

# Situating the Greenham Archaeology: An Autoethnography of a Feminist Project

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This paper discusses an ongoing investigation into the material cultural legacy and memory of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. Using an autoethnographic approach it explores how a project at Greenham became an exercise in feminist practice, which aimed to stay close to the spirit and ethics of its subject of study, the women-only, feminist space of Greenham. We draw on principles from feminist and post-positivist scholarship to argue for the importance of reflexively exploring personal investments and situatedness in relation to research. The paper offers three narratives, one by each author, of our involvement with, and relationship to, the archaeological and ethnographic work at Greenham. It thereby also presents an account of how the objectives and methodologies of the research developed and changed over time.

**KEYWORDS** Autoethnography, Greenham Common, Feminist archaeology, Epistemology, Contemporary archaeology, Ethnography

## Introduction

This paper offers an autoethnographic account of an ongoing investigation into the material cultural legacy and memory of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. It explores how a project at a Cold War United States airbase in southern England, the site of women-only peace camps, became an exercise in feminist practice, and what this means for each of the authors. The archaeological work at

Greenham was not initially conceived as feminist. It was rather framed as an exploration of opposition and reconciliation in the post-Cold War context. But as we were drawn into the research, and as our understanding of the archaeological evidence at Greenham deepened, the project changed shape. Working out how to conduct the research, and the terms on which we might engage with both the archaeological record of the peace camps, and the peace women themselves, was a complex journey.

Greenham was not just about the Cold War, or even nuclear disarmament. The camps were a testing ground for new forms of active, non-violent disruption by occupation, practices which were taken up and reinvigorated from the mid-1990s in anti-road, environmental and climate change actions, and at the ongoing peace camps of Menwith Hill, Faslane and Aldermaston. But most importantly, the camps were an exclusively women's space, becoming one of the central sites of the British women's movement in the 1980s. Greenham was the focus of thousands of non-violent feminist actions — decorating the fence, 'embracing' and blockading the base, weaving webs, dancing and singing on the missile silos, climbing over and cutting the fence to enter the base, and just 'being there' at the camp, enacting a gendered resistance to the militarism of the Cold War (Roseneil, 1995; 2000). An archaeological project at Greenham therefore offered a unique opportunity to examine the material cultural legacy of an explicitly feminist space.

We suggest that such an overtly feminist place demands a feminist research practice that takes seriously the politics of Greenham, and the experiences and values of the women who made Greenham what it was. Feminist research demands a commitment to reflexivity: to locating the researcher on the same critical plane as the researched (Harding, 1987; Wylie 2007), to exploring our 'intellectual autobiographies' (Stanley, 1987), and acknowledging the role of emotions and feelings in the research process (Stanley and Wise, 1983). In Haraway's much cited terms, it involves recognizing that we are *constructing* 'situated knowledge' (1988) rather than *uncovering* disembodied, neutral, value-free science. Seen this way, knowledge is a social process, and is always unavoidably partial; there is no view from 'everywhere and nowhere' (Haraway, 1991: 191). Knowledge developed from this ontology, feminist researchers stress, has the potential to be more robust than knowledge that lacks a critical reflexivity about the conditions of its own production. We agree with Wylie (1992: 30), that 'politically engaged science is often more rigorous, self-critical, and responsive to the facts than allegedly neutral science, for which nothing much is at stake'.

This article, therefore, draws on now well-established principles within feminist and broader post-positivist, constructionist scholarship about the importance of researchers exploring 'their historical and geographic situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and undoings in the process of the research endeavour, . . . and/or the ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view' (Gergen and Gergen, 2003: 579). We see our work as fundamentally *relational*: it is 'sensitive to the relationship of researchers to their subjects as dialogical and co-constructive' (Gergen and Gergen, 2003: 603). We have been particularly inspired by recent work that assumes the mantle of 'autoethnography' (e.g. Richardson, 1995; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Holt, 2003), whilst adopting a less self-consciously literary, evocative style than much of

this genre of scholarship. Autoethnography is a research/writing practice that is concerned with the ways in which ‘personal histories saturate the ethnographic inquiry’ (Gergen and Gergen, 2003: 579), and in which ‘personal investments in the observational act are not only recognized but become a subject of the research’ (Gergen and Gergen, 2003: 580).

This paper, then, is an *autoethnography* of an archaeological project; in it we write (*graphi*) about the relationships between the people and culture (*ethnos*) of the research project and the object of the research, the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, and about how these are connected with our selves (*auto*), the researchers. The selves at stake here are the particular version of our selves that we are able, and choose, to narrate in this particular site of publication at this particular moment in our lives and academic careers. Our selves are no more transparent to us than the archaeological record of Greenham that we encountered; interpretation is essential, and interpretation is framed by the conceptual, linguistic and other resources at hand. Our accounts of our selves are inevitably partial and historically situated.

At the core of the paper are three autoethnographic accounts. These narratives seek to make explicit and open to public view our personal situatedness in relation to the project and to Greenham. We explore not only what brought each of us to the project, and what we brought to it, but also what we have taken away from it, and how it continues to inform our practice. We discuss how we related to the project as formulated when we encountered it, how we worked to reshape it, the kind of archaeology it generated, and what we hope it will produce. The autoethnography we offer is polyvocal; we have chosen not to create a single narrative of the project, but to present our individual stories, speaking of our differing perspectives and relationships to the project. In this we are in keeping with the spirit of Greenham, which within its collectivity always also emphasized and celebrated individuality, multiplicity and difference (Roseneil, 1995, 2000).

## Greenham Common and the women’s peace camps

Central to the NATO plan to ‘modernize’ its intermediate nuclear forces was the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles at selected locations across Europe. Deployment would begin in 1983 with 96 ground-launched Cruise missiles destined for the US Airforce Base at Greenham Common (Figure 1). They would be housed in six specially built shelters, named by the military as the Ground-launched missile Alert and Maintenance Area, or GAMA, but known to the peace women as ‘silos’.

As the Cold War deepened, anti-nuclear protests intensified. In September 1981 a group of women in Wales organized the ‘Women for Life on Earth Peace March’. Thirty-six women, four men and several children set off from a nuclear weapons factory in Cardiff on 27 August 1981, to walk 110 miles to Greenham Common. The march was largely ignored by the media, so when they arrived on 5 September 1981 four women chained themselves to the gates of the base, demanding a televised debate with the Secretary of State for Defence. This self-conscious reference to the protest tactics of the suffragettes marked the beginning of the non-violent direct action for which Greenham became known worldwide. The televised debate was never achieved, but the peace camp was born. Thirty-nine people camped outside the base that night,

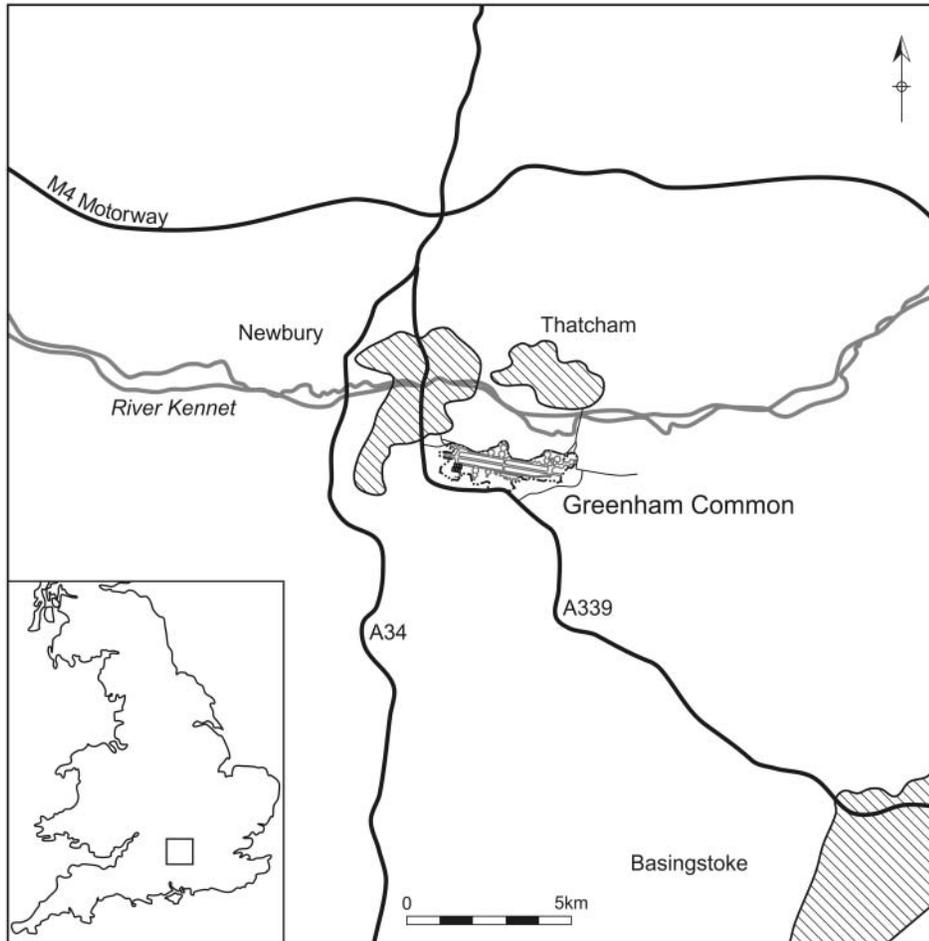


FIGURE 1 The location of Greenham Common in West Berkshire, England. Figure: Penny Copeland.

and the next day local supporters arrived with camping equipment and provisions. Many of the original marchers soon returned home, but as news spread amongst peace networks, others came to join the camp.

Although the walk to Greenham was initiated and led by women, and the camp was always called a 'women's peace camp', until February 1982 a small number of men were involved. By the early 1980s the principle of autonomous women-only organization was well established within the women's liberation movement (WLM), but remained controversial beyond the WLM. During the camp's first six months there was much discussion of the issue of women-only versus mixed actions, and matters came to a head when the women living at the camp organized their first women-only meeting. This decided that all future actions at the camp should be women-only, that only women should live at Greenham, and that the camp should always attempt to deal with women representatives of the authorities and women

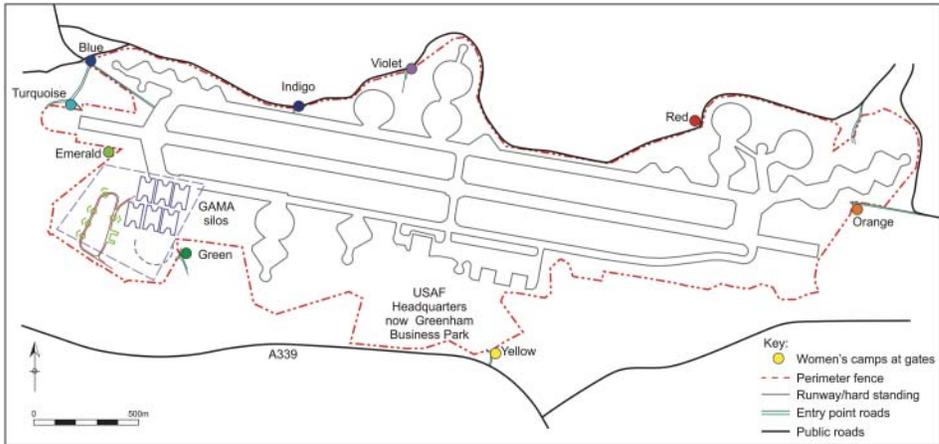


FIGURE 2 Plan view of the RAF Greenham Airbase showing the placement of the women's peace camps at each gate around the perimeter fence. Figure: Penny Copeland.

journalists. The men living at the camp were asked to leave (Harford and Hopkins, 1985; Roseneil, 1995).

Over the next four years, camps were established at all points of entry and exit from the base, and additional observation posts were intermittently occupied. From these locations the peace women could challenge anyone entering or leaving the base and by observing activity inside the base could respond to any changes. The camps were named after the colours of the rainbow (Figure 2). Although the full suite of camps was occupied for less than two years, there were women living at some of the camps for nearly 13 years, from September 1981 until February 1994.

The immediate focus of the women's protest was the deployment of Cruise missiles in Britain. However, the camps quickly became much more than this. In form, practice, and rhetoric the women resisted and challenged all forms of domination, from international militarism and environmental degradation to the everyday patriarchy of the family. The simple presence of Greenham became a challenge to much of British society. Because the camps consisted of women who lived in the open, outdoors, outside normal family relations, they were considered an affront to 'decency'. Greenham women appeared collectively to disdain the sanction of men, with their unruly behaviour and dangerous, transgressive sexualities. Greenham was a place where lesbians gathered, and where many women who had never thought of themselves as lesbians experienced passionate friendships and sexual relationships with women for the first time. Greenham women positioned themselves outside normality. Their queer 'uncommon practices' threatened the heteronormative, patriarchal social order, which responded with hostile, anti-lesbian and anti-feminist media coverage and regular attacks by violent local vigilantes (Roseneil, 1995, 2000).

The women's peace camps put Greenham on the map. In 1980, 41% of those surveyed in Britain did not know there were nuclear weapons in their country, but by 1983, two years into the life of the camp, only 6% had not heard of Greenham

(Roseneil, 1995). Within months, their presence had transformed Greenham into an international icon of resistance to the Cold War and nuclear weapons. The women made the Cold War specific, material and everyday, and women-only and mixed peace camps modelled on Greenham were set up across Europe, and in Australia, Canada and the United States. As its influence rippled out to touch people across the globe Greenham became a place of contestation on many levels. It contributed to the developing suite of practices and technologies employed today by non-violent protesters in the ongoing fight against nuclear weapons and environmental destruction (Butler, 1996; Fisher, 2007). And most significantly for us, Greenham was a central, defining place, event, and political practice for the women's movement.

### The Common Ground project

Following disposals by the Defence Estate at the end of the Cold War, English Heritage began recording and selectively scheduling Cold War era monuments and architecture (Cocroft, 2001; Schofield, 2004, 2005). The GAMA shelters (silos) at Greenham were among the sites selected for statutory protection as scheduled monuments (Schofield, 2005: 121–127). The boundary of this monument included the much disputed, much cut, fence around the silos, a unique archaeological record and artefact in its own right, but did not extend beyond the fence to include any of the peace camp sites (Schofield and Anderton, 2000). Although the scheduling documentation acknowledges Greenham as 'the centre of mass protest, especially by women's groups' and points out, under the 'miscellaneous' category, that the addition of peace camps increased its social significance, none of the camp sites were included in the scheduled monument. This omission was in part because at the time of scheduling, prior to our work at the camps, no buildings, structures of works, or other major material remains were known to be present at any of the peace camp locations, so technically they did not qualify for scheduling. They are currently afforded some protection by virtue of their inclusion on the local Historic Environment Record (Schofield, 2005: 125–6; Fairhall, 2006: 180–3). Nevertheless, for us this was not a satisfactory situation.

John Schofield, of English Heritage, and Veronica Fiorato, then of West Berkshire Council, decided to examine more closely the archaeological record of Greenham, particularly the peace camps, in order to assess their heritage potential more fully. Early in 2003, they drafted a Project Proposal and discussion paper outlining a major interdisciplinary project focused on Greenham Common and brought together a group, including Yvonne Marshall, who might take such a project forward (Schofield and Fiorato, 2003). Although it developed out of military and Cold War archaeology, the 2003 proposal focused on the peace camp sites at Greenham. It set out two key objectives: to engage artists and archaeologists in collaborative exploration of the contestations and landscape of Greenham as a place of memory, and to use the experience of excavating a peace camp as a vehicle to effect reconciliation — an overcoming of old oppositions 'to achieve catharsis through the archaeological process of discovery'. Emphasis was placed on the archaeological process as an outcome in its own right. The collective and personal records of doing the archaeology would be artefacts like any objects recovered during excavation.

The initial aim was for the archaeologists to remain outside, perhaps even above, the politics of Greenham:

The project is not politically motivated, being driven explicitly by social inclusion, not exclusion. . . . It aims to use the process of archaeological fieldwork and excavation to promote dialogue amongst those who once acted in direct opposition: those on either side of the fence. (Schofield and Fiorato, 2003)

As things turned out we did not secure a major grant to enable a project in this form to go ahead, and over the next three years the work envisioned at Greenham changed significantly. Agreeing with Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos (this volume), this transformation in the research project is an important and interesting process in itself, one that is worthy of attention and exploration.

Within a loose collaboration of interested parties — the Common Ground Research Group — several largely independent strands of research developed. John Schofield pursued his interest in the relationship between archaeology and art, securing an Arts Council grant for artist Lucy Orta to work on a piece about Greenham, the outcome of which was her 2008 exhibition at Fort Asperen (Schofield, 2009), and he encouraged artist Kristen Posehn, then a PhD student at Winchester School of Art, to develop a visual record of our preliminary archaeological investigations (Schofield, 2005, 2009). John also explored parallels between Greenham and the Nevada peace camps (Schofield et al., 2003; Beck et al., 2009).

In 2004, Yvonne took on direction of the archaeological investigations. By this time Sasha Roseneil was a member of the Common Ground Research Group, having been invited to join because of her research and writing about Greenham as a sociologist and former Greenham woman. When John secured a small CBA Challenge Fund grant from the Council for British Archaeology we decided to pursue a pilot project at the small site of Turquoise Gate, which Sasha identified for us, and recounted the history of its establishment in 1984, as a vegan camp.

During 2004, work began at Turquoise Gate, generously supported by archaeology staff and students from the University of Southampton. With the help of Graeme Earl and Tim Sly, we made topographic maps of the likely campsite area. We then conducted a forensic style collection of artefacts lying on the ground surface, over a 10 × 12 metre test area. Duncan Brown, Curator of Archaeology at Southampton Museums, set up an artefact recording procedure. Results from this work, lengthy discussions within the group, and interviews conducted by Andrew Crosby with peace women Lorna Richardson and Lynette Sewell, led to a radical change in field strategy. In 2006 we abandoned excavation-orientated research and the collection of artefacts, turning instead to survey-based recording of surface remains, visible over a wide area. This required an archaeologist with specialist technical skills and knowledge, a task Kayt Armstrong, then an MSc student at Southampton, was willing to take on. The details of the Turquoise Gate pilot and its results are reported in Armstrong (2006), Marshall (in press), Marshall, Armstrong and Roseneil (in prep.), and Schofield (2009).

In order to explore how the archaeology evolved, and responded to the personal experiences, politics and disciplinary practices each of us brought to the project, we turn now to our individual stories of involvement in the research.

## Yvonne's story

In August 1981, when *Women for Life* set off for Greenham Common, I was living in London. As the Greenham protests gathered pace, the Cold War rhetoric escalated, and Britain went to war with Argentina, Europe felt increasingly unsafe. In October 1982, I returned home to New Zealand. My cousin, who had been living in London for more than ten years, soon followed. We were both seeking a safer place to live.

I thought I had left the Cold War behind in Europe. However, nuclear weapons loomed just as large in the South Pacific as France continued its programme of nuclear testing at Mururoa atoll in the Society Islands, despite international condemnation and a 1972 ruling by the International Court of Justice against further testing. Greenpeace and other protest vessels protested by refusing to observe the safety exclusion zone around Mururoa atoll, and eventually the French retaliated. On 10 July 1985 French foreign intelligence (DGSE) operatives sank the Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior*, anchored in Auckland harbour, killing photographer Fernando Pereira. New Zealanders were appalled. Despite French interference, two agents, Dominique Prieur and Alain Mafart, were convicted of manslaughter (Greenpeace, 2008).

In 1984 a new Labour government came to office, mandated to build to a nuclear-free New Zealand. They immediately required all vessels seeking entry to New Zealand waters to declare themselves nuclear-free. No exception was made for United States navy vessels, placing New Zealand in direct contravention of US policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear power or weapons on their ships. In the standoff that ensued, the US retaliated by suspending all defence agreements with New Zealand. Having thus spurned the sanction of US defence treaties, New Zealand was, like the Greenham women, positioned outside the 'protective perimeter' of United States military power — unruly, dangerous and out of place.

These were heady times in New Zealand. We believed we could make a difference. Always keen travellers, New Zealanders joined the many international guests who visited, lived at and in other ways supported the Greenham women's actions. While I enjoyed the exhilaration of being in New Zealand at this time, savouring the way our small nation stood up against the global bullies, there was a part of me that felt 'I should be at Greenham', I should be making a stand with the women — 'I'd rather be at Greenham' (Armstrong, 2006).

Twenty years later, I was. When John and Veronica asked if I would like to be part of a project researching the archaeology of Greenham I leapt at the chance. Here was an opportunity to use my skills and knowledge to make a contribution to the Greenham women's project. I would be able to bring my interest in gender and feminist archaeology (Marshall, 1985, 2008a) to a specifically feminist subject, and apply my experience conducting archaeological projects as collaborations with communities (Marshall, 2002, 2008b, 2009). Much of this work was done with my partner, anthropologist and archaeologist Andrew Crosby (2002), also a member of the Greenham Common Research Group. For both of us, a meaningful archaeology of the women's peace camps meant engagement with the peace women — Greenham was, and in many ways remains 'their' place and 'their' archaeology. We would need their voices directing, questioning, critiquing, laughing, remembering — Sasha's commitment to the project was therefore critical.

John and Veronica's position, that the project should remain outside of Greenham's politics, was for me, Sasha and Andrew untenable. Respecting the women's actions and exploring their archaeology in a manner broadly sympathetic to their project was the only possibility for us. The 2003 proposal envisioned combatants from both sides of the fence and from the local Newbury community coming together to excavate the peace camps in a spirit of reconciliation. For us, this approach was problematic. Firstly, the recent nature of events at Greenham, the women's memorial site at Yellow Gate, and the now permanent residence at Greenham Common of one peace woman, meant that whatever their formal ownership, the peace camp sites were remembered, experienced, and thought of by many peace women as 'theirs', and as women's places. Peace women were unlikely to welcome this proposed mix of people digging up their places. Secondly, it quickly became apparent that there was little appetite for reconciliation among any party. Thirdly, in 2003 we knew nothing of the archaeological record left at the peace camps so any proposal to excavate was premature. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there were no community voices — peace women or otherwise. Archaeologists would design, direct and carry out a project in which community members would be invited to participate. This positioned community members as passive participants in someone else's project. In contrast, we felt an active, collaborative and powerful peace women's voice was essential.

To move forward I needed to understand the peace women's project, how they thought about Greenham and its legacy today, and my own objectives in choosing to work at Greenham. To this end, I read everything I could find on and by Greenham women, I visited and revisited the campsites, I reflected in the memorial garden, and I talked for hours with Sasha and Kayt.

I also needed to understand the archaeology of the peace camps — what was there and in what ways it was significant. So we began the pilot project at Turquoise Gate. After the first season of fieldwork in 2004, the intimate, personal nature of the archaeological record left there began to emerge, and my conviction grew that we needed to explore the women's actions and projects in a broad sense, rather than the narrower Cold War context (Figures 3 and 4). We therefore decided that removing materials from the campsites, as we had been doing, was inappropriate, unless this was done with the direct involvement of peace women. Respecting the integrity of the sites themselves, in all their undistinguished ordinariness, was of paramount importance. The women had wanted to leave Greenham undisturbed, without evidence of their presence, and unless you look closely under the skirts of leaf litter, twigs and horse manure, this is the case today. Keeping the campsites intact felt the best course of action. For the 2006 fieldwork, therefore, we took a different approach. All identified items were situated, described and photographed but not removed, a process made possible by Kayt, and the archaeology staff and students at Southampton University who gave their time and skills to support it.

Gradually, Sasha, Kayt and I built up a conversation about Greenham. It focused around the idea of resistance. Sasha and I took our ideas to the 2004 Annual Conference of the Women's Studies Association held in Dublin, and to the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies at the University of Leeds (Marshall and Roseneil, 2004). People responded to our work — not always with approval, but always with passion. Greenham was like that, and it still is.



FIGURE 3 Yvonne Marshall and Sasha Roseneil exposing in plan the remains of a fireplace at Turquoise Gate. Photo: Kristin Posehn.



FIGURE 4 Kayt Armstrong at the University of Southampton cleaning the sole of a platform shoe recovered from Turquoise Gate. Photo: Penny Copeland.

Encouraged, I took the archaeology of Greenham abroad. On Armistice Day 2004, I presented a paper at the Chacmool conference in Calgary, Canada (Marshall, in press). By coincidence my paper finished at 11a.m., so we stood for two minutes silence overlooked by a giant image of the peace women dancing on the GAMA silos on New Year's Day 1983. Again, I was overwhelmed by people's interest — many had been to Greenham, or knew someone who had visited. I have never given an archaeological paper that sparked such passion. In November 2007, I took Greenham to Taiwan to open a conference on *Data and interpretation: on contemporary understanding of anthropological knowledge* (Marshall, 2007). This audience knew little about events at Greenham, yet again I was surprised by the keen interest it engendered. I understood this better after a recent visit to the Berlin Wall. Amongst the informal graffiti added to images decorating the Eastside Gallery section of the wall, were an astonishing number of Taiwanese voices protesting China's continuing attempts to bully and reclaim Taiwan — the story of Greenham still has global resonance.

### Sasha's story

My becoming a teenage activist, who missed classes to take part in the 1983 July blockades and the Halloween fence cutting at Greenham, was not well received by my school, and resulted in a request, in November 1983, that I depart from the sixth form before taking my A' Levels. I had first visited Greenham for the Embrace the Base demonstration in December 1982, and was excited, enthralled, and exhilarated by the event. I hated having to return to school the next day. From then on, more and more of my time was spent on politics. It was changing the world that mattered to me in the early 1980s, not taking exams, and it felt like liberation to be freed from school, finally able to be at Greenham properly. I lived at the camp for a year from December 1983, the peak period of contention, when the full complement of missiles arrived, military exercises began, and many thousands of actions against the base and the missile convoys took place. After I left Greenham for London, I continued to return to the camp as a visitor through the 1980s. Greenham was a life-changing experience for me, as it was for many thousands of women, and it has shaped my subjectivity, politics and life trajectory in a multitude of ways (Roseneil, 1993).

Having turned down a place to study archaeology and anthropology at university after I left Greenham, I plumped instead for what seemed to be the more 'relevant' and contemporary discipline of sociology. After realizing just how little sociology had studied women's individual and collective agency, and how little it had to say about the sort of action, experiences and ways of life that I had encountered at Greenham, I decided to embark on a PhD. Through this, I sought to understand the significance and socio-cultural meanings of Greenham, its transformative power in individual lives, and its impact on the wider social formation, and I endeavoured to insert Greenham in the historical record of radical dissent and social movements. Many years of reading, interviewing, archival research, and writing later, I had, by the time that John Schofield contacted me about the nascent Greenham archaeology project, moved on to researching other things. I had, I thought, finally worked Greenham out of my system.

My initial response, then, to John's email asking if I would be interested in meeting up and going to Greenham with the team, was mixed, intellectually and emotionally: surprise and anger, puzzlement and anxiety. I was *surprised* because during all the years I had worked on Greenham, it had felt like few people were interested, at least amongst the feminist theorists, historians and sociologists I encountered. Greenham was 'old hat' in its association with 'woolly hatted womanhood' (Roseneil, 2000), its memory tinged with unfashionable notions of essentialism, maternalism, and un-deconstructed gender identities. I had sought to challenge this, arguing for a reading of Greenham as an early instantiation of queer feminism, and seeking to challenge its erasure from feminist collective memory. Why then, I wondered, if feminist scholars weren't really interested in Greenham, did a group of archaeologists suddenly want to study it? What was their motivation? What were their politics? Was this a sign that the importance of Greenham was finally being recognized? Wasn't this what I had long wanted? And my surprise turned to *anger* when I was told by John that English Heritage had listed the missile silos (which they referred to as GAMA, a term unheard of by us at Greenham) as a scheduled monument, without incorporating any of the peace camps, yet it was these that had made Greenham the internationally recognized Cold War site that it was.

I was *puzzled* because, having chosen to study sociology rather than archaeology many years earlier, I wondered if Greenham could really be archaeology? Could my life and politics, my community, and my field of research, really be, not just sociology and recent social history, but *archaeology*? I was intrigued, and curious to know what might remain that could constitute an archaeological record. I imagined that there would be little trace of the camps left. Greenham women had had a strong environmental conscience, and everyday life involved careful consideration of the impact we were having on the land. We tried to live lightly on the earth, recycling long before it was a mandatory practice, gathering firewood from the Common, and minimizing our use of disposable products, detergents and plastics. As Jenny Grey Heron said:

There were all these women who cared about where the rubbish went . . . saying, 'It takes 25 years for a tampon to rot down' . . . That ecology thing — women tried very hard to hold that as an important principle.

And Barbara Rawson, when I interviewed her in 1990, remembered:

I saw most of the women caring for their surroundings, thinking about what was happening to the woods when they were living there . . . We all had a meeting one day about what we were doing to the ground . . . wondering how much damage we were doing, and getting advice about that. And my pleasure in going back a few years ago and walking down there and it's all grown over . . . It's hard to pick out. The tall pines are there, where we used to have the fire, but to find where different benders were, it's almost impossible.

How would it be a decade and a half later, I pondered? Had we lived up to these ecological ethics, leaving little evidence that we had been there, or would archaeology tell a different story?

But, my strongest reaction was one of *anxiety*: the idea of a mixed-gender group of archaeologists riffling through the legacy of the camps was profoundly disturbing. The camps were public spaces, most of them on common land, and they existed under the gaze of the world's media and the surveillance of the British and American states. That was what made Greenham special; its public-ness was an essential part of the challenge it posed. Anyone could pass by and look at what was going on, shout insults or throw rocks, and the police and bailiffs could, and did, regularly evict the camps. Greenham was also fundamentally an open community. The camps were not private, they belonged to no one, and no one controlled who came and went. There was no membership system, no process of application, no qualifying period; anyone could join, just by turning up and deciding to be a Greenham woman. Any *woman*, that is.

Greenham had been home to many thousands of women, and was a special place, a refuge and an adventure playground for many more women who spent time there. It was a place of intimacies, friendship, love and romance, of pain, heartache, anger, disagreement. And vital to this, it had been a *women-only* space — a globally and historically unique place where women lived together without men, making a community and a politics for themselves, autonomously, in the spirit of women's liberation. Greenham was a place where women found a voice — many voices, sometimes in unison, sometimes discordant — and developed skills they would never have taken on in a mixed social movement, from debating and arguing at internal meetings at the camp, talking to the media, and public speaking at rallies and conferences, to building benders, chopping wood, and mending cars. It had mattered hugely that Greenham had been women-only, both to the women involved, and to the wider world.

All of this was on my mind when I met up with the archaeologists at Greenham for the first time, and sitting together over tea and biscuits, I tried to explain this history, and its implications for their work. I was drawn into the project, despite my initial scepticism and anxiety, in large part because of Yvonne. She understood my concerns; she had, after all, been involved in a number of highly sensitive community archaeology projects in Canada, Fiji and New Zealand (Crosby, 2002, Marshall, 2008b). That first trip back to Greenham, more than 15 years after my last visit, was profoundly moving. We walked around the sites of all the camps, including Green Gate where I had lived. I re-encountered the circle of pine trees that Barbara had mentioned (above), that surrounded the fire pit we used in the winter of 1983–1984. I found the place where we had stored our firewood, and identified the tree on which we had hung a mirror, where we washed and brushed our teeth: our bathroom in the woods. I looked for the trees that formed the structure of the benders I had built and lived in, alone and with different girlfriends, and I found string embedded in the bark of one of them, from which the bender plastic had long ago been cut (Figure 5). I searched for the holly bender, hidden in a holly bush, and wondered if we might ever find all the bolt-cutters — a key protest technology of the time — that had been buried before the big eviction of April 1984. We looked at, and discussed the meanings of, the painted posts (Figure 6) that surrounded the clearing at Green Gate, where dancing, rituals and performances had taken place, where a giant web had been woven, and helium-filled balloons attached, to float into the base. And we



FIGURE 5 A bender string, now embedded into the growing tree bark at Green Gate. Photo: Kristin Posehn.

scrabbled in the leaf litter where I had thought that the fire pit had been, and found evidence of ash and of fires burnt long ago.

I was not over Greenham; I was sucked right back in. There was magic still on the Common, and I wanted to know more about what remained of our lives there, and to explore what it meant to me and other women who had lived there. I even began to wonder what the material legacy of the camp meant to local residents, sympathetic and hostile, as John and Veronica, too, had wondered.

So it was that I got involved, despite my worries that the project might violate the principles of Greenham. And gradually the project was reshaped, through much discussion and debate, many meetings and emails. I argued fiercely that the project could not be non-political, and that reconciliation between the peace women and the local population, the police and soldiers was not the point. Eventually, and very much through the doing of the work itself, a project emerged that I could embrace, that felt true to the ethics and spirit of Greenham. We decided early on, as Yvonne reports above, that we would not remove artefacts from the Common, and the focus of the archaeology shifted to mapping and recording the artefacts we found and the structural legacy of the camps — the fire pits, the bender sites, the stashes of plastic and tarpaulins. I knew nothing about the technical side of the archaeological process, but I joined in enthusiastically, enjoying being outdoors on the Common, getting dirt under my nails and mud on my boots, like in the old days!



FIGURE 6 Sasha Roseneil, Veronica Fiorato and John Schofield at Green Gate discussing the fence posts decorated by peace women. Photo: Kristin Posehn.

And I worked on developing the ethnographic dimension of the project, so that we came to conceptualize the research as concerned with the material, symbolic, aesthetic, embodied, and gendered dimensions of living on or close to Greenham during the 1980s. Alongside the archaeological investigations, I framed an ethnographic–historical project to investigate the subjective experiences of former peace campers, and, in keeping with John and Veronica’s original intention, of local residents. It would explore the affective relations, the phenomenology and lived experience, and the contested politics of the landscape and environment of Greenham, and of its material legacy. The plan, as yet only piloted at Turquoise Gate, is to invite Greenham women back to re-encounter the sites, to engage with the archaeology and the contemporary landscape, and to discuss the ecological ideas of the camp, in recognition that this was our home, our politics, and our lives, for a time. And, the idea, ultimately, is to create an archive of the archaeology, history and memory of the peace camps which carries forward the spirit of public-ness that characterized Greenham, opening up its memory to the gaze of all those who are interested, and remembering the place and the politics it enacted.

### Kayt’s story

I was asked to join the project in 2004, as I was starting my MSc in archaeological computing. Yvonne invited me because I had the right technical skills for the direction

the project was heading in. I have also never been shy about my explicitly feminist and politically active position, so Yvonne knew I would bring those elements to the research. Even with my background and interest it was a difficult but engaging experience for me. The subject prompted a very complex set of feelings and thought processes to do with why I was so interested, why my career had followed this particular path, how I felt about my subject and what I hoped archaeology might accomplish, beyond trying to better understand the past. I read reams on archaeologies of the recent past and archaeologies of the present, trying to find confirmation of my gut instinct that this *was* archaeology, that the pursuit of this research was legitimate, on academic and philosophical grounds.

I read about feminism and how it was linked to the peace and anti-nuclear movements. I looked into my own past and came to new understandings of myself, my family, and my place in a much larger picture. I asked my mother about her experiences at the time, and she gave me an A3 sheet of songs from Greenham bearing the exhortation to ‘please make copies and give them to others’ (Figure 7). She was an activist in the North East in the 1970s and 1980s, and had saved it, along with leaflets she gave out and helped write for CND, the articles she wrote for the National Childbirth Trust about the births and growing pains of her children, and her copies of feminist magazine, *Spare Rib*. We wept together and laughed together as we poured over her past. I marvelled as I read about the strength, creativity and downright disobedience of those very angry women. I do not think I’ve ever cried or laughed aloud before when researching archaeology.

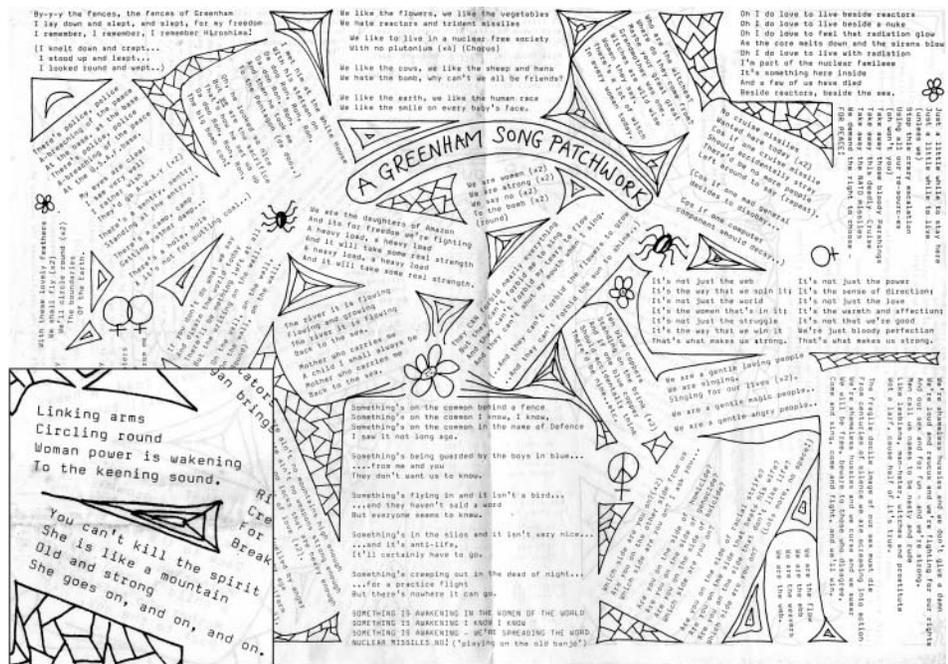


FIGURE 7 Song sheet written and distributed by the Greenham peace women. Photo: Penny Copeland.

I decided that this *involvement* with the material meant that it would be impossible to pretend a detached, third person viewpoint. What follows is part of my MSc dissertation, arguing for my use of a first person voice. It is quoted verbatim and whilst I might now write otherwise, it was how I felt at the time and any rewriting feels like self-censorship.

I need to make my own standpoint explicit. I was brought up in a feminist, left wing household that was strongly opposed to nuclear weapons and the Thatcher Government. I have very early memories of taking part in marches and demonstrations about diverse issues, including marching in support of CND. My mother was an organiser in our local area for CND and was heavily involved with organisations such as the National Child-birth Trust. She still has her ‘Spare Rib’ (a feminist journal) diary from the year I was born. My father was a card-carrying member of the British Communist Party, and left in disgust when they became the Democratic Left. My mother is named in British Parliament’s official, debate transcripts having been referred to as a ‘dangerous Marxist-Leninist radical feminist’ on the floor of the House of Commons, during the Cleveland child-sex abuse crisis (both my parents were social workers in Cleveland in the 70s and 80s); my mother does not herself agree with any of those labels! So yes, I have a standpoint here. The title of this piece of work is a tongue-in-cheek reference to that fact (note: my dissertation was titled ‘I’d rather be at Greenham’, referring to a badge I found during the course of my research).

I am politically active, though I do not support a particular party. I remain opposed to nuclear weapons of any sort. I am proud to call myself a feminist and I do not consider the struggle to be over by any means. I consider myself ‘queer’ in a number of respects.

I feel strongly that recognising this from the outset, letting it ‘out of the closet’, is preferable to not mentioning it at all and attempting what would obviously be impossible, a neutral voice . . .

I do not think this admission detracts from the validity of the work I have done. It has been a strangely daunting prospect, as I am very aware of going against the norm, both in acknowledging my viewpoint so explicitly, and in adopting a first person voice for this piece of research. I hope that my use of the first person will remind both myself and the reader that all knowledge is situated and dependent to a degree on the person doing the knowing and the asking. (Armstrong, 2006)

I take from Greenham a sense of power; that my chosen field can play a political role and, more importantly, that that role can be a dissident one. My dissertation was inherently a political statement about the value of contested spaces like Greenham, and the need to investigate them and render them visible once more. I am immensely proud of that. Most of the women my age I speak to about Greenham have no idea what it was, despite having lived through it and the Cold War. By making the contestations of power at Greenham visible again we can make future dissent more likely by providing a model and a source of inspiration for peoples’ actions.

When I was a very small child my favourite book was about a bat named Lavinia, who is pregnant. Lavinia loves flying at night and being one with the world, and she hears a voice whispering to her to ‘pass it on’. Later, her daughter Lola is born and she teaches her to fly, and to be in love with the world (Hoban and Baynton, 1984). This idea of ‘passing the something to the other’, of sharing knowledge and

experience in the hope of generating passion and commitment, is at the centre of my relationship with my mother, and is a key part of my relationship with Greenham: pass it on; remember and celebrate the actions of the Greenham Women.

The first time I went to Greenham, Yvonne and I met Sasha in the tea rooms where the women used to go to warm up, one of the few establishments in Newbury where they were welcome. We spent the day exploring the area from Blue Gate to Green Gate, talking about Sasha's experiences and recording finds, structures and art left by the women. It struck me that we were part of the continuing act of *being* at Greenham, that we were performing our own protest. Our archaeology was a performance, a deliberate act. In the memorial garden at Yellow Gate I found a paper crane and recognized it as a symbol of peace. I rescued it from the cold earth and wove it into the fence there, my own contribution to the web of action and ideas, and felt powerful (Figure 8).

### A feminist archaeology of Greenham

How do our stories bring us back to our starting point? Researching Greenham was for each of us in our different ways always an explicitly feminist act — an exploration of an explicitly feminist place. The approach we developed at Turquoise Gate, to record, engage and try to understand, but not to disturb, grew from our aim to know and preserve the archaeological canvas left at Greenham by the peace women so it can act as a base from which the many, often divergent and dissonant voices of the women may continue to be heard, remembered and rethought. Our work at



FIGURE 8 The engraved message on the central stone in the Memorial Garden established and maintained by peace women on the site of Yellow Gate. Photo: Kristin Posehn.

Turquoise was a pilot study. The major work of recording the archaeology of Green, Emerald and Orange Gates remains to be done. So, too, an ethnography and oral history of the affective relationships of women at Greenham with the materiality of the camps and the Common on which they were situated.

We each needed to travel the paths described above, to confront ourselves in the material, and locate ourselves explicitly in relation to it; to understand the nature of the archaeological record, and the best way to approach it in theoretical, practical and ethical terms; and to engage with the Greenham women — they have to be an active part of the project, whether challenging and contesting or supporting and confirming.

The autoethnography presented here is part of this process. We have discovered how much the archaeology of Greenham matters to us and others, and how we might do archaeology at Greenham in ways compatible with our own convictions. The methodology is described elsewhere (Armstrong, 2006, Marshall, Armstrong and Roseneil, in prep.); what we have here is that ‘politically engaged science . . . more rigorous, self-critical, and responsive to the facts than allegedly neutral science’ that Wylie (1992: 30; see also Wylie, 2007) argues so passionately for, and by explicitly locating ourselves in relation to our subjects, we have placed ourselves at stake, we hope, in a positive way. In doing this we also place our feminist project at Greenham alongside those of other archaeologists who argue we need more explicitly politically engaged archaeology (Hamilakis and Duke, 2007).

We want to take these feminist ways of thinking, knowing and doing, and put them into practice at the other camps at Greenham. As part of this work we look to develop autoethnography and ethnographic archaeology because we see them as key to the practice of politically engaged archaeology. To us, Greenham is about more than the Cold War. We believe that our situated, grounded process and approach can help us to explore many other aspects of Greenham — feminist and environmental politics, protest technologies, relationships with the landscape, community and affective bonds — through the material traces left on site, and the memories of the women who left them.

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