

# Witness: Protection of the Light

*'Although I am out of the king's protection [ie the law],  
I am not out of the protection of the Almighty God [the Light]'*

Margaret Fell

*Clare B Dimyon of Ditchling Meeting writes about an event near Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in 1984 that involved 'speaking truth to power'. She recounts how a man responded unexpectedly, in this least likely of situations and how it prompted some on the spot 'restorative justice'.*

**B**y a curious coincidence, I was at the Meeting House to pick up *the Friend* (27 November 2015). Although Friends (*Quakers*) are not entirely given to believing in coincidence. I was delighted to learn that Lynette Edwell had assembled various archives of the Greenham Common Women's Peace camp. Later, the headlines '*Travelling in the ministry*' and '*Women of courage*' "*spoke to my condition*" and I started writing of a peculiarly successful Quaker witness that took, as the charge-sheets say '*...at Greenham in the County of Berkshire*' in 1984<sup>1</sup>.

An eighteen-year-old Quaker woman got on a coach to spend Easter at the Women's Peace Camp, passing through Oxford and getting off at Newbury. She made her way to Greenham by instinct up the A34, crossing the footbridge. Hopping over a fence she dislocated her shoulder. The large orange rucksack she was wearing pulled against the dislocation and she was in '*...a right old pickle*'! A lorry driver saw her plight and pulled over, gently removing the rucksack and helping her to his lorry to take her to A&E. She had a scarf, a birthday gift<sup>2</sup>, which is kind of odd for late April, *when* you think about it, but jolly useful as a sling!

The lorry went to the nearby roundabout, and turned right in a three-quarter turn, whereupon the shoulder happily re-located. At this point she said: '*No need for A&E, carry on round the roundabout. Drop me at the next exit.*' The driver did a one-and-a-half turn of the roundabout, upon which would turn her whole life. Adjacent to the Greenham Common airbase. He mentioned something about reaching his tachograph limit and, after his kindness, it seemed churlish to refuse a brief stop for... coffee.

The driver turned off and stopped in a siding. He then poured from his thermos and settled to drink when a rather *too* 'familiar' arm came round her shoulders, which our young Friend (Quaker) insinuated herself out of. She offered him all her money, to which he replied: '*That's not what I'm after.*' An attack ensued in which a physically smaller man battered this young woman with great violence. Encountering further resistance, he took either end of the birthday scarf acting as a sling, held her aloft by her neck and strangled her so that she believed that she had literally breathed her last.

Exhausted, and protecting the recently dislocated shoulder of her arm, further *physical* resistance was simply no longer possible. Yet, though many women freeze, this young woman had the advantage of a rape education courtesy of one Peter Sutcliffe. Like other women and girls across the North of England, she had lived in lockdown for several years with very real and very sensible discussions. Unusually, the brain of this eighteen-year-old Quaker went into overdrive with thoughts of Judge Pickles stating that '*When women say "No" they mean "Yes"*'. It is strange that the law places the onus on women to *decline* consent but is remarkably lacking in

---

<sup>1</sup> Burghclere in the Count of Hampshire – as it turned out, as reported in full to Hampshire Police 18 March 2016

<sup>2</sup> From her adored step-father on Thursday 19 April 1984, in fact their wedding anniversary, as advised after his death November 2016. There is no longer any harm in that information.

the practicalities thereof. It is also curious how the pivotal issue of 'consent' clear at this moment in 1984, is only now being discussed, some thirty years later.

This woman had another major advantage/ disadvantage. (*It is always this way in rape, some double or multiple edged sword*). She did not yet know it but she was ...a lesbian. Though she might not have fully understood that, one thing had always been clear – that "sex" (sexual intercourse) with a man was utterly repugnant. She even considered telling him she was a lesbian but realised, given the social attitudes of that era, that this was likely to make things far worse, providing additional sexual titillation or "corrective rape" especially by courts, police and media. (*We have moved so far with homophobia but hardly a millimeter wrt sexual violence.*)



Photo of Annie "Mechanic"s 'bender' (shelter) at Green Gate, Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp: 'Where I was taken such good care of.'

In her minds' eye, it was as though, circling above their heads, were police, judge and juries and media, all cheering him on as she realised how every single action would be twisted by a defence barrister in court. She reasoned: 'He may be able to take but I will give him nothing that allows him to think it is anything other than what it is' ie Rape.'

Recent NVDA (Non-Violent Direct Action) training came to her mind: to become a dead weight, like we had practiced for arrest by the police. No assistance, no resistance, he had to move a motionless body that might as well have been dead. While this eighteen-year-old Quaker prepared for an ordeal that one in five women face in their lifetime, she repeated in **dullest**, emotionless monotone: 'I don't want this to happen, I don't want this to happen...' over and over again... according to her Quaker heritage, 'speaking truth to (violent) power', acting on instinct but, in truth, risking his further wrath and with it her life.

Then a very Quaker miracle took place, though it took twenty-five years to see past the "myths and stereotypes" of rape and sexual violence, and those who have been, as well as the trauma of the event (*not to mention lesbian naivety about male sexual function*<sup>3</sup>) to understand it for the astonishing victory it was. What this man had not understood through the life-threatening violence he had employed, he finally understood from her refusal to furbish his sexual/rape fantasies. He came to his senses, removed himself... and then burst into tears.

He let her out of the cab for some much needed 'verticality' and thereafter, behaved, with what I have no doubt was sincerest remorse. Many women do not have the luxury of their assailant admitting the reality of the transaction. There we were, a mile or so from the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, with me in severest shock and with him desperate... to get me to a place of safety but realising it wasn't quite his place to offer. Does that sound like any kind of rapist you ever heard about? I know that I have never referred to myself as a rape "v-i-c-t-i-m" (ie since 1984), I have *always* called myself a Rape Survivor, only recently understanding that I hadn't even been a v-i-c-t-i-m *while* I was being raped.

Finally, with little choice, and a large rucksack wedged firmly in the middle, I did actually get back into the cab, even 'joking' to myself: 'So what can he do? Rape and kill me...again?' He took me to the junction, closer to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Slight amendment, better accuracy from the original article as printed

gates of the Peace Camp, where I asked to be dropped off. I chose to look away when I *could* have seen the number plate. I knew the number would be burned on my memory to populate and enhance my nightmares for a lifetime.

And that, dear Friends, is how, this Quaker, aged eighteen came to '*restoratively justice*' an accidental killer/rapist on the spot, by 'speaking truth to violent power' c1984. He kept his side of the bargain. I knew that the criminal justice system, c 1984, would only unpick any good that *had* been achieved. I can only pray that he DID learn and was changed, I can at least hope that it changed at least *some* of his subsequent sexual encounters, spared *even* one woman that appalling ordeal.

I can't help observing that Friends were ahead of the curve for 'homosexuality'. The Quaker View of "Sex" was in 1964, and yet 52 years later there is no sign of the Quaker View of Rape. In *Quaker faith & practice* there is simply nothing to be found on sexual violence in which violence, injustice and the inequality of women intersect. Yet, how can that be when male sexual violence against women is a form of terrorism that kills *far* more women in the UK than any act of "*extremism*"? And does anyone think that Quaker women are in some way immune, or indeed Quaker men incapable of mistakes about consent? How can Quaker testimonies make any sense, if, with respect to sexual violence, I do not also '*Let my life speak?*' [*and indeed his*<sup>4</sup>.]

*Clare is a member of Ditchling Meeting*

---

<sup>4</sup> Addition but perhaps a rather important statement wrt prevailing stereotypes of "Monsters" – no just a man who makes a mistake about #Consent, a topic which has only arrived in the public discourse some 30 years later but was immediately and usefully grasped by THIS 18 year old Friend.