

2nd - 5th November 84

I couldn't leave the University until after my critical reading seminar, so I rushed to the car with clothes, sleeping bag etc, and piled them on top of the firewood I had collected from the woods at seven oclock that morning. I was picking Hil up at Victoria coach station at 12.45, but I was about an hour late as the traffic was appalling. She had met up with my son Mark and we all had a drink and a sandwich, and Mark gave me £20 as I was the student now, and Hil and I left ~~him~~ (plus my parking ticket) to go to Orange Gate. The rain bucketed down and it was a foul drive but the welcome was as warm as ever. Rebekah, Reading Anne, <sup>Jane</sup> Judy, Annie back from her couple of weeks grape picking in France, <sup>Maween</sup> Jay and Taversham Hilary who is now called Ary to differentiate her from Deal Hil, Jill, ~~xx~~ Art school Julie, Rugby Julie who now lives at Red Gate, Karen, Fiona and other from the London Hospital, American Liz, <sup>Welsh Liz</sup> Penni With flu, Val, Sarah, and Jan from Kent with Blue, <sup>Isia</sup> Jo, Helen, Listy, and over the weekend, Canterbury Liz with Karin and a school friend, Steph, tall Sue, Merseyside Karen, Abervageneey Anne, Waffle woman Jan, <sup>big Liz</sup> etc etc. It was a hell of a good weekend for meeting friends. There were so many women there that we had four fires going. I missed seeing Sally and Ruth, both <sup>having</sup> returned home.

Hil and I got there just in time for supper, which was well up to standard, and of course the wine and beer ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> produced quickly. The rain had eased by this time, although the ground was sopping wet and there was a rather cold wind. Most women slept in tents or simple single sheet benders. Hil and I opted for the car, which was warm even though the condensation dripped at times on our heads. We sat and talked for hours, exchanging news. I was very sad to hear that the oven had been firmly evicted, but at least it was used a few times, and a cake had been baked in it. We know that the principle works, and perhaps will make another one sometime. The evictions have been quite fierce and quite a lot of things are missing. The bathroom went very quickly indeed, but now we have two kitchen prams rather than one, and I think that ~~at~~ <sup>still</sup> most of the cooking and eating utensils are around. The brown van is more crowded than ever, as Reading Ann's car, Mabel needs something like £500 spending on her body before she'll pass her MOT, and nobody has that sort of money ~~around~~. I heard a really nice story about Amelia the car from the north side. Poor Amelia got really sick, in fact, let's be honest, she died of a big end going. Well she sat around at Red Gate and Sharples the bailiff kept on threatening to put her in the pound unless she was moved. He had no idea that the women were quite happy that she would be towed away as it would



save them the expense, but they kept begging Sharples not to impound her. In the end he said he was going to tow her away the next day. That night the women carefully unscrewed all the wheel nuts, and then adjusted them so they stayed in place. Along came Sharples in the morning, put a tow rope on Amelia (which promptly broke) put a better one on, started pulling and all four wheels fell off at the same moment! He was furious as you can imagine, but it appears that later on he did see the joke, and did admit he really had been caught by the women on that particular occasion.

Eventually we staggered off to our various beds at some time after midnight. Luckily there was a night watch and I slept soundly. Even better it was a nice morning, and after juice and coffee I felt it was time for a blewitt hunt. About half a dozen of us wandered off. Well, we walked a hell of a long way, found hundreds of marvellous fungi of all various, but I really wasn't sure if they were edible or not as I had no book with me. We did find some blewitts as well, and had fried eggs and blewitts ~~for~~ and toast for breakfast, at lunch time. A lot of women tried them, and only Jane decided that she really didn't like them. Julie & Meryl then appeared and wanted to know if I was going to go round the gates in my car so Jane came with us, and we ~~went~~ <sup>set off</sup> round. At Yellow we picked up Barbara who said she was in a cosmic state, and I'm still not sure if she meant that she had a hangover or was just out of this world. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ I also saw Rebecca J there with her bandaged hand which had happened inside the base a couple of nights previously. She and another woman went in, and then climbed into a vehicle, and a soldier got so insensed he smashed the windscreen with his rifle butt. It appears that the car was loaded with weapons. They were lucky not to be badly hurt.

The five of us went on to Green, then Blue, then on to Red, as Julie had a fungi book and we wanted to walk in the nature reserve nearby and see what we could find and identify. It was beautiful there, quiet and peaceful, but there were so many different ~~xxxx~~ varieties of fungi, we could only identify a few before it started to get dusky and cold. ~~xx~~ Jane and I left the others ~~there~~ and went via Thatcham offie and telephone back to Orange. I'm not quite sure how it happened but once again I managed to miss supper by going from one camp fire to another, always getting there just after they'd eaten, so ended up with toast, eggs and more blewitts for supper. At least I've proved that they aren't poisonous to everyones satisfaction!

At one of the fires~~es~~ we had a discussion about women's actions



during the ten days, and how we felt about things, and what we wanted to do in the future. One woman felt we ought to set up a sort of workshop in <sup>a</sup>Newbury <sup>house</sup> to learn skills from each other and perhaps make things to sell. Then the usual money question came up. Commercialisation, problems of when we have money, and when we don't, etc etc. Oh, for the ideal world without money. This is one of the reasons why I'm not sure whether Greenham is the real world. Its about the only place that I know of where you can talk like this without being thought a total loony.

I knew that Saturday night was going to be an <sup>active</sup> night inside the base. I'm not nearly so brave as some of the women, I can't face more than one charge at a time so I didn't want to be involved. Keeping an eye on things from inside my sleeping bag in the car is the right way to ~~xxxxxx~~ operate in comfort! During the evening quite quietly women disappeared. This was going to be a big action. One of my tasks was to drive a woman down to the phone box sometime after midnight and alert the media as to what was going on. This we did, and perhaps because of this I missed our hospital women's firework display, although sometime during the evening I did hear the odd spluttering firework noise. Karen did tell me that most of the ~~xxxx~~ rockets, including the one with a label on saying 'Ginette is innocent' slightly misfired, and as she told me this the next day with a strained look on her face and a glass of alka seltza <sup>& brandy</sup> in her hand, there could be a good reason for ~~ixx~~ this. It was a nice idea anyway. Eventually at about one thirty when the last 'merry' woman had gone her way I went to bed. It was a chilly night, and I was rather concerned when I woke briefly at about 6am and found that Hil was still not back. It sounds rather mean to say that it didn't stop me sleeping for a couple more hours, when Helen, Jan and Blue returned. It wasn't until 9.30 that the others turned up.

<sup>previously</sup> The whole actions had been well planned and executed. Women had checked the American buses parked inside the base and decided that the ignition key needed was very simple, a screwdriver would have worked. One woman had a key that she brought along. Three groups of ten cut their way at different places into the base, to meet up at the bus. Unfortunately one group 'missed the bus'. They got there too late. The other twenty arrived, <sup>climbed</sup> ~~piled~~ into the bus, switched on the engine, drove across the base, past MOD cops and arrived at the inner silo fence. They piled out, watched by a terrified little soldier in glasses, who shrieked into his walkie talkie that there were women everywhere getting out of a bus. The



women went over to the fence, and took turns in cutting. They did a lot of damage before they were arrested and put into the vans. It appears they were in quite a lot of personal danger as all the Americans in the vicinity had weapons which they were waving about in a rather dangerous way. The women were taken to Newbury nick, questioned and then left in the ~~the~~ vans, where they spent a very cold night. In fact the MOD cops were concerned and went back to the base and got urns of tea and coffee for the women. As usual the arrests were arbitrary. ~~Two~~ <sup>Three</sup> of the women were accused of actual cutting and two of those (both wearing leather jackets) hadn't even touched a pair of bolt cutters, and the third had just had them passed to her and had them poised, but hadn't actually started. All twenty women are pleading not guilty to the charge of either attempted theft or collusion because they allowed themselves to be driven in a stolen vehicle, although of course it never went ~~off~~ <sup>outside</sup> the base. Anyway, this charge means that they can make sure that they appear at the Crown court, rather than a magistrates', and there will be more publicity. Incidentally, the ~~xxxxxx~~ <sup>media</sup>, well the Guardian and the BBC news, featured the incident quite well. Apart from anything else, it shows up the total lack of co-operation between the Americans and English inside the base.

After breakfast Hil and Canterbury Liz were feeling quite tired (~~I'm not sure why!~~) having been awake all night, so the three of us went for a walk on the common where we found a really warm place, an abandoned garden I think with a park bench in the sunshine. Although it's November, we all pulled off sweaters and jackets and when they both fell asleep on the ground I went back to Orange. Jay, Ary and Sarah were going down to Eileen's to help her move a straw stack on to some pallets, so I joined them and spent a good afternoon heaving bales of straw about. I really enjoyed it. Plus cups of coffee and dogs, cats, parrot and horses, ~~xxxxxxx~~ cows and guinea fowl around. Anyway, Eileen is so supportive, it's good to give a bit of help occasionally.

I'm not sure how it happened but I still didn't get to bed very early on Sunday night. I think it's the booze and the talk and company. You can put these in any order, but ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> ~~does~~ <sup>make</sup> ~~help~~ <sup>xxxx</sup> make Greenham what it is. A lot of women had to leave to go back to work or their other lives. Big Liz drove her fellow students back to their peace studies in Bradford, and many went off to Wales and London. Canterbury Liz and hospital Karen were amazing. They offered to do night watch, and started by clearing up the mayhem of dirty plates and general dishes left by the rest of us. Apart from anything else, I do remember being woken by the noise of someone making awful



noises on a duck decoy whistle, not far from me. The noises stopped abruptly and it appears that Karen had gone over to the gate and told the man who was playing with the whistle that if he didn't stop, she would inform her MP that he was disturbing the peace! Greenham Peace Camp is full of amazing women.

Monday dawned bright and clear. Actually it was grey and cool, but when Karen brought Hil and me a coffee in the car, it was bright and clear and happy. I dressed really formally and respectably in my new (nearly new, bought in Sussex University market) cordory dungerees, clean shirt and knickers ready for court. I must confess that I hadn't washed underneath all these clean clothes since Thursday, as it had been rather too cold to strip down. At least I looked the part, with brushed hair and clean teeth. Mind you my hands and nails after heaving straw around and living at Orange Gate had taken their toll, and the smell of wood smoke, was, I think slightly stronger than anything else.

I took Reading Anne who was up on that ridiculous charge of cutting down a tree on the common, and Helen and Hil, with all their gear, as I'd offered to give them a lift near London, and we had no idea how long the court pleas~~e~~ would be. I was feeling slightly apprehensive as none of the women I had been charged with, had been around, but as soon as we arrived at the court I saw Merseyside Karen. She told me she was going to plead Guilty, but refuse to pay the fine and get sent to Holloway straight away. She's trying to get a job and therefore doesn't want this case to hang around. Steph, tall Sue (who was arrested at a 12 noon blockade at Indigo the same day as I was) and lots of other women all decided we would plead Not Guilty, come back on the 9th Jan as directed, then refuse to pay the fine and do our bit of porridge probably in Holloway. As the 9th Jan is a Wednesday we <sup>think</sup> ~~hope~~ that we will <sup>be given not more than</sup> ~~have~~ a week inside, <sup>with another remman</sup> but as they don't let you out over the weekend, we will just have the rest of Wednesday, Thursday and be let out on Friday evening. I hope.

A lot of the women didn't turn up, and as it was only a day to give pleas, the whole affair was over for everyone by about 11.30. I was one of the last. I was called into court, Steph going out as I went in. She informed me that they were all very rude there, but perhaps because she said this in a very loud voice, they were polite to me. I was directed to the dock, the charge was read out by the chief magistrate, and my name, and I was asked how I was pleading. I said 'Not guilty' and I was informed that I would have to be back on the 9th Jan at 10am and I must be there as I would receive no further communications about this, and I was given



unconditional bail, ~~until then~~. I then just walked out. All too easy really. Lets wait and see what happens next.

Anne, Helen and I decided to go back to Orange. On the way we stopped for a chat at Red, then spent most of the rest of the day at Orange, saying goodbye all over again, and eating more breakfasts/lunches. Liz took Hil back to Canterbury as she had room in her car. At about 3pm Helen, Reading Anne and I left, to the strains of a woman <sup>with green hair</sup> playing her trombone for us. It had been another good time at Greenham, but by the time I'd got lost a few times on my way to pick Ellie up in Surbiton from work, driven to Brighton, had a necessary bath, ~~had~~ a meal and mulled wine, walked miles in Lew<sup>is</sup> to see the firework display and bonfire, I was quite weary. As I watched the vast bonfire burning, I did think the Greenham women could have done with some of the wood ~~burning~~. I hope they are managing, and the evictions which never came on Monday weren't too bad. All that work that Maureen did, tidying the van and clearing up will make things easier for those few left behind. I'll be back soon. *Work does rather get in the way.*



16th-17th Nov. 84

Annie, American Liz, Val, Alison, Judy. Pouring with rain. Val taken ill, so we all went to hospital in Basingstoke with her. More women arrived that night. Hil and her children in the Peace Van, Isia, Jan, Jill, Listy, etc etc.

Sat. went round to Yellow and talked to Sarah Hibbertson and others, then round to Green. Free food by CND and peace groups, four times a week. women being evicted 5 times a week at least. Morale still pretty good, but the wet is depressing. No camps at Indigo or Red. Everything cut down to minimum. Women still going inside Nice story about fog one really bad night. Annie went up to the OrangeGate where there was a young soldier on his own. She said hello to him. He asked her if she had seen a film called 'Fog'. She said no, and asked him if he wished he hadn't seen it. He said Yes!



Jan 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 1985

I realise in retrospect that I have been pretty scared at the ~~un~~nerveing prospect of time in Holloway. I think it was mainly the feeling of having no control over my own destiny for even a short while, and also that it was the sort of situation that I'd no idea how I'd react to. It was all very well for the other Greenham women to tell me that it would be fine, and I've seen enough documentaries on telly about prison, not to make a real fool of myself by yelling, 'let me out', but all the same I'm really glad it is all over. Whether its release of tension, coincidence or psychosomatic, I don't know, except that the night after I was released I was violently sick (a very rare thing for me) and then I developed an abcess on a tooth!

My preparations were careful. I left my car at Worthing, and having carefully packed a small bag with a change of clothes and books, I took a train and coach to Thatcham. I reached Orange Gate having walked from the coach stop through the snow at about 7.30. By the time I arrived I was boiling hot, and kept a bit back from the blazing fire until I cooled off. There was no mud this time, just ice and snow, the brown van, Petal from Red Gate, Tim, and of course the women. Julie, Maureen, Jan the waffle woman, Maggie, and a newcomer. Jan found some supper for me and we sat and talked. There was only one 'wind tunnel' bender up near the fire (Julie still has hers hidden), so Jan and the new woman decided to sleep in the van, and I offered to do a chunk of night watch, then take over from Maggie in the bender with Maureen. It worked out well, as at 3am I kept falling asleep on the chair I was so tired, and then crawled into Maggie's sleeping bag which was warm. Earlier we had had some trouble in de-freezing the water in the hotties, which had been shoved into the brown van for that morning's eviction. A stiff, right angled hot water bottle is quite a funny sight. Anyway I slept soundly until about 8am, then Maureen got up and brought me a welcome cup of coffee in bed. She and Jan decided to drive me to court and support me there, which was really encouraging of them.

Outside the courtroom we met up with Steph, tall Sue, Lizzie, and others on trial and supporters. As usual we all went and had a wash and brush up in the toilet, then sat and waited. And waited. Apart from waiting for other people to be tried, we discovered that Sue and Lizzie were going to be heard together, and they hadn't even seen each other until they were put in the police van and had been arrested. They protested, and Sue got tried first. She was found guilty, refused to pay and was to be sent to Holloway for 7 days.



When we had first arrived Steph had anticipated in just paying her fine and going home, but then she was determined to stay. Her grown up daughter was with her and agreed that she would look after things back at home. Steph and I agreed to be tried together, but before we went into the court other women were tried and found not guilty for various technical reasons. It wasn't until 1pm that we were eventually called. The magistrates consisted of one man and two women. We were told by the clerk of the court the procedure and what we could do and say, and then the prosecution called the arresting police officers. Steph was dealt with first, but their evidence was duplicated almost word for word. She maintained that she had not been arrested by the officer who claimed he had, and I protested that I had only arrived at the scene of the blockade half way through the statement that he made, and I had never been warned that if I sat down again I would be arrested. The chief magistrate asked the policeman if he had recognised me amongst the women who had been warned. He said that he couldn't remember, but I was certainly there when he arrested me! I had to agree with him on that point. Everyone fell about laughing. Order was restored then Steph was asked if she wanted to go into the stand and make a statement. She said she would, then then proceeded to give a most moving account of why she was there, because of her children, and the cost of armaments while so many starved in the world and the horror of nuclear weapons. I wouldn't try to reproduce her actual words, but the Greenham women listening were all reduced to tears.

I had to follow that. All I managed to say was that I totally agreed with her, and that most of my life I had been a pretty law abiding citizen, and if the American base with cruise missiles were not at Greenham, I would never have been arrested.

The magistrates went out to deliberate, and we waited for a while. They came back and said they found us guilty, and we would have to pay £25 plus £10 costs. We both refused to do so, so they said we would be sentenced to seven days in prison. The Greenham women all rushed up to wish us well, and we were led away. The first of the clanging and locking of doors until Friday morning.

We had to empty our pockets and be searched, our possessions were taken from us, various forms filled in, and I found myself back in Newbury nick, with wooden bench, glass brick window, bare walls and floor. Well, I sat and waited. After an hour or so (my watch had been taken from me) a copper brought in a toasted cheese sandwich, bar of chocolate and small carton of Ribena, sent in by the Greenham women who realised we had missed lunch and would be



pretty hungry. It was welcome, as much for the concern from friends as the actual food.

It was getting dark by the time we were let out. We realised as there were only three of us, the others must have got off, so we would stick together as much as we could for the next few days.

~~Wxxxxxxpntxxxxthexbarkxxofxx~~ I should mention that in my cell there were various messages from Greenham women from most of the gates except Orange. I couldn't let that pass, so found a couple of dead matches on the floor and wrote 'Orange Gate QQ' on the wall. It will probably get cleaned off soon enough, but it made me feel better. Writing graffitti can work.

We were locked in the back of a police transit van, and very cold it was too. Our possessions were in the front, so there was still no chance of a cigarette, but at least we could talk together. A policeman drove and a woman sat with him. I'm not sure what time we got to Holloway, about 7 I think. The entrance was pretty formidable, and although there was a tremendous relief to have the court case over and done with, at that moment, the last thing I wanted was to go behind those gates. Actually it is not just one set of gates, but at least two or even three. Its hard to remember in detail, except that having driven in, the engine had to be switched off, the gate behind closed, then the one in front opened. We got out of the van and were officially handed over to Holloway prison.

The reception area had a lot of screws wandering about. Our possessions were put in front of us, we were asked if they were ours, and we were told to go along to a cubicle, undress and put on a dressing gown. Then back to the reception area with tables and chairs, and other waiting women in dressing gowns. Many of these were on remand with their trials actually going on, or were just arrested and not granted bail. Some pretty foul food was produced, which we picked at, and then we were processed one by one. This consisted of having our possessions checked, and those we were not allowed to have with us, being placed in a sealed bag, for example I had the choice of a packed of cigarettes or loose tobacco and papers for rolling, I had one tee shirt too many, had to take off my Greenham bracelet and anklet, no toothpaste, only toothbrush and flannel, It all seemed rather arbitrary to me, but later I understood more. (Other things rather than toopaste can be concealed in the tube.) We were weighed, asked about past illnesses, whether we were vegetarians, had to drop our dressing gowns to make sure we had nothing concealed on our bodies, given tooth powder in sanitary towl bag, a bag of foul soap, towel, two sheets and pillow



case, told to have a bath (plenty of hot water, but very tide-marked bath) got dressed back into our own clothes, and then escorted with clanking keys attached to screw to our cells for the night.

The other inmates in the reception area were interesting. Questions were asked as to what women were in for. We all said 'Greenham' and we didn't have to explain further. We were accepted. Some of the women were subdued, others talkative. It seemed to me that most were in there for fairly petty crimes. But there was one really quiet young woman who said nothing. She was tiny. She didn't even come up to my shoulder. When asked why she was there, she said, 'GBH' and we all fell about laughing. She then explained she had stuck a knife in a fellow's eye, and it had damaged it so badly he had the eye removed and now had a glass one in its place. We all wondered how she had managed to reach that high. He was either minute, lying down, or she stood on a box to do it! A black girl was in for theft, and Shelly for a variety of petty cheque card forgeries and thefts. Others for drug offences. We were a pretty mixed bunch, but already I felt it was very much 'us against them'.

Quite by chance tall Sue and I were put in a cell for four with Shelly. There was a young woman in there already. Steph had been rather a long time over her bath, so ended up in a cell on her own. My cell looked a bit like a hospital ward. Just inside the door was a wash basin and sink on one side, and on the other a lavatory with wall and door round it. The room was steaming hot, and we each grabbed a bed and dumped our stuff on it. The windows were long and narrow with opening sections. Each section was about eight inches wide, and in this particular cell it was impossible to see out as behind was an opaque plastic screen. All I could see was a couple of square feet of frozen ground, and the same amount of sky. I instantly felt deprived of a visual perception. The door was another notable object. It was a double door, only one half being opened. This had a covered hatchway in it, just large enough to pass food and mugs of tea through, and the other part had a thick glass slit in it at eye level, about 3 inches wide and fifteen inches long. There is never any real privacy. Each bed had a bell beside it, only to be used in times of real emergency we were told, and a socket for a radio, as in hospitals. But there were no radios. In the other cell I was in, there were curtains which could be pulled round each individual bed, but there were severe reprimands if an inmate did have the audacity to do so.



The floor was lino and the walls painted pale green. To a prison visitor the impression would be of a pleasant room with pleasant decor, privacy, radio, etc etc. As an inmate you don't see things the same way. I was far more conscious of the clanking doors, jangling keys, strident authoratitive voices, petty rules which were often altered by individual screws, terrible stodgy food, tea and every more tea (which I personally loathe), plastic utensils, and of course the continual feeling of being harrassed and put down by those in command. The only chairs to sit on were hard and uncomfortable, so all the inmates either sit or lie on their beds all day. Each woman had a tiny wardrobe for clothes and a table. For a few days I felt I could cope without problems, but when I heard the stories of other women who could be sentenced to this sort of life for years, I don't know how they could contemplate it so calmly.

The fourth woman in our cell introduced herself. Her name was Grace, and she was from Holland. She had been in Holloway on remand for seven months. She and a friend came to Britain for a holiday. At Dover their car was stopped by sniffer dogs, and 6½kilos of heroin were found hidden in it. She said she had no idea that it was there, and is certain it was put in the car by her stepfather who is in prison now in Holland for drug running. The women I talked to all believed her story that she had been set up by him, or there was someone on this side who would have stripped the car. She obviously has not had bail, is separated from her friend who is in a different wing, so there is no 'association'. Her trial was meant to start a couple of weeks previously, but the prosecution asked for extra time as they hadn't got their case ready. Grace is moved from wing to wing as the authorities want. In this particular reception wing, there is no work for her, so she just lies on her bed. She is twenty years old. Her English is good, but she finds it hard to read books in this language. It is much too far and expensive for friends to visit her. She receives mail, but finds this upsetting. The maximum sentence for drug pushing in this country is life, which means fifteen years. I may be a gullible fool, but I think she was framed and is innocent. Sue and I asked if we could contact anyone for her when we got out, but she just shrugged, thanked us and said no one could help her. She just wants to know that her trial will be soon, and what her sentence will be. She has almost no hope that she will be found innocent.



Shelly was quite different. Nervous, blond, restless, and also aged twenty. We asked her what she was in for. She started by saying that she was a naughty girl. She had done a bit of forgery on cheque cards and a bit of thieving, and she told us a story about how she and her fifteen year old sister had gone out and got drunk, and found a taxi with a Pakistani driver to get them home. On the way they got him to stop at a kebab place, ordered some food, rushed back to the driver to ask him to lend them some money which they would pay him back when they got home. He did so, but a couple of streets from their home, they jumped out of the taxi and rushed off in different directions, and went back home. The police did catch up with them the next day, and although she lied, this was one of the charges she was up on. She'd been to court that day, and thought she had to go back the next, but I think she had it muddled up. I didn't like her story all that much, but then she started talking about her home, and that she was worried about her mum, who was paralysed. This mum was only a couple of years older than I am, but this paralysis was mainly caused by being beaten by her old man regularly ever since they were married. Shelly was also worried about her sister's child whom she was looking after at the moment. She thought the child would be put into care, and hoped someone would contact her sister in Scotland so she could look after the baby herself. Poor Shelly, she took the troubles of her family on her shoulders, then couldn't cope herself.

Shelly couldn't settle. Sue and I got out our books and started to read, and Grace was lying quietly on her bed, thinking. Shelly asked what books we had. Sue had some fairly heavy feminist books, and I had Tristram Shandy, and W.B. Yeats poetry, both of which I am studying at University. Shelly had a look at the Yeats and said she had liked poetry at school. She glanced through it, and said they didn't look very easy or romantic, so I read her The Lake Isle of Innisfree. She thought it was lovely and went to the loo, tore off some paper and asked if she could copy out some other poems.. She was a long time lying very quietly, and said she had remembered a poem she had written at school and won a prize for. She read it out to us. It was all about an angel telling her to love someone faithfully. She is not stupid or bad, but will just drift into more crime without real help. Prison will keep her off the streets; teach her about more serious crime and drugs. It is not the answer to her problems.



29/7

At about 8.30 our hatch was opened and a screw said 'supper'. This consisted of a mug of tea plus a large biscuit each. I took the tea and gave it to Shelly. I learnt quickly you never refuse anything, someone else may like it even if you don't. At about 10.30 the corridor lights were turned out and a screw called to every cell, 'goodnight, girls' and as we were all tired, we washed, undressed and went to bed. I was surprised that there was no actual lights out time. We each had our individual very bright light over our beds, which we controlled ourselves. There was one central light which had the switch outside the cell.

I was really tired, having been awake until 3 the previous night, and although the bed was very hard and the two radiators pumped heat into the room, I fell asleep quickly. The next thing I knew was the screw was shouting it was time to get up and get breakfast.

When you are told to do something in prison, you don't hang around, you get a move on. We all washed and dressed and at about 7.45 our door was unlocked and we followed Grace to the eating area. We collected our mugs of tea, bowls of porridge if we wanted them and two slices of white bread and one white roll with a knob of margarine and smear of dark jam. Prisoners have to provide their own sugar, but as you are not allowed to bring any in with you to reception, this is impossible to obtain, until you have been there long enough to earn money or get a visitor to send some in for you. We met up with Steph at this point and also with Georgina from Yellow Gate whose trial had been on Monday. She was having a lot of problems over food and drink as she is vegan, and the tea arrives all the time in a huge pot with milk already added. In the end she told us she drank a lot of hot water which she got from the kitchen. She was very concerned about the diet she had received as there was no fresh fruit or any supplements which she should have been receiving. Before we had half finished our meal, the screws told us to hurry up and go back to our rooms. We collected buckets and brooms on the way to scrub out our cell.

We were locked inside again and cleaned the room. We were meant to actually scrub the floor, but didn't worry too much as it was pretty clean. We then sat around on the beds, until two screws came and checked the room, we took the cleaning stuff away, then back again and the door was locked. Out of boredom, Shelly decided to wash her clothes. After a while a screw unlocked and told Shelly Sue and me that we were to go and see the assistant governor. More unlocking and locking and a crowd of us waited in an open area and once more we were checked and in turn saw the AG. She told



me that I should be released on the 13th but as that was a Sunday, I would go on the 11th which was the next day. She asked if I was going back to Newbury, and I said no I had to go to Worthing to see my mother in the hospice. Reluctantly she said that she thought Worthing was about the same distance as Newbury, so I would be given a rail warrant there plus 60p fare to Victoria station.

I listened to other inmates talking about their home problems. One black woman, pregnant, with a 2 and a 4 year old was worried about getting the older child registered in the Catholic school near her home, rather than the ordinary primary, as there was a real violence problem in the playground here. The woman was in Holloway for ABH.

Back to our cells. Then a while later we are told to hurry up get our possessions together as we were moving to the discharge wing. We shoved our clothes and washing things into the very flimsy 'Sainsbury type' brown paper bags, plus sheets, towel etc, out of cell, then wait by a door, that was unlocked, locked behind us, down corridors and up stairs, more locking and unlocking, and then we had to put our possessions on the floor in eating area, and were allocated a new cell. This time I was with Georgina and the other two women were already in the room, Blue and Sandra. The screws had to check that we hadn't acquired any possessions we shouldn't have on the walk to this wing, and also we had to shed what we didn't actually need for just that night. But, no time to do that now, get your mug, knife, fork and spoon from the table in the cell. Lunch time. I glanced at my watch. 11.15. Another Fawlty Towers type meal. The food was a load of grey potatoes, mixed vegs, peas carrots etc all mushed up, and a few more mushy veg under a bit of cheese sauce. Plus a bowl of I think, apple tart, smothered in custard. It was stodgy and tasteless. A visitor appeared with an AG so Georgina rushed to complain about non vegan food, and the rest of us picked at the least unpleasant bits on our plates. Hurry, hurry, back to your cells. Must get locked in quickly. Before you go, tip the uneaten food into a bucket and take the plates back to the kitchen, but keep mug, knife, fork, spoon.

After an hour or so, our door was unlocked and we had to go through our possessions in the eating area. I was allowed to keep a book with me, but it appears that this is arbitrary and very much depends on the individual screw. The rest of the things were put in paper bags and stapled shut with our names on them. Back to the cell to be locked in again. We talked for a while, then all dozed off, to be awakened by the hatch in the door being opened



and a screw shouting in, 'got any dinner plates in there?' What the hell would we want foul old plastic dinner plates in our rooms for at 3.30 in the afternoon? I think it was just to wake us up.

At 4.15 tea time. Collect mugs etc, and receive a plate of pretty foul macaroni cheese (no good for Georgina) and bread and butter and more tea. Eat up quickly, no time to finish the tea, take it back to the cell. Then the door was locked again. It remained that way until we were on our way to release or courts at about 6.15 the next morning. It was a long time to be banged up, but quite normal according to the other women.

Sandra was thin, fair haired, white faced, a junkie. Her street had been done over by the drug squad and now she was in Holloway. She was on remand and although she had been to the medical wing, she felt that they didn't really help her and she hated it there, so was suffering her quite severe withdrawal symptoms. These consisted mainly of stomach and leg cramps, and not sleeping. She was very neryy and anxious. She said the drugs they found were mainly for her own use, and that although she helped friends sometimes she wasn't a real pusher. She knew that a certain 'pink liquid' type medicine helped to relieve the cramp, but all she was given was an asprin type pill to swallow. I think she had been in prison quite a few times before as she seemed pretty knowledable about life inside, but she wasn't all that forthcoming. She was in her mid twenties.

Blue was the real extrovert. Rather dramatic looking with loose afro style dark hair, and a completely transparent complexion, caused of course by the drugs. She had been on remand in Holloway for a month and said it was amazing that now she could see the black pupils in her eyes, the first time in years. She was 34, had been a registered heroin addict for 10 years, and had started smoking pot when she was 12. She had been working as a secretary and her boss knew all about her addiction. She was very knowledgeable about prison, and the drug scene descriptions she gave were amazing. She had dealt in every known drug (except glue sniffing, which she thoroughly disapproved of!), had even taken magic mushrooms to Morocco, had grown about 150 cannabis plants in an attic, and traded and pushed everything. She swore that she had never sold drugs to kids, just to her own friends of her age. She told us about various bad trips she had had, but when I asked if she would kick the habit when she came out, she shrugged and said she would like to, but she had no other friends other than drug takers. I felt as far as hierachy, she was pretty high up the scale inside Holloway.



Blue told us everything about Holloway. She said it was about the worst womens' prison in the country, although at Durham they still had potties and slop out. She knew many of the women, and spent quite a lot of time during the evening, calling to friends through the slitted window (this one had no opaque plastic outside so you could see into the exercise yard and a few other windows). This calling happens every night, although if a prisoner is found doing it she loses privileges. The screws try to stop close friendships and lovers from seeing too much of each other, so they are put in different wings. So they can meet up, they all go to church every Sunday and can see each other, even if they can't actually talk. Once a woman is sentenced she can go to educational classes and this is another way of meeting. Everything done there is to try to beat the system and the screws. The screws spend all their time trying to put you down in one way or another, and the inmates bounce back, or find a way round. Survival techniques abound. Anything that you want in prison, can be got. Drugs for example. Wrapped in cling film, they can be stuck up your crutch, or swallowed. It appears that one woman was seen palming something into her mouth just before she got into Holloway, so was sent straight to the nurse who gave her medicine to make her vomit. She vomited through her fingers, using them as filters, and the drugs came into the prison. Another way is for packages to be chucked over the wall into the exercise yard. They are picked ~~by~~ up by the prisoners who sweep the yard and shared between the sweeper and inmate who is expecting it. If you have money and friends outside you are alright inside.

Apart from the wings with convicted inmates just doing their time, there are the medical and psychiatric and mother and child areas. The psychiatric prisoners are called the muppets, and some of them are just sad, and others violent. It sounded a pretty unpleasant place. The general feeling was that women in there were not getting the sort of help they needed. Most addicts and junkies went to the medical wing when they first arrived, but got out as soon as they could. The mother and child was for women with babies, but I don't know much about it, except that women from other wings went there to help with the cleaning. Then of course there was the punishment area. These were all single cells, cold and bare, no furniture. The offender was allowed to keep her clothes on these days, but just had one blanket. Food was passed to her on a tray. All the food on one tray, all slopped together, meat, custard, potatoes, apple pie, gravy, etc. No plate. The punishment was usually for two or three days.



The stories of drugs and prisons went on on one side of the room and Georgina and I told Greenham stories. Blue said that she had meant to come down and visit the women there. Perhaps when she finished her sentence she would come. As she had already told us that the law was really heavy on pushers these days and that she could get fifteen years, we did say amongst laughter that we hoped we would not still be there. At the usual time supper was brought to our hole in the door. A small cake for three of us and two water biscuits with a smear of jam for Georgina, and of course tea with milk in it. Blue, for health reasons couldn't drink unboiled milk, so the argument started. The screw said that no milk wasn't down on Blue's form, so she had to have it with milk. Blue said surely they knew her well enough by now to know she never had had unboiled milk, and she'd had it put down on the form again this time. Anyway what about Georgina? She managed to get plain hot water, and Blue nothing. I waited, handed my mug up to the slot and said very politely, 'coffee and milk, no sugar.' For a moment there was a stunned silence, Then the screw said, 'we're clean out of coffee.' and the tension went. But still they didn't get their tea.

I asked what the screws were like on the whole. The women resented a lot of them, said they made up the rules as they went along, or bent them in their own favour, so the inmates never really were sure if they were obeying them or not. They said some few were quite nice with a sense of humour, but some were really heavy. I must say, by the look of some, I wouldn't care to get in their bad books. It appears when they first start they have about 6 weeks probation period, when they more or less watch what is going on, then they don uniform and are screws. There could be quite a lot more to it than that that the inmates don't see, and I believe they have to have various tests before they are employed, but I don't think the training is all that arduous. I think that many of the male screws are ex-army or police, but I don't have any idea where the women come from.

We heard all about the Christmas riots. It was started mainly because of the bad food, lack of association allowed and general discontent. It wasn't started at a very clever time, as the women were banged up, so rioted in their individual cells. They broke the furniture and windows, burnt mattresses, and blockaded the doors. It was complete mayhem in some wings. The authorities got very worried, and called in help from the men's prison, police and firemen. The place was swarming with men. The barracading of the doors was rather a failure, as the entire door can be lifted off



its hinges from the outside, and the bits of furniture pushed up tight against it, more or less fall down. I don't think it did much good for the women, but at least they showed that they are capable of causing real trouble if they are pushed around too much.

I learnt that cigarette lighters weren't allowed inside because of the fuel in them. Matches are always in short supply, and women split each one in two to have enough. Photos are allowed to the women, but not polaroid ones. These, it appears, have acid on the back from when they are processed in the camera. I suppose some inmate must have made use of it sometime in the past, but I've no idea what for.

With all this talk going on I didn't get much reading done. At about 10.30 we heard the screw walking down, calling out 'Good night, girls' to each door. We looked at each other. We all hated being called girls, and when she came to our door, we waited, then called out in unison, 'women', and listened. Down the rest of the corridor, she called out 'goodnight' only.

We had been warned we would have an early call in the morning, and we must leave the place tidy, fold blankets etc, and must hurry up and be ready. Blue said there would be ages to wait, hanging around, so we knew what to expect. We got ready for bed, and I fell asleep quickly.

The next thing I knew was the central light being switched on and a strident voice telling us to get up. We did so, and were ready when the door was unlocked at 6.30. We met up with Steph and Sue clutching their possessions, and were then told to wait by a door. A screw with a pile of files unlocked it for our group, then locked it behind us. We went through four more doors like that, were told to leave our things out in a passage, and go into room with tables and chairs and women milling about. The ones on trial were a bit apprehensive, but those going out were really happy. Breakfast, consisting of a couple of bits of white bread and a lump of very greasy bacon, was brought in, plus the usual mugs of tea. We sat and had some, but by now all I could think of was a cup of coffee. We hung round for about an hour, talking and getting impatient. One woman said she hadn't done much, just a bit of burglary and theft, and a very quiet Asian sat nearby looking frightened. A big black woman was getting her friends to put her turban on for her, but I saw it being carefully wound round, then taken off at least three times.

Blue and Sandra were called, so we said goodbye and wished them luck. Then it was my turn, first go into a cubicle get undressed,



put on a dressing gown and wait. My clothes were searched (I'm not sure what they expected to find on me when I was going out of the place) and once more I had to drop the dressing gown and turn in a circle. Then back into my clothes, pick up my paper bags, go to a desk and be told that my previously checked £2.46 would be increased by 60p for the fare to Victoria. This would be given to me at the gate with my rail warrant. On to the next desk, where my things were checked and I was given back my hold-all and other goods taken from me when I arrived. I had to stuff everything into my bag in a rush, then we were led to the gate. It was nearly 8.30. I was asked my number, D23485, and name, given my warrant and money. The second gate was opened and we were free.

Georgina went off quickly to visit her daughter who lived nearby, and a friend of Sue's had driven from Wales to take her home, so Steph and I joined them in a coffee before we went our separate ways. The last we saw of some of our fellow inmates was an hour later when we were saying goodbye on the main road, and I saw a prison bus go past. There were a lot of men in it and a few women. I waved half heartedly, checked and saw a mass of faces and wildly waving arms. We all waved like mad as they went round a corner.

It is really presumptuous of me to think I know all about Holloway after one evening, one day and two nights, but it certainly left a strong impression on me. Perhaps on a personal level I was really relieved that as a Greenham woman on a piddling little charge, the other inmates didn't think I was just playing at prison. They really seemed to respect and understand what we were doing. We were all there for a variety of reasons, and whatever these happened to be, they banged us up together, and we suffered the same humiliations and treatment. One woman said that the Greenham inmates had helped to get better conditions, knew who to complain to, and how to get things changed. For everyone inside, I think it is the general feeling of being put down, pushed round, treated like idiots, strongly pressurised all the time, and of course being locked in a cell for such long periods of time, which would become more and more galling after a time. I'm not sure after a period whether I would totally become a 'yes miss' person, or fight like hell against the pricks. The continuous jangling of keys reminded me of my convent school where the nuns had long jangling rosaries hanging from their waists. I had no control over my life then, and in prison I was a naughty child again, being dictated to by those whom I had no respect for.



The argument about prison has been going on as long as crimes have been committed and people locked up. It does keep criminals off the streets for a while, but none of the women I saw in there would be deterred by a sentence. The young ones will learn new tricks from the old hands, and the old hands only have their previous life and friends to go back to. And I know that the three of us who went in together certainly won't think twice about sitting down in the road in similar circumstances at Greenham in the future.



29/14

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