but no one came near me, so I reported back. I didn't want to get arrested at that point and miss the party.

Food was being prepared, the wine was starting to flow, and many more 'regulars' and newcomers had turned up. Zoe and her daughter greeted me in their normal polite way, and Diana's sister, Fiona, and their mother had come, so I was asked to read Diana's story to them and everyone ~~there~~ ~~poor~~ Diana was not well, but I gave them the copy of the story to give her when they went home, with my love. Francis from Northern Ireland and Jenny the actress, decided we hadn't got enough drink to last the evening, so we had a whip round and they came back quite soon with lots more wine, and also, they said for me, a bottle of Glen Fiddick to see the new year in. My God, what a party! We all agreed it was different, much better than dressing up tidily and singing Auld Lang Syne, then not knowing what to do, or even worse, watching the never ending TV trash.

Although it was still some way off midnight, Margaret thought that she and I ought to take another walk, so I collected my cutters, and off we went. About the only person we saw was a poor little soldier all on his own. He was terrified of us. If I'd shouted 'Boo' loudly, I think he'd have run like hell. As it was we asked him where he was ~~muttered~~ from and he ~~said~~ ^{muttered} Wales, so we told him we were sure that he'd prefer to be home and would he like a cigarette. He did say that he didn't smoke, so we did a bit more unravelling in front of him and went back to the fire.

Some women had gone off to Avebury to see the New Year in there, and some to the party at Indigo, but about 20 of us were left with the Glen Fiddick and party spirit. At about midnight (give or take a minute or two) we rushed to the Gate, sang and danced, and of course I stood on my head, very conscious that the bolt cutters in my pocket were slipping rather ~~badly~~ ^{rapidly} towards the ground. I really must learn to behave in a more restrained way, but not yet~~x~~, and certainly not at Greenham! Apart from other songs we did sing Aulde Lang Syne, but the Greenham Women songs came over much better.

After a while Margaret, I and a few others, thought we ought to check that damn fence again, so strolled off in twos and threes. There was very little activity inside, so we did a little more damage, chatting all the while. We discussed what a lovely night it was, and the stars, and how nice it was to be in such good company etc, etc, but by this time we were all rather tired and a little drunk, so having wished the troops good night and a happy new year we went back to ~~to~~ the camp fire.

Hilary and Liz were going to drive home that night, and as Debbie, whose bender I had been sleeping in, was there, I had swapped places with Gabrielle, and there were three of us in a very small bender with a lot of things in it. Rose was already asleep when Jenny and I arrived, and we had to push her more to one side so we could get in with our hotties. I must say ~~were~~ were beautifully warm, and in fact Jenny told me she spent quite a lot of the night hurling off clothes. I woke with a bang at about quarter past nine, realised that Rose had gone, and that I had a tiny headache. I never get hangovers, so I thought this was unfair, but also I never sleep as late as that whatever time I go to bed, so I suppose it's all swings and roundabouts in this world. Jenny was going home very soon, so we got up and I had coffee and aspirin for breakfast, and very soon proper food, and felt fine. Rose greeted me with the news that she had got up at 8 and had taken a photo of me asleep in the bender. I thought this was very unfair. She said she'd send me a copy. Thanks for nothing!

Everyone seemed happy but fairly subdued. ~~thxxxxxxxxxxxxxxing~~
 We got the balloons and helium bottle out and I saw Penny making a mini bender. Her idea was to attach it to balloons and send it off with messages of goodwill from Greenham Women. It seemed a lovely idea so I helped her, but with some doubt in my mind as to whether the weight would be too much for the balloons. Miranda cut out little ^{cardboard} Greenham Women and stuck them to the polythene top, Nikki made a lovely feminist symbol from rope and wool with a peace message to the woman who found it, and eventually we decided that as the strongish wind was from the south west we would ~~warry~~ carry it round the corner towards the ~~Orange~~ ^{yellow} gate, so that at least for a while it would fly over the base. The Police had ~~previously~~ been watching us make it and typing the balloons ~~xxxx~~ ^{on} and came and warned us that it could be a hazard to traffic if it came down on a road, I said that if they had more faith in its flying power than I had, but they said that they were having bets on it. Eventually about thirty of us carried ^{it} to the flying area, ^{Jo} Penny and I with Rebekah and her washing bag, taking the main strain. We realised that it was too heavy, and eventually with the aid of my penknife and lots of advice, cut away the wood and cardboard part and then to our relief and joy, and many photos, it sailed ~~away~~ beautifully and bravely over the fence and trees, gaining height all the time. It was a marvellous sight, even the soldiers were delighted.

I had arranged with Jo and Gabrielle to leave at 4pm and give them a lift to London, so I packed my things in the car and made sure that the bender was tidy and secure ~~and~~ I saw a good photo of Rebekah, Charlie and me taken last time I was there, and also read an article in a Dublin magazine in which Margaret and I featured strongly. It dealt a lot with the wet and cold, Margaret's various activities and my energy and so called efficiency. Oh well, fame at last.

Jo, another woman and I were very hungry, so we had some soup, then I saw Rebekah cutting meat, ham to be exact, and I couldn't resist a large chunk, then toasted cheese sandwiches, with the last of the fresh coffee. Three visitors were doing all the washing up, and then split big chunks of firewood for kindling, as the fireplace was totally clogged up. I talked to them for a while, then Jo, Gabrielle and I loaded up the car, said our goodbyes, and see you again soon, and take care, and left. My passengers slept quite a lot of the way to London, and in the three hour journey I had plenty of time to think and reflect on new year's eve and the coming 1984. As we left it was starting to rain and blow, and I always have feelings of guilt leaving my friends to the bad weather when I'm on my way to comfort. I'd rather share the discomfort with them.

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Incidentally, although I had all the makings for a bender for me at the Orange Gate, Nickie and others strongly advised Hilary, Liz and me not to make one at the moment, as under the new laws, ~~they~~ they thought that all the benders could be pulled down and destroyed by the authorities. It was much better to keep the material until we all knew what was happening, so reluctantly I brought polyethene, carpet, rope, etc home with me again.

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Jan 1984. Deal

Back in this real, unreal world of home, life goes on. I meet old friends and acquaintances and the phone rings constantly. Friends can sometimes be a little unkind, or perhaps truthful, I'm not sure which. The first woman I bumped into in the town when I was shopping, said hello quite quietly, then had a double take, and gushed forth how glad she was to see me as she'd read in the paper that a Greenham woman had been arrested for being drunk and disorderly, and she had feared it might have been me! When I got home, the next three phone callers all said the same thing. I really don't really think my reputation calls for these sort of comments, I'm not as bad as all that. I know I like to enjoy myself and even let my hair down on occasions, but I feel rather hurt that all these people should have such unkind thoughts about me, hurts me to the core. Even my son made the same remark to me. Surely he knows me better than that? I had heard about the arrest at another gate at Greenham when I was up there, and the actual incident was that a woman was trying singlehandedly to stop a police car from driving off by sitting on the bonnet. I'm glad I wasn't around. I might have helped her.

One of the good things at the Orange Gate is the nice women you meet there. Round the camp fire over the weekend I was talking to someone called Jo. I told her I came from Deal and she asked me if I knew a great friend of her parents who had moved to my part of the world and was a member of a golf club. Her name was Audrey. Well, of course I know Audrey. I have just resigned from being the handicap secretary of my club and Audrey has taken the job on. Believe it or not, but more or less the first phone call I had when I got back was from Audrey about a golf query. She is a very nice, extremely respectable Conservative (with a capital C) lady, and I don't think she even knew that I was one of those awful Greenham women, who she's seen and shuddered at on the tele. She knows that my politics are rather suspect, but on the whole its not feasible to talk politics to anyone at the club, so I keep fairly quiet about my views, and never sell Labour Party raffle tickets at Christmas time, although Conservative ones are always being bought and sold. Jo had wanted me to say where we had met, so with some pleasure I told Audrey that I had been talking to this really delightful young woman round the camp fire at Greenham, at the new year. There was a sort of deadly hush for a moment

a moment while Audrey recovered herself, then said faintly, 'Oh, how nice. I haven't seen Jo for such a long time. I always liked her so much, but of course I didn't know her all that well. My daughter was very friendly with her sister, but even all those years ago, the sisters weren't a bit alike.'

I've seen Audrey a couple of times since that conversation, but somehow I don't think she views me in quite the same light now. I think I must have blotted my copybook, and Jo's as well.

I've been wondering about joining the Newbury and Crookham Golf Club. It would be very convenient to have the odd game when I stay at the Orange Gate. If I applied for membership it would make a good local address and with a handicap of 7, the members would have to find ~~xx~~ some really good excuse not ~~to~~ to accept me. It would give my Greenham friends plenty of advantages, they could use the facilities, showers, loos etc, come and have a drink with me in the bar, and perhaps earn a bit of pocket money when times were hard, as caddies. One other use would be the odd sliced ball being knocked into the base.

'Please can I have my ball back, mister?' Or 'I was only cutting a hole so I could get my ball out.' We could have endless fun. In fact I can see only two problems. One is that the subscription is probably rather high in that wealthy area of Berkshire, and the other is that I would be blackballed from every golf club in the country, and I do enjoy playing. I'll have to give the idea a bit more thought and consideration.

800

20th - 22nd Jan 1984

I really had no intention of going to Greenham this weekend but ~~xxx~~ I phoned ^{Hilary} Jan the previous Monday, and she told me that they were going to be very short of women, as lots of them were going to Holy Loch for a big demo, so the call was for as many regulars to turn up and hold the fort. OK, most plans can be changed, so I got myself organised, ^{and} arranged to go with Hilary from Faversham. On Thursday evening Hilary phoned me, but was feeling awful with a temperature and flu, so in the end I went on my own.

When I arrived at Orange Gate at lunch time I really was glad that I had gone there. Cleis, Margaret, Sally and Rebekah were the only women ~~xxxxx~~ around, and I must say they made me welcome, especially when I produced a large saucepanful of vegetable risotto ready cooked for supper! Once again the gate and camp had changed. The previous week Newbury Council had engaged two men as bailiffs/wardens to clear the women off the Common. This means that nothing at all must be left ^{around except by} ~~away from~~ the fence. No chairs, polythene wind breaks, wood for the fire, kitchen bender, no tents. Nothing. Anything that is ^{on the Common} ~~there~~ when the bailiffs make their rounds will be taken away. One useful thing is that if we pile up the rubbish in sacks, they cart that away, which saves us a job. We did have a small fire in the clearing on the Common, but all the food has to be carried over the road, and cups and kettles of water for tea and coffee, also have to be moved back and forth. The washing up and washing areas are now right by the fence, so the soldiers watch us from only a few feet away through the mesh. In some ways this does make communication and friendly chat with them easier, and these particular Royal Irish Rangers from Northern Ireland, were on the whole, polite and pleasant. I was actually called M'am by a couple of them.

Cleis was busy sorting out the new kitchen bender. ~~They~~ We had been chucked off the common in terrible weather, and everything had been rather ~~xxx~~ thrown under cover, and as it was a lovely day, and very quiet, it seemed a good opportunity to get ^{it all} ~~everything~~ sorted out. The rats were being a damn nuisance and extremely bold, so all food has to be put in containers. ^{Next} ~~Later that~~ evening we had a discussion about these rats and Jill said she would bring some farm cats along to deal with them, as none of us would even contemplate using poison, but if something wasn't done about them, the rats really would take over and be a health hazard.

I put my sleeping bags in Ruth's bender as she was away in Wales, and then help^{ed} with general tidying and sorting out of things round the camp. Just before dark Cleis and I went for a walk to warm up before the evening. As always it is beautiful on the common, sombre shades of brown and green, and suddenly a brilliant tiny patch of orange fungi on a branch. Some of the trees are beginning to sprout fat buds, although it is only January, but to have got past the shortest day and feel that spring must come, is an achievement.

We had an early supper and the five of us sat round talking and had a bottle of mulled wine later. This really does feel right for me, this place. With a blanket round my shoulders, a fire in front, and the friendship and companionship of these women, I don't feel the cold, although the ground is frozen hard, and I try to avoid too many trips to the shit pit. People back home talk about the hardship of the life there, and of course it gets very tiring for the women who are there all the time. ~~and~~ I don't think I could cope with it for too long, but when I am there, I'm totally at home, at ease, feel invigorated, and am part of something; the new revolution, anarchy, feminism, a different life style. We talk a lot about this, about ourselves, why we are there, and its not just cruise missiles. Could we live together in such harmony without the tension of cruise, without the mud and cold and physical discomfort? Its hard to separate these things. Is it the bad which makes it good?

Anne turned up^{on her bike} and Cleis, Sally and Rebekah drifted off to their benders ^{side} and Margaret, Anne and I stayed and talked for some time as ^{although} I knew however comfortable and warm I would be in the bender, the first night away I never sleep that well.

The next morning was bright, cold and clear, idea camping weather! I decided to sort out the wood pile, which was in a muddle under polythene, but when I got down to it, I was appalled how little wood there was. We decided we might have to go into town to ~~get~~^{get} a local paper and perhaps ~~get~~ buy some wood. Well miracles always happen at Greenham, as all day long women arrived with more wood, some pinched out of skips in London, some collected from the woods in other areas, and some actually bought for us, and by the end of the day, once again we had a huge pile.

Old friends appeared. Marion, who had been keeping a vigil at Holloway for Anne the vicar's wife. Unfortunately Anne was not at Holloway, as it was full, and no^{one} knew quite where she was, ~~and~~ we were all horrified at her sentence of 30 days, rather than the usual 7. Marion also showed me the report of horrors

done by the soldiers to the women, which had been compiled by Sian and Nikki since the bringing in of cruise. They included having a spike being thrust through a bender, huge lumps of concrete being hurled at another one, masturbating in front of the women, peeing in the washing and washing up bowls, smearing toothbrushes with excrement and mud, and the same on bedding, threats of gang rape, and the usual verbal abuse which goes on most of the time. This report has been given to the press, and since then things seem to have improved. The women felt it depended very much on which regiment was patrolling the fence, and even more so on the officers in charge. Some positively encouraged harassment of the women at Greenham.

~~xxxx~~ Liz ^{arrived} ~~came~~ from Canterbury as arranged, but said that she was only going to stay for the day, ~~and~~ and Jill who was staying overnight; and other familiar ^{and new} faces from London and Sheffield, and Maura from Tunbridge Wells ^{turned up}. We had heard that the police and soldiers expected some sort of action that day. ~~as~~ They had heard that lots of women were going to be there, and as the day wore on, Margaret felt that we shouldn't disappoint the authorities, but have a little party. I agreed with her and so did Maura. Most of the others had court cases coming up or commitments of some sort, but said that they would gladly cause a diversion.

Rebekah had gone back to London in the morning, and later on in the day after Cleis, Liz and I had had a walk, Cleis felt that she wanted to go back, so I took her to Thatcham and on my way home, did the rounds of the Gates on the north side. It was amazing. The day before these gates had practically no one there, but by the early evening women were arriving every few minutes. I had wondered if these gates, Blue, Indigo and Red would have enough women to hold them, but my fears were groundless. Some women offered to do night watch while others slept, and the general feeling of goodwill and companionship was all round the fence. Is it telepathy, or phone calls which bring these women at a time of need on a bitterly cold January night? I think a bit of both.

Back at Orange, supper had been prepared, the corks drawn, and those who could sing started singing. Actually that's not quite true, everyone sang who knew the words of Greenham songs. I heard that someone is going to compile a tape of songs, and I would certainly like to have it. We then decided to sing to the soldiers by the fence, so a mass exodus from the fire took place, and those of us prepared to cut the fence, put bolt

cutters in our pockets and joined them. Everyone sang like mad and tried to get the soldiers to join in with us and there was quite a lot of friendly talk. I should mention that some time earlier ~~some of the~~ women had put SuperGlue in the padlock on the gate, so we knew that would cause confusion ~~at some time~~ when it was discovered. Soon Margaret, Maura and I drifted off ~~down~~ back to the camp fire and then through the undergrowth towards the main gate. We could see in the arc lights, soldiers huddled near their braziers which were about 100 yards apart. We walked down near some trees for cover and started cutting, but almost instantly there was a slight commotion inside, so the three of us made a hasty retreat onto the common, (we were) sat quietly and had a little think. We decided that we had been too close to a tent on the corner where there were reinforcements, so we would go back nearer the benders and sing ~~ing~~ ^{es} and just snip and do a bit of damage. Well, we walked up to the fence right in front of a soldier and started cutting. He just watched us. We snipped from over head height down to the ground and then I stepped inside and cut the coiled barbed wire. The soldier couldn't believe it. I'm not sure whether he was reporting in on his walkie talkie, but Maura was all the time talking to him in her lovely Irish voice saying that his ancestors would be ashamed of what he was doing etc etc, and so we went on snipping. Eventually when I was standing right inside the fence, he leaned forward to take my cutters from me and said rather weakly, 'Don't cut any more.' so I backed out, and Margaret and I ~~went back~~ ^{returned} to the singers, leaving Maura arguing with him. Margaret said that she felt it was a private argument between the Irish, and it was better if we left ~~it to them~~ ^{them to it}. (The next morning Maura said she couldn't remember ~~arguing~~ ^{arguing} with him, but was just rather surprised to find we had gone, so came back to ~~find us~~ ^{the singers})

Back at the benders I went up to Liz and swapped her balaclava for my woolly hat, and we just all went on singing happily. Margaret went straight to her car and to bed. She said that she was sure ~~they~~ ^{the police} would recognise her, so she would pretend to be asleep. Maura put on her shawl-like scarf again, and after a while we all drifted back to the camp fire. Before long the MOD police arrived with the soldier who had watched us cutting. He was obviously told to ~~pick out~~ ^{identify} the ones who had done the terrible deed, but he shook his head, having looked hard at both Maura and me, and they went off, to shouts and laughter from ~~all of~~ us.

~~Early~~ next morning some of the women from Sheffield had been highly amused to hear two soldiers talking about ~~last night~~ ^{the previous night.}

'I don't know what's wrong with the effing padlock on the gate. It won't work its all stuck up. The women did it.'

'I hear that the women cut the wire last night. What was it? Just a little hole?'

'Little! It was fucking enormous!'

~~Actually,~~ ^{where!} After I had gone to my bender ~~and~~ slept soundly, Maura and some of the others ~~went and~~ talked to the soldiers again, and listened to a song that the soldiers were making up about us. I can't remember it all, but it went something like this:

As we were ~~standing~~ guard at Greenham at midnight,
Some women came along and cut the fence by candlelight.
I hope by now, they have put some more words to it, as we all thought it was very nice.

One story I heard on Sunday was when the ~~practice alert~~ ^{a few days earlier} went ~~for~~ for the Americans and families to get into their bunkers. They came streaming ^{along} in their cars with wives and children in pyjamas, while the whole of Newbury was in a flap over the alarms. It took about two hours before all the personnel were inside the camp, and ~~then~~ by this time some of the troops had been issued with rubber suits ~~and~~ helmets and guns (presumably to control their fellow Americans and possible any British who might want a place in the shelters as well). At a certain time these men went round, telling ^{their comrades} ~~those inside~~ that they were dead, and then they raised a black flag over the camp. We have been telling as many of the British troops as possible about this ^{present} ~~as the new~~ technique of changing the regiment every week means that the new men will not hear about it. The women said it really was a pathetic sight.

More visitors with food and mainly wood, also came on Sunday. Di arrived with her mother, children and a friend. She had just spent a week in Holloway where one of her duties had been to pack war games toys. She and another Greenham ^{woman} ~~objected~~, and they were put in solitary. Di had to stay there for 28 hours, but she said it was worth it, as in the end she saw the Governor and the rule has been changed that if for reasons of conscience a woman won't do a job like that, she will be given alternative work ~~in the sewing department~~. Di took my name, address and phone number, as it appears that quite soon there is going to be an all womens action in my area, and of course I can help quite a bit.

Pat Arrowsmith also paid us a visit. She is someone I have heard about since the early Aldermaston days and it was nice to meet her. The one thing she disapproves of about Greenham women is that when they are put in prison, they don't try to escape! She really is an expert on this, and I told her I knew a friend of hers from Deal, Bruce, who had told me ~~some~~^a story how when they were both working for Amnesty some years ago, she had turned up, and they had gone to a restaurant for a meal, and how horrified he had been when he realised she was on the run!

During the day news trickled in from the other Gates about action that had taken place on Saturday night. At the Yellow Gate, 5 or six women had been arrested, and at the Blue, the soldiers had been very tough and unpleasant with women there, and had made them lie on the ground, spreadeagled for a long time, and had been ~~very~~^{vocal} ~~tough~~ and nasty. We were really very lucky to have got away with it again at Orange. I'm beginning to think I lead a charmed life.

I had been feeling very worried about the permanent residents, ~~which~~^{who} by this time were down to two, Sally and Margaret. They were both exhausted, mentally more than physically, and needed a break. I had a word ~~to~~^{with} Jill and Anne and we agreed that I would take Sally back with me for a few days for a holiday, and they would take it in turns to cover at night with Margaret, as they both live quite locally, but work during the day. Then Hester said that she was going to stay for a few days, and that Zoe was coming that night, and the Sheffield women said that they also could manage at least a couple of nights. Anyway, between us we persuaded Sally to come with me, and Margaret ~~thought it an excellent idea~~^{was in complete agreement}, and said that she would have a break quite soon herself. We also knew that Shirley, Sian, Kim and others would be back from Holy Loch as soon as they could, but the weather up there had been so awful that they might be delayed for a while. Anyway there ~~was~~^{were} enough women to cover for a few days, and no one person is indispensable. That is what Sally firmly told herself and she went off to get her things. [While she was doing this I did a bit of washing up, and the Ranger said 'good day' politely, then 'You're skivvy today ~~than~~ are you?' I explained that we didn't have duty rotas, If we saw some job needed doing, and we were happy to do, we just got on and did it. Nobody told or even asked someone else to do a job, we didn't need to. He nodded in agreement politely, but I don't think he really believed me. Men don't function that

way. They organise and everyone has a duty. I don't think anarchy would work with men, but it certainly seems to with the women at Greenham.

Sally and I left ~~about~~ at about 3, as there was a terrible forecast. This time I didn't leave Greenham as soon as I drove away from the Orange Gate, but brought a bit of Greenham home with me.

I think Sally appreciated the break. A hot bath on Sunday night, a drink, then bed. On Monday it poured with rain for hours and blew and was foul, but when I came back from work, it was getting better and I took Sally to see the sea, and as we walked on the pier the clouds lifted, yellow light flooded the town and it really looked beautiful. We then went and saw Hilary, who asked us to supper the following evening, I took Sally up to Kingsdown where we saw the lights shining in France, ~~then~~ on to Olivia's for tea, then home and supper. The next day I went to work as usual, and during the morning Sally went down the road to Olivia's to talk astrology, ~~then~~ ^{and} I arranged that she would come with Hilary and me to the WEA class ~~which~~ in Dover which was on, believe it or not, Women and Peace, so ~~all~~ the two hour session was really discussion and questions and answers on what makes Greenham women tick, Then a meal and drink back and Hilary's, then home and bed. Sally had decided that she wanted to go back on Wednesday, ^{in the morning} so we drove through Sandwich to Canterbury, ^{in packed} ~~saw~~ the Cathedral, and she got a coach at 1 o'clock. When I see this written down, I don't think it can have been much of a rest for Sally, but it certainly was a change. I know I enjoyed having her, and will try to bring other residents home when I come again.

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