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MA Cultural Memory

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In Living Memory: How Does an Oral History Collection

Map the Landscape of Greenham and Crookham Common ?

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"A place is particular, a tapestry of woven contexts:
enduring and ephemeral,

local and global, related and unrelated, now and
then, past and future...

Every place has ongoing stories, recognized,
concealed, and lost. Some take

longer to tell than others, some are short; some have
an ending, others are

open, still unfolding" (Whiston Spirn 1998: 160).

Prologue

When we are unfamiliar with a place, we can turn to maps to guide us and so before I began talking to the local inhabitants about Greenham and Crookham Common, I consulted a map of West Berkshire to give me a sense of the space involved. Its aerial perspective revealed a piece of common land lying south-east of the market town of Newbury, just north of the county boundary with Hampshire demarcated by the river Enborne running along its bottom edge and with the Kennet and Avon Canal sitting a bit further to its north. Aware that other people's memories of the area might precede the publication date of my map, I particularly noted the details that were most likely to have been long-standing features in the landscape.

However, it became clear early on in my discussions with those who knew the Common well, that they remembered the place differently. Compass bearings were inconsequential and neither waterway was recalled. In order to map the space I was told: "You'd have to start at Greenham School."

Introduction

In 2008 I undertook a 'reminiscence project' with a group of elderly residents, most of whom grew up near or on Greenham and Crookham Common. The project was commissioned by the Corn Exchange in Newbury and New Greenham Arts as part of a wider community arts *Peace through Participation* initiative and funded by The National Lottery *Awards For All*. The brief was to identify and work with a group of "elderly people who do not have direct access to the arts", record their "memories and stories" about the Commons and present these in the form of a 'sound exhibition'.

Research of Newbury's local amenities for the elderly led me to base the project at Fairclose Day Centre, a thriving establishment run by the charity *Age Concern*. Participants were recruited through distributing advertising bills and chatting about the project to diners in the centre's canteen. The project began with four enthusiastic individuals meeting one afternoon a week. The group's number gradually grew so that by the end of the two months twelve people had taken part either to contribute their memories, or just to listen to those of others. The fact that there was only one man amongst them, is perhaps a reflection of the higher mortality rates for octogenarian males compared to their female counterparts. Group memory work can be problematic for oral histories because it raises the issue of more dominant individuals talking over others and imposing their agenda on the material being discussed. The recording sessions were therefore carefully managed to ensure that all those who wanted to take part were heard. My voice is present in the collection acting as the

interlocutor, but for the most part, the group's memory work found its own direction and narrative rhythm.

Twenty-six pairs of reminiscences were selected from the five or so hours of recorded material to form the sound exhibition. These twenty-six tracks were representative of the main themes covered by the group and were compiled, with the help of sound artist, Neil C. Smith, onto a compact disc with a total running time of forty minutes and entitled "In Living Memory" (see Appendix). They were not arranged in any specific order, but designed to be played in a random sequence. Installed in New Greenham Arts, an art centre occupying buildings on the Common's decommissioned airbase, the design of the exhibition was such that visitors encountered the work whilst seated between two speakers, hearing each of the paired reminiscences play alternately, from the right and then from the left. In this way, they were literally placed in the middle of the group's exchange, evoking a sense of immediacy.

At times amusing and at others poignant, the collection of oral history affectionately recalls lives lived in and around the Commons from the early twentieth century up to the present day. As the project took shape, I began to realise that a kind of virtual cartography was taking place in that the landscape of Greenham and Crookham Common was being 'mapped' through the memories and stories of the group. When we navigate a space from the past, or rather, when we remember a space in the present, we create a 'cognitive map', which, according to Roger Downs and David Stea, "allows us to generate mental images and models of the

environment, which are *present* again" (Downs and Stea 1977: 7). Cognitive mapping is the memory of the practice of space. It is, as they explain in their book on the subject: "an activity that we engage in rather than an object that we have" (Downs & Stea 1977: 6); a stepping inside of the picture frame to inhabit the space from within and unlike paper maps, is neither static, nor a singularly spatial representation. It offers another way to know a landscape and one that acknowledges the perpetual reworking of both place and memory over time. My use of the word *landscape* here and elsewhere in this dissertation moves beyond its art historical meaning of being something purely visual; a view to be admired from a distance - but rather, what the anthropologist Barbara Bender refers to as 'intimate encounters' (Bender 2007: 135). The oral histories recount the practice of the Commons space and "on *being in* rather than *looking at* the landscape" (Bender 1998: 6). They also recount the practice of a space that is subject to change. "Landscapes", explains Bender "can never stay still - feelings and engagement with place and landscape are always in the making. Nor can they be situated only in the present, for they contain and are referenced on what has gone before" (Bender 2007: 136). As a collection of memories about a particular place over time, the oral histories present a rich primary material for further study of how they map the landscape of Greenham and Crookham Commons. Here then, is that study.

Before outlining the paths that my analysis will follow, it is necessary to explain their theoretical starting point. Greenham and Crookham Commons cover over one thousand acres of

plateau heathland. They therefore present a vast space for the oral histories to map. "Spaciousness", writes Yi-Fu Tuan in his book on *Space and Place*, "is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act" (Tuan 2007: 52). The Commons were remembered as providing 'enough room' for inhabitants to move as though solitary travellers within the space. "You'd walk miles across Crookham Common" recalls one oral history, "and you wouldn't see another soul. But you would see an ice-cream man, pedalling along" (In Living Memory 2008: 3.1). There is a strange logic to this memory, in which at one moment the landscape is all but deserted and the next, 'another soul' appears, as if out of nowhere. Such an encounter seems contrary to the very spaciousness of the space, and yet as the geographer Doreen Massey explains: "what space gives us is simultaneous heterogeneity; it holds out the possibility of surprise; it is the condition of the social in the widest sense, and the delight and the challenge of that" (Massey 2008: 105). However deserted the Commons appeared, the space held the potential for a surprising "encounter with the unforeseen"; an "accidental neighbour" (Massey 2008: 112); or an ice-cream salesman. Such encounters demanded social interaction and a negotiation of space, and it was this "throwntogetherness" (Massey 2008: 141) that marked places of harmony or disharmony on cognitive maps. Massey's theories run largely concurrent with those of the French scholar Michel de Certeau and in each of their discussions of 'chance' encounters, they refer to something called 'labyrinthine' 'clarity' or

'intelligence' (Massey 2008: 112; de Certeau 1988: 90). The term derives from Situationist architecture that sought to transpose "a mixture of order and accident" in their spatial design (Massey 2008: 112). As a particular experience of space, I believe that 'labyrinthine clarity' cogently expresses how Greenham and Crookham Common was encountered and remembered in the oral histories. It also helps to differentiate between the experience of using conventional maps, on which everything is made visible, and cognitive maps which make room for the unexpected.

When cognitive maps are narrated and become what de Certeau calls "spatial stories" (de Certeau 1988: 155) it is their encounters with the space that determine the limits and place coordinates of the space. They have the ability to transform how the space is remembered over time. Encountering a newcomer for example, may be remembered as a confrontational place of exchange, but over time may become a less distinct mapping co-ordinate, as relations ease and the space is shared more harmoniously. "If space is...a simultaneity of stories so far" Massey explains in her book *For Space*, "then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place" (Massey 2008: 130).

In the following analysis of the oral histories, I aim to look at how encounters of Greenham and Crookham Common contribute

to the "specificity" of the place in living memory. My analysis is divided into three sections in which the oral histories map the space from three different perspectives. In the first section, I consider how they map encounters inside the bounds of the Common, looking at practice and their narrative as part of common land inheritance and as determinants of how the space is negotiated in daily lives. The next section examines how the oral histories map encounters with outsiders who came to the Common during the Second World War, looking at the different power-relations at work in sharing space with others and how the space is re-negotiated at this time. In the third section, I look at how the space is mapped through encounters outside its bounds in which historical master narratives come into play and a sense of nostalgia pervades the oral histories.

The analysis of the collection follows a roughly chronological sequence beginning with memories of Greenham and Crookham Common at the turn of the Twentieth Century up to the present day. However, this does not preclude discussion of the temporal shifts that occur in the memories themselves, in which time appears as no more stable than place co-ordinates on cognitive maps. It is an underlying theme of inquiry weaving through the three sections and leads on to the conclusion where I end with consideration of how the collection of oral history maps Greenham and Crookham Common beyond its bounds and those of living memory.

In considering memories of 'being in" space, human agency as much as the landscape itself, is under scrutiny. My theoretical

field of research therefore treads a path between the two academies of Human Geography and Cultural Memory; Doreen Massey's theories of spatial narrative are echoed in a close reading of de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in particular *Part Three: Spatial Practices*, in my analysis of the oral histories. His work is particularly relevant here as it draws on oral accounts of space to develop its own theories. In the first section, I also refer to the oral historian Daniela Koleva who writes about the temporality of space as expressed in the stories of rural communities and return to Barbara Bender's views of landscape from an anthropological perspective. In his writings on landscape as 'encountered space', Yi-Fu Tuan informs my treatment of the oral histories throughout. His consideration of the interplay of human and landscape in language construction is particularly addressed in the second section when I also draw from the writing of Anne Whiston Spirn on this subject. The third section looks to the work of historians Norman Klein and Kerwin Lee Klein on meta-narratives and Svetlana Boym's study on *The Future of Nostalgia*. In addition to this theoretical line of inquiry, I refer to David Fairhall's recent study of Greenham Common, Ed Cooper's commentary on the place and David Reynolds essay on Europe after the Second World War to bring an historical context to my analysis of the primary material.

Transcripts of selected oral history extracts are provided, but for a more nuanced interpolation, the reader is very much encouraged to 'listen' to the oral histories on the compact disc provided (see Appendix). Colloquialisms are retained, exclamation

marks are used for emphasis and a dotted line indicates the rhythm of group dialogue. Each track has two parts with a two second separation, indicated on the transcript with '* *' and referenced with the collection title and date, track and part number. When encountered, they provide co-ordinates from which to plot our analytical journey through the oral histories and they thereby serve as points of labyrinthine clarity.

Inside

Inside the bounds of Greenham and Crookham Commons, space was mapped through the stories of other's and through practices and place, each providing co-ordinates with which to navigate its limits. The oral histories drew from a narrative repository that is intimately tied to land use across generations and in considering them more closely, I aim to establish how time is mapped in the space and how its bounds are not fixed but movable limits.

►CD Track 13

Mary: Granddad, he was the pig-sticker. He was known as 'Old Joe Dowling the Pig-Sticker'. And urh, Grandma would hold the pig on his bottom between her legs and hold him by his front paws...and Granddad would stick him. And I know what a pig sticker looks like cause it was still in the cottage when we moved in. And he'd kill the pig and then Grandma would hold it while it bled.

Joyce: Sounds horrendous!

Mary: Yeh...and uhm, they never wasted anything – that was all used. Cause I mean, that went in to make black pudding and what have you. But when he was all gutted and cleaned out, Grandma would catch hold of him by his hind legs on her shoulders and she'd walk into town. And from the Volunteers to Newbury was how many miles?

Monica: A long way!

Mildred: Three or four.

Monica: Gosh!

Interviewer: With a pig on her shoulders?

Mary: With a pig on her back, yeh...yeh. And I mean, his head would probably have been banging on the floor because she was four foot ten or something.

Monica: She could have got it killed in Newbury.

Mary: Sorry?

Monica: They killed them in Newbury.

Mary: Well they could have run him in, yeh. But then that would have cost, wouldn't it? And Granddad did his own!

* *

Mary: People had stopped having cows then as a milch cow, didn't they?

Monica: Although my father said that when their cows wandered...now I don't know whether it was that cottage...they used to take them down Pyle Hill to Pound Cottages. And that's why it's

called Pound Cottages because the pound at the bottom of Pyle Hill is where they took the cows to if they wandered. And he said that him and his sister used to have to walk all the way down there and pay a shilling to get it back.

Mary: There's a pound down in Thatcham isn't there?

Monica: Well no, these were Pound Cottages at urh...

Mary: Pound Lane too I suppose.

Monica: No, down at the bottom of Pyle Hill.

Interviewer: Paying a shilling to whom Monica?

Monica: Pardon?

Interviewer: Who would they have paid the shilling to?

Monica: Well the people who lived in the cottages, I suppose or...

Mary: I suppose Tull or Baxendale would have...it would eventually found their way into his pocket, I expect.

Monica: Yeh, I expect so.

Mary: Most things did!

Monica: Definitely!

(In Living Memory 2008:13)

In recounting the lives of their parents and grandparents, the oral histories mapped the landscape back to the Victorian era. But as narratives of lives lived on common land, they also recalled an earlier time as it is a part of the English countryside that signifies an ancient practice of space dating back to the reign of King John in the Thirteenth Century; for those properties that stand within or back onto a common's boundary, that has not already been enclosed¹, have varying rights of *pannage, common in the soil, turbarry* and *estovers* tied into their deeds (Fairhall 2006: 131). Greenham and Crookham Commons therefore served as a free local resource for their inhabitants who could graze animals and fowl, take gravel, cut turf and collect firewood respectively and being "a long way" from the

nearest town of Newbury the inhabitants were relatively self-sufficient by necessity. The oral histories recalled 'Fry's Bakery' and 'Miss Bew's' shop where provisions could be bought (In Living Memory 2008: 18.1), but most other food was either grown, foraged or reared. "You didn't buy potatoes" they remembered, as "you grew enough to last the family for the year" and hedgerow bounty such as blackberries, raspberries and sloes were gathered seasonally (In Living Memory 2008: 24.1). Rearing livestock for their meat

¹ The Enclosure Act of 1845 "codified" seizures of common land by landowners who incorporated it into their own private estates; a practice that

had been going on for over a century (Fairhall 2006: 129)

inevitably involved killing the animals and commoners were remembered undertaking this task themselves. Viewed by another as an 'horrendous' scene, Mary's tone is strangely matter-of-fact as she described her grandparent's dispatching of the pig. It is as though she was retelling someone else's story; a family story with a comical twist in its tail. Her admission that she knew what a 'pig sticker' looked like "cause it was still in the cottage when we moved in", all but confirmed that she did not witness the drama first-hand. "The unity of place in the life stories of rural inhabitants" writes Daniela Koleva, "blurs the time-borders between generations and between the episodes of the life of a single individual, imports stability and determines the cyclical character of a person's narrative" (Koleva 2004: 65). When stories are handed down through the generations, they become part of a family's collective memory. Many of the oral histories drew from this narrative inheritance. Some require careful listening

to hear the layers of authorship, but others like Monica recounting her father's memory of Pound Cottages, openly acknowledge their narrative source. The practice of having "a milch cow" may have stopped, but 'stability' in daily lives across the generations is implied in the journey that Mary's Grandma took across the Commons. It is highly probable that it was a Thursday when she made her way to town with the pig on her back, as Thursday was remembered by everyone as 'Pig and Paper Day'. According to historical records the name dates back to 1805 when "local farmers would bring their seasonal crops and animals to town" and "the local newspaper was launched and circulated" (*Pig and Paper Bar* website). The fact that both the name and day were still in currency over a century later reflects a certain continuity in the rhythm of the inhabitants lives.

While recording the oral histories of a Bulgarian community, Koleva also found that living with "the same trees, same river, same hills" from day to day, "makes all temporal borders fluid and rhythmical. The succession of generations in that local, spatially limited world appears temporally unlimited" (Koleva 2004: 66). Certain places like the 'Volunteer' Public House were mentioned repeatedly in the oral histories as familiar landmarks. In his book on the Commons called *Here Is My Heart*, Norman Foster links its origins to the Volunteer Movement in the second half of the Nineteenth Century when "some 20,000 troops were encamped on Greenham Common" to carry out military manoeuvres and had no doubt, been in need of refreshments (Foster 1988: 40-41). Another landmark known as the 'Rifle Butts' and described in

the oral histories as "a massively high gravel mound" (In Living Memory 2008: 22.1) were used by the soldiers for target practice and believed to have been built at the same time. Like Pound Cottages, their names derived from their original purpose and stood as material records of past and present practice of the space, and as Monica remembers that when put into practice, Commoners' rights could prove to be a costly business.

As 'Lords of the Manor', "Tull and Baxandale" loomed large as authoritative figures, each appearing in turn; the profiteer and then, the philanthropist. Those who attended Greenham School, remembered a "great big" map of Greenham Common displayed on their classroom wall and viewed it as a symbol of Mr Baxandale's proprietorial gaze over the land that they played on "at dinnertimes" (In Living Memory 2008: 15.2). "Maps in school atlases" writes Yi-Fu Tuan, "show nation-states as sharply bounded units. Small-scale maps encourage people to think of their countries as self-sufficient, discrete entities...cartography can clearly be made to serve a political end" (Tuan 2007: 178). Although by no means small-scale, the map of the Common would have nevertheless presented 'discrete' boundaries to the children's world outside the School walls. More particularly, it would have drawn their attention to the fact that this space was divided in two by a parish boundary distinguishing Greenham Common over which Mr Baxandale presided from Crookham Common which fell under "Old Man Tull's" jurisdiction. This may have been indelibly marked on the wall, but on enquiring where this boundary lay in the landscape itself, no one could locate it on their cognitive map.

It was not remembered as having affected or 'limited' their practice of space which is apposite of Michel de Certeau's contention that: "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (de Certeau 1988: 129). In his musings on *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau suggests that in narrating the practice of space, people's stories "have the function of *spatial legislation* since they determine rights and divide up lands by "acts" or discourses about actions" and can contribute to "the formation of myths" that build up around a particular place (de Certeau 1988: 122).

There is an ancient British custom of "beating the bounds" which once a year "required the parish priest to walk around the parish and strike certain markers with a stick" (Tuan 2007: 166). In this way, the extent of his pastoral authority was symbolically defined. Although a recently revived practice on the Commons (Cooper 2001: 14), it was not remembered in the oral histories which 'determine rights and divide up lands' in their own account of life on Greenham and Crookham Commons. An account that drew from its own familiar customs to map the space.

►CD Track 1

Monica: It was about an inch dirt in, deep in, rabbit droppings. The whole Common.

Mary: And they mowed it didn't they? There was no...the grass was never very high, because the rabbits keep it cut for us and it was gorgeous. It was like a lawn.

Monica: And Mr Baxendale used to give us a treat; he used to throw biscuits in the air and we had to scabble for them. And we scabbled for them all amongst those old rabbit dirt...oh, it was horrible!

* *

Mary: We used to have them for stew.

Monica: We had them everyday I think; we had rabbit stew or roast or boiled.

Mary: My Dad could walk out and he would stop and sniff a little bit and he'd...just clear off. And he'd come back and...you can pick up hares. Not now because they've gone. But if you

walk right, a hare doesn't go underground. It hides in the grass tussocks. And if you come up on the tussock the right side, so Dad said, you could pick 'em up. Because they'd hide from the bitter cold wind and they wouldn't hear you. And you could just pick 'em up. And he did. Came home once with five. Course we didn't have fridges or anything.

Monica: Then you could get thre'pence for the skin.

Mildred: I remember Mum cooking jugged hare.

(In Living Memory 2008:1)

Unlike the map on their classroom wall, the Commons were physically too large a space to 'see' all at once, but Monica remembered the "whole common" being covered in rabbit droppings because she moved about its space, walking to Greenham School everyday and scrabbling for treats from Mr Baxandale, the School's benefactor. She recounted an experience of being in the landscape and sets its bounds accordingly. Not everyone in the reminiscence group attended Greenham School and yet it provided a definitive point from which they began to map out the rest of the Commons. It was a navigational marker fixed in their childhood recollection of the space.

"If we think of space as that which allows movement" writes Tuan, "then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 2007: 6). As an internalised system of moving within a space, cognitive map co-ordinates are imbued with biographical significance. For instance, 'home' is a place that is left and returned to; Mary's dad "walked out" and then "came home" with five hares. Tuan observes that "human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom. In open space one can become intensely aware of place; and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting

presence" (Tuan 2007: 54). 'Shelter and venture' can have particular resonance in childhood memories of space, as the School House is viewed as 'shelter' and beyond is viewed as 'venture'. The Commons were described in the oral histories as "our playground" where "we used to roam all over the place" and "build dens" (In Living Memory 2008: 12.2). Even the coldest winters did not deter the adventurous; who skated on Taffy's Pond and subsequently received "hidings for getting wet through" (In Living Memory 2008: 14.1). But when they "used to come in all dirty" from beating out the "dreadful fires" that left "acres of burnt black broom and gorse" on the Commons, they "didn't get told off", even though they had missed school as a consequence, but "got praised for putting the fire out" (In Living Memory 2008: 16). "From childhood onwards" Bender explains, "people negotiate space and place, learning through being told, through emulation and almost subconscious habit, what is permissible and what is not" (Bender 2007: 136). It is through this 'negotiation' that boundaries are metaphorically written into the landscape and remembered. De Certeau reads them as "transportable limits"(de Certeau 1988: 129) able to be moved through the very act of their narration.

In teaching how to "pick up hares" and then putting them in the pot, at the same time "Dad" and "Mum" were pushing the boundaries of permitted land use. The bagging of game was not a commoner's right as "they belonged to Tull and Baxandale". But in spite of there being a resident Keeper, poaching is remembered as an everyday activity on the commons (In Living Memory 2008: 2).

The adeptness with which Mary's Dad engaged in this activity is surely evidence of its proclivity. Her description is highly evocative as when he sets out to stalk a hare, he takes on the behaviour of the animal itself. His practice of space is hare-like and as he mimicked the movements of his prey he became one with it.

Intimate encounters with the landscape reoccur throughout the oral histories, creating a literal sense of place. They also infer a sense of belonging in that the Commons are remembered as though owned by the commoners themselves. "The rabbits keep it cut for us and it was gorgeous. It was like a lawn", exclaims Mary, as though it was the lawn of her own garden.

"Territory is established by the limits of the processes which create it" (Whiston Spirn 1998: 119) writes Anne Whiston Spirn in her book on *The Language of Landscape*. Paths across the Commons which "people that had lived there over the centuries had made" (In Living Memory 2008: 6.1) traced movement into its surface; marking space between places; between shelter and venture. Typically experienced on foot or by bicycle and sometimes like Monica, on hands and knees "an inch deep in rabbit droppings", such modes of travel served to define the physical limits of the landscape in the lives of its inhabitants and in 'the process', the extent of *their* territory. Whiston Spirn sees both paths and boundaries as 'performance spaces' in that they are actively maintained through movement in the landscape. "Once a process ceases", she observes, "space becomes a shell of past practices" (Whiston Spirn 1998: 119). It is only the memory of

these practices on the cognitive map that remain: "you can pick up hares," Mary says, but "not now because they've gone".

The parish boundary was unremarkable in the oral histories, and yet social boundaries between *us* and *them* were not and present another form of spatial legislation. "Social distance" Tuan suggests, "may be the inverse of geographical distance" (Tuan 2007: 50) in that the inhabitants of the Commons lived side by side and yet, could remain *socially* poles apart. Snobbery between the residents of Greenham and Crookham, in which each thought the other to be beneath them is recounted and "the big houses" (In Living Memory 2008: 14.2) where the Lords of the Manor presided, stand as remote worlds within the landscape.

There were two golf courses remembered in the oral histories that also served to highlight social distance in the practice of the Commons' space as players favoured one above the other depending on their standing in the Community. The original one, used "for nothing" (In Living Memory 2008: 25.1) by the Commoners, dated back to 1873, making it one of the first inland golf courses in the United Kingdom (Bowness 1996: 3; Cooper 2001: 14). The first hole lay opposite the Volunteers, but the rest of the course was unmarked. "If you got hit with a ball", one oral history recalled "you were just unlucky!" (In Living Memory 2008: 25.2). The other course lay just to the north of the Commons and was played on by the Lords of the Manor.

The Commons then, were by no means new to the concept of 'the other' when the outbreak of the Second World War brought an influx of foreigners into their midst. However, sharing the space threw

up new challenges in the Commoner's negotiation of its limits,
which in turn, created new narratives of spatial legislation.

Outside

Outside events brought others within the bounds of Greenham and Crookham Commons and the space was then mapped through encounters with outsiders. The oral histories recalled new limits being placed in the landscape and in examining them more closely, I aim to show how in remembering different encounters with 'outsiders', the difference in their mapping of the space is also marked.

►CD Track 5.1

Dot: I remember coming along Bury's Bank once - you're talking about that. Right up until then, it had been British troops with their grey coat on. It was in the winter, but grey coat on and a beret and just stood at the gates. You know? And there was a gate along Bury's Bank road. Must have been almost along by the Volunteers, somewhere there. But there used to be - there was a gate at that particular time. Came along on my bike, minding my own business...

Mary: That's the new Bury's Bank Road, once they'd tarmac'd it? The one that's there now?

Dot: Yeh...where was it? It used to be...it's...I don't know whether it is still there. The gap is there - where it used to be. And I was pedalling along, minding my own business. And all of a sudden and I couldn't believe my eyes; there was an American soldier stood there with a gun at the ready.

Mary: Yeh, and loaded!

Dot: He'd got the most biggest, fur'est parka that you've ever seen in your life. He'd got great big gloves on. Enormous boots. And the day before when I'd gone past, there was just an ordinary soldier stood there in a grey coat. But he was dressed as if he was in the middle of the Artic, sort of thing...

Mary: You got a Yeti!

Dot: Yeh, I couldn't believe it! You know? I don't think the British army had a gun. If he did, I don't remember. But I mean, this one had a great big one and he was marching up and down and he wasn't going to let anybody in that gate!

Alf: Why they had to close them, I don't know.

Mary: I can't remember that gate.

(In Living Memory 2008: 5.1)

The oral histories recall a road that ran "absolutely straight across the Common" (In Living Memory 2008: 8.1) Believed to be a remnant of Roman occupation, it proved to be the reason for another, when the British Armed Forces requisitioned Greenham

and Crookham Commons to use as an airfield during the Second World War, eventually rerouting the ancient highway along Bury's Bank to the north. In his study on Greenham Common, David Fairhall notes that in running "roughly east-west", the road presented a perfect alignment for a runway "because of the prevailing westerly winds" (Fairhall 2006: 13). Despite the airfield and military manoeuvres including preparations for "D-Day" (In Living Memory 2008: 18.2) taking place, these were not fenced off and locals were permitted to move about the landscape, albeit with the odd checkpoint, consisting of a pill-box and an armed guard to negotiate. Both British and American troops became a common sight, but it is the Americans who were remembered most vividly in the accounts of this time, no doubt because their 'foreignness' was the most conspicuous in the landscape.

In her discussion of 'territory', Whiston Spirn identifies movement within a space as key to defining its bounds and that sometimes this movement is corralled through 'gateways' which function as "places of passage and exchange" (Whiston Spirn 1998: 119). De Certeau locates such places at the bounds, where encounters with another world are made possible and a sense of *insider* and *outsider* prevails (de Certeau 1988: 126-129). These frontiers of social, cultural and political exchange are as 'transportable' as the bounds themselves in that they are located in the landscape through narratives of practiced space. Like the gate on Bury's Bank Road, they may be a concrete entity in the landscape, but they could also be, as we will hear shortly, a more arbitrary frontier such as a town market place. The frontier's

affect on movement was not defined by any physical reality, but by whether it was remembered as having functioned as a place of passage or exclusion when encountered.

"A distinction that all people recognize is between "us" and "them"" explains Tuan, "we are *here*; we are *this* happy breed of men. They are *there*; they are not fully human and they live in *that* place. Members within the we-group are close to each other, and they are distant from members of the outside (they) group" (Tuan 2007: 50). Viewed from a national perspective, the "British troops" were not foreigners, but they were considered as outsiders to the area and as such, were not referred to as *our* troops. Dot did not pay them or their activities on the Commons much attention, "right up until" that is, she came face to face with an American. He presented such a startling contrast to her previous encounters in the landscape, that he was marked on her cognitive map. This foreign soldier guarded both a literal and cultural gateway at the frontier of Dot's experience as a local and her utter disbelief is insistent in her narration. The American sentry appears as Tuan's 'not fully human' other; a wild creature from a distant land. But as de Certeau maintains, meetings at the frontier are a two-way encounter in that both the native and the foreigner may appear as equally strange to one another. "This is the paradox of the frontier," he writes, in which neither subject "possesses the frontier that distinguishes them" (de Certeau 1988: 127). The American invades Dot's world, but in marching up and down with a loaded gun, he warily defends the gateway to his own. De Certeau reads the frontier as "a middle place, composed of

interactions and inter-views", a "sort of void" through which other worlds are glimpsed (de Certeau 1988: 127); a borderland between *here* and *there*. "The gap is there", confirms Dot in marking the place where another "used to be".

►CD Track 19.1

Monica: I don't know who went first up on Greenham Common - whether it was Americans or English. Do you remember who went there first?

Mildred: The Americans I think, wasn't it?

Mary: It was the Americans that came.

Monica: I tell you what, I had some good times up there, I can tell you that. Cor! They used to come down to town and pick you up in the truck and take you up there for the evening. Oh, it was lovely, lovely!

Mary: I wasn't really old enough because I was still at school, you see.

Monica: I was old enough. But everything shut up there at ten. They'd pick you up in the market place at seven in the trucks, took you up there, brought you back to the market place. D'you know what? I used to leave my bicycle in the market place and when I got off the truck my bike was still there to get on and bike home again!

(In Living Memory 2008: 19.1)

The convivial frontier 'of passage and exchange' that Monica encountered presents a stark contrast to Dot's frontier. Remembering the commons during wartime served to highlight the different ages of the oral history participants. Being still of school age, Mary "wasn't really old enough" to fraternise with the Americans, but Monica who "was old enough" recounted dancing and socialising with them at their base on the Commons. The fact that she had to cycle several miles from her home on the Commons down into Newbury, just to be taken back up there and then repeat this roundabout route at the end of the night attests to her determination to meet foreigners, even if it meant going 'out' of her way to do so. The potential for the frontier to essentially 'bridge the gap' of its own creation does not escape de Certeau's

attention and neither does this irony. "The bridge is ambiguous everywhere", he declares, because "it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them. It liberates from enclosure and destroys autonomy" (de Certeau 1988: 128). In uniting *here* with *there*, the bridge at the frontier challenges a sense of their separateness and particularities of place.

Monica's encounter with outsiders was an harmonious affair, but wartime liaisons were transitory by nature and she remembered the Americans leaving as "suddenly one night" (In Living Memory 19.2) as Dot remembered their arrival. The creation of the airfield brought a significant number of 'foreigners' to the Commons with whom some bridged the cultural divide, and others marked it out in the remembered landscape. Consequently, a gateway that featured significantly in one person's memory, was forgotten in another's.

There is an overall sense in the oral histories that the Commons absorbed the influx of newcomers with equanimity, sharing the space with them. New frontiers were written into the landscape and with them came the potential for exchange, but also the potential for exclusion. Gateways that had once been open could also be closed, leaving locals outside asking themselves "why"?

►CD Track 20.1

Mary: To start with, they...just outside Heads Hill, they put up a huge great hopper to make the concrete. And they poured concrete into this place, into this hopper, day and night. And the lorries were coming and going all the time, but we were off, we were in Heads Hill. And all we got was the smoke from this hopper, the dust and it was putrid. You'd hang some washing out and it was all covered in this grey matter. And then one morning, cause our buses were still going up and down the runway, in actual fact, because it wasn't used. But,

we woke up one morning and they're putting up this fence and you then couldn't get from this side of the Common to the other Common side. And that went up within about thirty-six hours with no - nothing to say to the people who were living there what was going to happen. So we then had to turn round and instead of going out from Heads Hill across the Common, we went out from Heads Hill down the bottom and that's when we picked up the buses at Knightsbridge.

(In Living Memory 2008: 20.1)

With the war over and the military gone, Mary remembers the landscape "was pretty well empty for about a year" (In Living Memory 2008: 8.2). An odd way to talk about an inhabited space perhaps, but a place inevitably feels more spacious after 'guests' have left. The whole space was free to be used and modes of transport were changing so that routes previously walked or cycled, were now accomplished by motorised means. "A tool or machine enlarges a person's world when he feels it to be a direct extension of his corporeal powers" Tuan writes. Where using "a bicycle enlarges the human sense of space" he believes that a bus might do the contrary, as the experience of movement itself is more passive. "The speed that gives freedom to man causes him to lose a sense of spaciousness" (Tuan 2007: 53-54). With each accelerated movement therefore, the Commons appeared to shrink its bounds and when the military returned to build a larger runway and a perimeter fence around the airfield this became a physical reality.

"If people have the power to build" writes Tuan, "they also have the power to destroy, and on the whole, it is easier to destroy than to build" (Tuan 1991: 693). The construction of the new airbase meant destruction of the Commons landscape and with it, the inhabitants' daily lives; washing was ruined as was the habit of hanging it outside to dry and places that had been

frequented for generations such as the 'Volunteer' public house (In Living Memory 2008: 17.2) were pulled down. There was strong local protest against the re-instatement of the airfield (Fairhall 2006:16) at the time, which is not dwelt on in any detail in the oral histories, except to say: "there was quite a hoo ha" (In Living Memory 2008: 8.1). Time has perhaps played its part in allowing memories to acquire a broader view of a protest that, in hind-sight, proved inconsequential in contesting rights to the space; a broader view that framed the 'local' within a wider spatial context. "We almost got it back" the oral histories remembered, "but then the Cold War came, didn't it? And the Berlin... barricades and they decided then to put in a big one" (In Living Memory 2008: 8.2). The extension of the runway, making it the longest one in Europe, was directly related in memories to the spatial politics being worked out in Germany between the Allied Forces and those of the Soviet Union as they vied for power over territory. "A relational politics of place" writes Massey, "involves both the inevitable negotiations presented by throwntogetherness and a politics of the terms of openness and closure. But a global sense of places evokes another geography of politics too: that which looks outwards to address the wider spatialities of the relations of their construction" (Massey 2008: 181). The oral histories remembered the Commons through 'a global sense of place' in which Stalin's blockade of the Allied maintained zones in Berlin in June 1948 and the "'iron curtain' descending from the Baltic to the Adriatic" (Reynolds 1996: 284), the phrase that Winston Churchill coined, were relational to

events taking place at home. The Cold War, they recalled, was the reason why "they took the Common from us" (In Living Memory 2008: 8.2), as the runway proved too strategic a military resource to relinquish.

The Americans returned, but this time "took over, lock, stock and barrel" and the frontiers ceased to be places of exchange with negotiable limits but entrenched places of potential conflict where the gun-toting foreigners took pot-shots at the locals. "Poor Mr Hazel" one oral history recalled "got shot at three times, because his house was down in the dip and every time he popped his head out he got shot at" (In Living Memory 2008: 20.2). The only way to cross the Commons now, was to make a detour down to Knightsbridge; an appropriately named place for passage across the new frontier. The difference between this roundabout journey and the one taken earlier by Monica, is that it was not made freely, but by the imposition of the fence and the authority behind it.

The runway and the perimeter fence not only re-inscribed the space and its bounds, but also its name. The airbase became known as 'Greenham Common', even though it stretched across the parish boundary to incorporate a sizable area of Crookham Common under its jurisdiction. "Naming is power" declares Tuan, who describes in his article *Language and the Making of Place* how past explorers often "introduced names that embraced larger entities than were clearly recognized by the local inhabitants" (Tuan 1991: 688). In renaming the Commons, its new residents emphatically stated their

claim to its space and reshaped the territory according to their own needs and desires.

The fence is as conspicuous on the maps of the oral histories as it would have been in the landscape itself. It acts as a temporal marker for when life on the Commons presented farcical situations as negotiation of its space became ever more convoluted and relational to wider spatial politics outside of its bounds.

Some remember Air Shows "in the fifties" (In Living Memory 2008: 21.1), which took place in a restricted area inside the airbase's perimeter, but otherwise, the landscape remained impenetrable to those who had previously practiced its space. Others in the oral histories however, had yet to plot the landscape on their cognitive maps and it is to their accounts that we now turn to hear.

Inside-out

The perimeter fence enclosed the space, leaving those who had lived inside, out of bounds and the space was now mapped through encounters outside of its limits. The oral histories remembered the place through master narratives and landscapes of nostalgia and in looking at them more closely, I aim to show how time is intimately tied to memory of place.

►CD Track 26

Frances: Well I came to Newbury when I was forty-five as a domiciliary midwife with a [group] of doctors that are now Eastfields. And it was a little while before I was introduced to the Greenham Women in my capacity - professional capacity and I was really rather horrified with their general behaviour. Well, of course they were older women mainly, there weren't many young ones. Of course they had to be delivered at the hospital, probably Royal Berks. And, they were very fortunate really – they were given a standpipe and an address for postage. I don't remember an awful lot about them, because I didn't see much of them, but my general opinion wasn't very good. I think they had a point, but there are different ways of putting these points across I feel, you know? I don't think the thing to do is to damage other people's property.

* *

Joan: I knew nothing at all about Greenham Common. I was a Londoner and vaguely heard about it. And we - the first house we moved into - my husband worked at Aldermaston A.W.R.E. And he took me, he sort of showed me the area. At that point there was Bury's Bank Road and I know it was closed for some - quite some time, so we weren't allowed to go there and see where the actual Greenham Common was. But like Frances, I so remember the Peace Camp women coming. I can remember them walking along North Brook Street. It was an Easter I think Frances, when they came. You know, singing and chanting. I remember my husband saying to me "there's going to be trouble here!" You know, at thirty-five, I thought 'yes, good. There's something going on'.

(In Living Memory 2008: 26)

Frances and Joan were the only two participants in the project who had not grown up local to the Common and they both came to Newbury after the airbase was already established. However, the fact that they did not encounter the landscape first-hand does not signify in their oral histories as they mapped the space through their encounters with "the Greenham Women" instead. 'Greenham Women' is the collective term for those who came to live and protest against nuclear armaments outside the base. The women

themselves approved of the name, "saying there is no such thing as a 'Greenham woman'. By which" David Fairhall believes they meant "there is no single stereotype that represents the thousands of women who came through the camp, or supported it as best they could from a distance" (Fairhall 2006: 9). It is through presenting this unified front that the Greenham Women became synonymous with Greenham Common as a global landmark for anti-nuclear protest and the protest's public face. They became its 'imago', encapsulating the place in all its complexity in a snapshot image; a photograph where the details are lost beyond its frame. In his study on *The History of Forgetting*, Norman Klein gives the example of the two photographs that we have come to "see in our mind's eye" as the Vietnam war: "a general shooting a man in the head and a naked girl running toward the camera after having been napalmed" (Klein 2008: 4). They are the war's public memory; "the sculpture that stands in the foreground next to negative space...they are the rumour that seems haunted with memory" (Klein 2008: 4). With the landscape obscured from view it was the Greenham Women who came into focus for Frances and Joan as the imago of the space.

It is interesting to note that Joan recalled "the Peace Camp women" arriving in Newbury when she was "thirty-five". As a woman of eighty-eight years at the time her oral history was recorded, she was perhaps actually remembering the first Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (C.N.D.) march from London to Aldermaston's Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (A.W.R.E.) that took place in the Easter of 1958 (CND website). This would also explain, as

an employee there, her husband's worried remark on encountering the marchers. The CND protests at Greenham Common did not become a woman-only initiative or a camp outside the airbase gates until 1981. Time has literally collapsed into the space, compressed into an imago that can be "so satisfying" believes Klein, "that it keeps us from looking beyond it" (Klein 2008:4).

His reading of imagos as 'rumour' ties in with de Certeau's contention that rumours "are always injunctions, initiators and results of a levelling of space, creators of common movements that reinforce an order by adding an activity of making people believe things to that of making people do things. Stories diversify, rumours totalize" (de Certeau 1988: 107). Compared to the diverse narratives of space in the other oral histories, the landscape here has been 'levelled' to the one distinguishing feature of the Greenham Women, providing the co-ordinate on their cognitive map of a standpipe and postage address. The imago in Frances's memory also takes on some local colour in its criticism of the women's behaviour, as Fairhall records, residents of Newbury "generally regarded the protest as a public nuisance" (Fairhall 2006: 114).

One only has to scour the discourse written about the Commons to recognise that the Greenham Women still represent their public face. The oral histories drew my attention to the only two books that do not focus on the protesters, although published after their appearance on the scene; Norman Foster's book, already mentioned and Brian Bowness's *The Golf Courses of Newbury and Crookham 1873-1995*. They are both private press publications as presumably not considered of great interest to a large readership.

I only mention them, because the two accounts of the Greenham Women in the oral histories are the only accounts of them. Others did not engage with this master narrative discourse of Greenham and Crookham Commons and the Greenham Women did not feature on their cognitive map in any way, shape or form.

"While "meta" or "master narrative" may help to remind us that narratives can be powerful determinants of experience" writes Kerwin Lee Klein, "in a post-Foucauldian academy, we should be leery of the simple dualistic vision of power that the phrase implies...we should not succumb to the temptation to dichotomize narrative forms into "bad" master texts and "good" local texts, and then try to ground that distinction in an ahistorical narrative logic" (Lee Klein 1995: 297). I am not tempted to dismiss the Greenham Women accounts simply because they hold to a master image of the Commons. They are what was remembered about the place and as Lee Klein observes "we are living a golden age of global narratives in which universal history is not simply possible, but unavoidable" (Lee Klein 1995: 298). However, in noticing the absence of other narratives, I am tempted to read the silence as a protest for 'local texts' to be heard. The oral histories that remember the space before the perimeter fence went up chose to remember the landscape as they encountered it then. How they chose to remember it after the perimeter fence came down is another story, and one that brings my examination of the oral histories to a close.

►CD Track 23

Monica: I lost interest in it once it was taken over, you know. I didn't think of it as a Common any more, at that time. When I go through it now, I get quite nostalgic and think 'oh dear'.

Alf: I mean these people gives the Common back to the people.

Monica: Not really!

Alf: Well they haven't! Look at the buildings down...the outfit, well I say outfit...look at the buildings on the bottom end of the Common - Basingstoke Road - which is on the Common.

Monica: There's factories as well I hear

Alf: They haven't given it back to the Commoners have they?

Mildred: No.

Alf: Or the people?...No.

Monica: No.

* *

Monica: Do you know Snelsmore Common? It was nicer than Snelsmore Common, I do know that. Which is still in its original state, really i'n it - Snelsmore Common?

Mary: Yeh, it was nicer than Snelsmore Common.

Monica: It was even nicer than that.

Mary: Yes. It would perhaps interest you just to go up onto Snelsmore and take a walk round it and just imagine that Greenham and Crookham had these lovely grassy, open spaces.

Monica: That's right.

Mary: And they were filled in with the gorse, weren't they? I mean, although they were big open spaces with this nice short grass, they were private in their own way.

Monica: That's right.

Mary: Weren't they? Yeh, and they were all that's what the Common was.

Monica: Lots of broom too, don't forget.

Mary: Yeh

Monica: Which you could get up close to, couldn't you? That pop, pop, pop in the summer.

Mildred: That is lovely in the summer, yeh.

(In Living Memory 2008: 23)

The end of the cold war with Russia brought the eventual closure of the American airbase on Greenham Common and after much legal wrangling, the perimeter fence came down in 1997. The land was officially decommissioned for military use and its open areas sold to the local council for one pound who set about restoring it to common land. But as Fairhall explains, "in reality the commons were so damaged by half a century of military occupation, overlain by miles of concrete, polluted by thousands of gallons of spilt aviation fuel, the recovery process was always going to be long, complex and expensive. And the remarkable concept eventually devised to manage their restoration reflected that" (Fairhall 2006: 168). This "remarkable concept" was to convert the area where the airbase buildings stood into a Business Park and use its rental profits to help finance the restoration of the rest of the space, but one that the oral histories considered as detrimental to its common land status. Deemed by the courts as having been unlawfully extinguished, disputes over commoner's rights were finally resolved by an Act of Parliament in 2001. This extended surviving rights of common "across the combined area known from then on in the singular as 'Greenham and Crookham Common'" (Fairhall 2006: 175) thus like the space itself, its name was not entirely restored to its previous form.

The Common was once again open, but the oral histories remained curiously closed, continuing to map the space as though it were still inaccessible. "At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place" writes Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*, "but actually", she explains "it is a yearning for a

different time - the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (Boym 2001: xv). A time the oral histories recalled, when the Commons were a playground, their bounds measured by human movement along paths inscribed by previous generations and of greater stability in the rhythm of daily lives. A time also that for those nearing the end of their life, was less finite and still held the possibility of 'dreams'. Like Boym, Tuan understands nostalgia to be a product of feeling "that the world is changing too rapidly", but "when a person feels that he himself is directing the change and in control of affairs of importance to him, then nostalgia has no place in his life" (Tuan 2007: 188). The loss of a sense of control over the space that was felt at the time "it was taken over" was not alleviated by it being given back and the oral histories expressed disenfranchisement with the space in the present. Alf and Monica both talked about the cattle that were now allowed to wander on the Common, but neither remember this happening in the past (In Living Memory 2008: 9.1). The landscape no longer resembled their cognitive map. It is an experience that echoes Monica's recollection of when her "Grandma got lost on the Common in the fog" (In Living Memory 2008: 4.2) because the landscape had become unintelligible for her to navigate. "Orientation" writes Downs and Stea, "refers to the tie between our knowledge of the spatial environment and the environment itself, between cognitive map and real world. We are lost when we are unable to make the necessary link between what we see around us and our cognitive map" (Downs & Stea 1977: 53). In

feeling lost in the present landscape, Monica and Alf found themselves in the past, remembering the space as it was.

In yearning for 'the time of our childhood', nostalgia takes us back to when space was at its most influential in our lives. "We are imprinted with the landscape of our early childhood" (Whiston Spirn 1998: 5) declares Whiston Spirn, who believes that it shapes our formative years and our sense of who we are. De Certeau finds the root of both spatial language and practice in childhood, when we learn to negotiate environment in relation to ourselves. "To practice space" he writes, "is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood: it is, in a place, to *be other and to move toward the other*" (de Certeau 1988: 110). In this way, those that grew up on the Commons have embodied its landscape, allowing its very spaciousness to form their sense of movement and physical limitations. According to de Certeau, the Commons would then have informed all future encounters of space as "the childhood experience that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, floods private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces" to create its own 'tours' of the landscape (de Certeau 1988: 110). It was the 'childhood experience' of spaciousness recounted in the oral histories that was sought in the landscapes of the present. I believe that it is this spatial encounter, rather than the place itself that lies at the heart of the oral histories' nostalgia and is implied in their refusal to engage with Greenham and Crookham Common in the present, but to accept Snelsmore Common in its place.

In researching his book *Common Ground*, Fairhall entered into correspondence with Richard Adams, the author of *Watership Down*, who had also known Greenham and Crookham Commons as a boy. Adams was equally dismissive about the restoration of the landscape, writing: "that 'so-called restoration' of Greenham Common is no restoration at all: 'The whole periphery of what used to be the common is now surrounded with housing and other development. The whole sense of a great, lonely expanse is gone forever" (Fairhall 2006: 173). But to "take a walk round" Snelsmore Common, the oral histories were able to "imagine" when Greenham and Crookham Commons were "big open spaces" that "were private in their own way" and where intimate encounters with the landscape could provide seasonal delights. "The object of longing" writes Boym, "is not really a place called home, but this sense of intimacy with the world; it is not the past in general, but that imaginary moment when we had time and didn't know the temptation of nostalgia" (Boym 2001: 251). For those who recalled the Common before it was fenced off, their memories were not overpowered by a global sense of space in which cold war politics and anti-nuclear protesters dominate the scene, but long instead for an 'intimacy with the world' of its local space. "Nostalgia and progress are like Jekyll and Hyde" explains Boym, as it "is not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into "local" and "universal" possible" (Boym 2001: xvi). She believes "the nostalgic creature has internalised this division, but instead of

aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearns for the particular" (Boym 2001: 11).

In turning to Snelsmore Common which lies a few miles to the north of Newbury, the oral histories map Greenham and Crookham Common from outside its bounds, through encounters with another space and ironically, replace the original with another. "Nostalgia, like irony" Boym asserts, "is not a property of the object itself but a result of an interaction between subjects and objects, between actual landscapes and the landscapes of the mind" (Boym 2001: 354). Snelsmore more closely resembled how the oral histories remembered Greenham and Crookham Common on their cognitive maps. It therefore offered them a tangible route back inside the 'landscapes of the mind', where the unforeseen could be encountered and plotted to give labyrinthine clarity to their memories.

Conclusion

"An object or place" writes Tuan, "achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind. Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience" (Tuan 2007: 18). The distance of both time and space enabled the oral histories to gain critical distance in their memories of Greenham and Crookham Common and served to sharpen their sense of its particularities in their mapping of its space. Let us reflect for a moment upon these particularities and how they have been mapped.

"It is true", acknowledges de Certeau, "that the operations of walking can be traced on... maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But", he maintains, "surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by...the trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten" (de Certeau 1988: 97). As a vast landscape, 'being in' and moving across the Common was key to how it was remembered and how its limits were inscribed independently of a conventional map. These were marked according to each individual's practice of space and for those who grew up on the Common, it was one that formed their intimate sense of spaciousness. The bounds on the cognitive maps were movable

limits, subject to change when movement within the space speeded up and new features were encountered. "The negotiations of place" writes Massey, "do not create bounded territories but constellations of connections with strands reaching out beyond" (Massey 2008: 187-188). It was encounters with others that marked places of negotiation along routes that continued or stopped in their tracks. Places where co-existence was measured by the freedom to move. The space had been shared with the military in the past, but the perimeter fence brought this practice to an abrupt halt and in closing off the Common to its inhabitants, the landscape became a place bounded by their memories. Master narratives brought the Greenham Women to mind and created a global sense of space and un-mastered narratives longed for the local landscapes of childhood, identifying more closely on their cognitive maps with another space, rather than the restoration of Greenham and Crookham Common itself.

However, there was one oral history that was able to relate to the physical space after the fence came down and which plotted its cognitive map differently as a result. Mary recalls her father having left her, her mother and younger brother on the Commons at the outbreak of the Second World War and never coming back. He died while serving in the British navy and was buried in Yokohama, Japan. Mary visited his grave in 2003 and with her she took some earth from beneath an apple tree that he had climbed as a boy. This apple tree still stood in the garden of the house where he had been brought up on the Commons and which had become once again accessible to her when the airfield was decommissioned

(Fairhall 2006: 171). She had wanted to take her father "something from England" and in scattering the soil over his remains, performed a symbolic act in which the bounds of Greenham and Crookham Commons were extended halfway across the world to bring one of its commoners back inside its limits of memory. Mary's account mapped the Common beyond its bounds, and thereby performed its own act of spatial legislation in its narrative representation of the landscape. "The story", explains de Certeau, "does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It *makes it*" (de Certeau 1988: 81). Cognitive maps are active representations of space that are continually renegotiated through narrative encounters. They are not 'surveys of routes', but the routes themselves, ensuring that 'a way of being in the world' is remembered.

The restoration of Greenham and Crookham Common has seen commoner's rights being exercised in the space once more. There are about seventy-five commoners on the register² whose rights are overseen by a Ranger, employed by West Berkshire Council to manage the space and its wildlife habitats. In addition to the Commoner's livestock, the Council have also introduced Exmoor ponies that are well adapted to survive on the nutrient poor grazing that the heath land has to offer and although not a commoner's right, birch harvesting for making brooms is permitted at the eastern boundary. The Ranger is also in charge of public access, maintaining

² The figure for the Commoner's register was provided by the Ranger, Andy Phillips, in an interview carried out with him in December 2007

routes for visitors to walk around the space and the Council have published an illustrated map indicating where these are and providing information on the landscape's ecology and history. The map highlights what remains of the American airbase, where the runway used to be and where the Control Tower and massive grass covered silos that once housed the nuclear warheads, still feature as visible landmarks in the space. As "archaeological remains of the Cold War", the silos have been scheduled by English Heritage as a national monument (Fairhall 2006: 182) and there are plans to convert the Control Tower into a Visitor Centre. A 'Commemorative and Historic Site' has also been established in memory of the Greenham Women who erected a memorial of stone and steel just south of the industrial park on the Common in 2002 (Fairhall 2006: 155).

"There is never a landscape, always many landscapes" writes Bender, who believes they "are not passive, not 'out there', because people create their sense of identity - whether self, or group, or nation state through engaging and re-engaging, appropriating and contesting the sedimented pasts that make up the landscape" (Bender 1998: 25). Different memories mark out the Common's space, constructing different landscapes in the process, each of which forms a layer in its "sedimented pasts". In setting down its memories of the Common, the collection of oral history constructs its own particular place that according to Boym, need not be considered as stuck in a nostalgic reverie. "Nostalgia" she declares, "is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past

determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future. Consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales" (Boym 2001: xvi). As part of Greenham and Crookham Common's heritage, the oral histories contribute a particular perspective to its future as restored common land. A future where venture into the landscape would mean the possibility of intimate encounters with its local space and chance meetings with others, keeping the territory open to negotiation. Such realities would listen to the oral histories and hear their rhythm beating the bounds of Greenham and Crookham Common, preparing the way for the next chapter in the practice of its space.

Appendix

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