



Feminist Archive North

Newsletter No. 3 Summer 2008



We've been rethinking the Newsletter. FAN has a fantastically rich and varied resource of material on the Women's Liberation Movement. It's here to be used by anyone interested in the struggles and achievements of feminists - by schools, by colleges, and researchers. And we must reach out and get that across.

So this issue will build on the Treasures of the Archive* section in the two previous numbers. With the theme of Peace, we focus on raising awareness of the scale of the FAN archives on women's activism in this area.

There's an article on the local Menwith Hill camp and an overview of the range of related FAN holdings. Let us know what you think, and also of other themes you'd like to see.

There are still reports on work in progress and FAN activities, but in future you'll find notices about upcoming events and small items on the new FAN blog (accessible at www.feministarchivenorth.org.uk/new.htm) - that will be a quicker way of keeping everyone informed.

* No.1 Pavilion collection; Crimes Against Women, Leeds City Council's Women's Committee conference, 1985; No.2 Spare Rib collection; Leeds Women Against Apartheid collection.





I'd Rather Be At Greenham

(quote from badge in the archives)

Jenny March writes - For my postgraduate dissertation I researched how feminist history is portrayed in museums. One of the topics I looked at was the Greenham Common women's peace camps. After finishing my course, I started volunteering at Feminist Archive North. There I worked on the Menwith Hill Peace Camp collection.

I'd been dimly aware that there had been a women's peace camp there and I knew the base was up north somewhere but I didn't know where it was or what they were protesting about.

Menwith Hill is near Harrogate in North Yorkshire and is a US spy base. It monitors telecommunications, and although it doesn't house any nuclear weapons, the information from the base would be used for "intelligence" during a nuclear attack. Women involved in Greenham and the peace movement began protesting there in 1993, becoming a permanent camp in 1994. This camp remained until they were evicted in 1999. Women from the camp, plus a few other groups like CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and the Quakers, still protest there but people are not allowed to stay at the site because of a legal injunction.

I was working on material from about 1993 to 1996, but there is more recent stuff that is still to be donated to the archive. So far, the

collection includes posters, magazines, press releases, photos, banners, legal documents (like court papers) and letters. One of the most interesting parts is the letters sent to women in prison, as many women refused to pay fines when taken to court. The Menwith Hill women called their camp "Greenham-style". They exposed the security flaws at the base by frequently getting inside, cutting the fence, stealing paperwork and painting graffiti with peace slogans.

The peace camp was situated in a layby on the A59 road near the base, and was smaller than Greenham. It's not as well known and received less media coverage. Menwith Hill was part of a network of peace camps at places like Aldermaston and Faslane. Recently a year of protest was held at Faslane (Faslane 365) - a base for nuclear submarines in Scotland. Groups from all over the country took it in turns to protest for one or more days at the base. One of these groups was women from Greenham.

I think the women's peace camps are an important part of feminist history, and there aren't enough books about them. Here I've listed some resources for further reading.

I haven't found any books on Menwith Hill, but there's one article on the F Word (www.thefword.org.uk) and some websites. I'm hoping to create a chronology of the camp, and this will be added to the FAN collection.

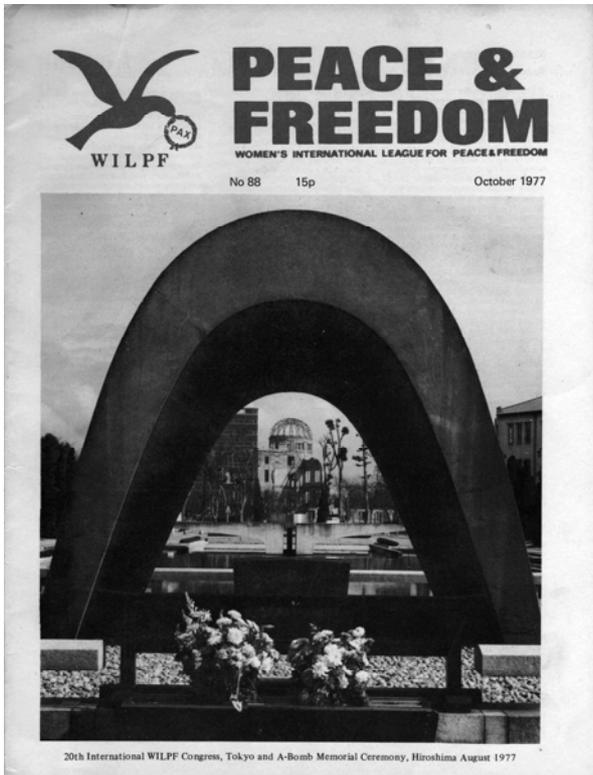
Resources:

- CND website on Menwith Hill - cndyorks.gn.apc.org/mhs/wpc/wpcmh.htm
- Article on both peace camps from one of the women involved, Finn Mackay - www.thefword.org.uk/features/2003/09/from_greenham_to_menwith_the_womens_peace_campaign_at_menwith_hill
- The Guardian's online exhibition on Greenham - <http://www.youngreenham.co.uk/>
- Video of dancing on the silos - www.guardian.co.uk/youngreenham/video/page/0,,2072731,00.html
- Imperial War Museum online exhibition - www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/22/greenham/index.htm
- Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp - www.aldermaston.net/camp/index.php



Treasures :

Women's Peace Activism



We were hard put to choose just four images for this newsletter, from all the FAN peace collections, which might give a flavour of the research potential. The FAN archive materials are mainly from the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s on, but our search for illustrations reminded us that women have been campaigning for peace, and against violence for literally, thousands of years.

The striking 1982 issue of the Brighton Women's Peace Group's newsletter *Lysistrata* (overleaf) makes the point. (After years of war between ancient Greek states around 400 bc *Lysistrata* organised the women to bring it to an end by withholding sex, and by barricading the state treasury. The women then used the analogy of weaving, one of their acknowledged skills, to show how society could be organised less aggressively.) Are there links here with the photos of knitted children's clothes on the military base fences?

More recently, the 1977 cover of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) *Peace News* commemorates the A-bomb memorial ceremony at Hiroshima. WILPF was set up in 1915 during WW1, and is still going strong as an international NGO. In 2000 it lobbied successfully for the UN Security Council to pass resolution 1325 on the need to include women in all peace processes and to protect them from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict. (See www.peacewomen.org ; www.ukwilpf.org.uk)

The two photos we chose bring us up to date and closer to our home grass roots. The photos of women activists demonstrating outside Greenham Common base and Menwith Hill near Harrogate show uniformed officialdom totally nonplussed by peaceful protest. FAN is particularly rich in informal material from local groups used at the peace camps and on demonstrations, like song-books illustrated with cartoons (hand-made before the advent of photocopiers or computers) and letters that were pinned on the wire fences of military bases. We have runs of at least fifteen periodicals, posters, pamphlets, photos, postcards, badges, and several collections from particular groups.

What emerges from a trawl through the archive is an inspiring sense of women's peace activism nationwide, targeting the bases above, but also Faslane, (Trident nuclear warheads) Capenhurst (weapon-grade uranium processing) and Porton Down (chemical and biological warfare experiments). Internationally, links are sought and fostered, visitors welcomed from women's groups in Australia, Diego Garcia, Ireland, Israel, Latin America, Namibia, North America, and Pacific Islanders.

It's also clear that groups can change through time. The focus gradually broadens from campaigning against the military/nuclear complex to all threats of violence against women's lives, including all forms of discrimination, racism, and oppression. Real peace can only be based on political, economic and social justice for all.



Sister News Feminist Archive South

The FAS holdings are now in store at Bristol University, pending their new home. A skeleton service is still available. Enquirers should email Hannah Lowery, archivist, at H.J.Lowery@bristol.ac.uk or go to the FAS website which Jane Hargreaves, now a temporary trustee, continues to monitor.

FAS still welcomes donations, most recently 'In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism' by Margaret Jolly from Sussex University, who did some of her research at FAS.

With sadness, we report the death of two valued sisters. Pat West was an early member of WLM in Bristol. She lived a rich full life, as performer in Sistersshow, poet, anti-nuclear activist, and creative writing tutor. Pat's son has promised her archive to FAS.

Ursula Masson was a founder member of the Women's Archive of Wales. She did much work on the Dora Russell archive held by FAS, and in spite of a long illness had recently played a major part in launching the Women in Wales Roadshow.

Celebration of IWD 2008 in Leeds

The International Women's Day event FAN organised this year was a great success. Al Garthwaite (Vera Media) showed a video and led a discussion about Reclaim the Night and Jan Gregory spoke on Sustaining a Feminist Organisation over 30 years. We sold bags and duplicate materials (copies of Spare Rib were very popular) and publicised other feminist events such as Fem 08, Million Women Rise and Reclaim the Night.

The whole event was video-ed by students from the Northern School of Film (Leeds Met University). Feedback was very positive and the networking table much appreciated. A special thanks to Ruth Pearson for getting us the venue.

This newsletter has been written and produced by Ailsa Swarbrick, Jenny March and Lynette Willoughby.



The editorial in issue 10 of Lysistrata explains how their collective changed. The original aim "was to link up peace groups and spread news about peace actions that were happening up and down the country and overseas." But their understanding of the concept of "Peace" changed many times. From an entirely white membership, they reached out to minority women and were now more ethnically diverse. They defined the struggle not simply in terms of male oppression, but as cultural oppression, and therefore planned to relaunch with a new name to mark a new beginning.

If you have been involved in a women's peace group, or know anyone else who has, and have material to add to FAN, we'd be delighted to hear from you. If you don't want to donate at present, we have facilities to copy.

All images in this newsletter are reproduced from the FAN archives.

