

April 1983

**Welcome to the Greenham Common Blockade, A
Non-Violent Direct Action, Easter 1983**

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Summary:

This pamphlet provides participants with information on taking part in a blockade of RAF Greenham Common, where Cruise missiles would be deployed from the end of 1983. Readers are encouraged to engage in direct action, and extensive legal advice is given to clarify what forms of action are legal.

Credits:

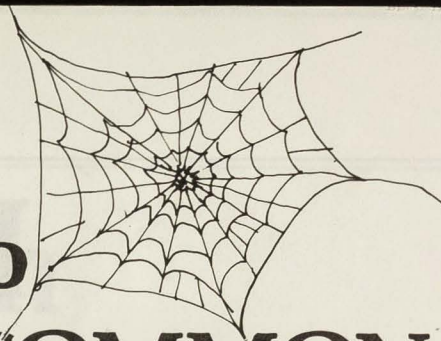
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Welcome to THE GREENHAM COMMON BLOCKADE

A non violent direct action EASTER 1983

The invitation to join this blockade stressed the commitment to non violent direct action. this means using creative ideas and methods for closing this factory where nuclear warheads are build without threatening or abusing the workforce or the police. We believe that for the peace movement any act of violence (or acts provoking violent reactions) can only be self-destructive. Please help us by remembering why we are here, and by preserving our dignity and responsibility. Violence would only show what Martin Luther King called the angry mourning of the defeated and we are not defeated. We will win our cause if we keep our hearts and heads clear in the struggle ahead.

To ensure that the blockade is as positive, as enjoyable and as safe as possible for everyone involved, please read the following notes very carefully.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- **When you have set up camp etc, please go to the NVDA Training tent.** If you are already in an affinity group you will be briefed together about this action. If you are not already in a group you will be able to form into groups there. Everyone should therefore be in an affinity group before taking part in the blockade; this is so you can receive and give support to others. During the briefing session you will be given the emergency phone number in Newbury. **Make sure it is written clearly on your arm** so you cannot lose it.
- **Then register together as a group.** One of your support people should register for the whole group. There is a separate sheet describing the role of the support people in full, but briefly their role is to act as observers, and to report to the main support area any arrests or incidents. They will not get directly involved in the blockade themselves.
- At the Registration tent you will find out which gate you should go to, and when.
- **Don't forget that you may be sitting down at the gates for a long time.** Make sure you have eaten and been to the loo before you go; facilities at the gates will be very limited. Take food and drink with you. Take warm and waterproof clothing with you too.
- **Don't carry any non-prescription drugs, or anything that could be classified as an offensive weapon.** This includes even the smallest penknife.
- **Carry some form of positive identification.** This may help you get released quicker if you are arrested.

ON THE BLOCKADE

- Some of the gates have limited milling about space so we need to be self-disciplined in our approach. It is not our intention to block public roads, this only causes a great deal of local frustration and ill-will, and you are more likely to get arrested.
- **Remember that there are people living along Burys Bank Road** who will want to get in and out of their homes. We must always try to ensure that they are not obstructed.
- **If people are arriving at the gates without having registered ask them to go to the campsite first.** This is in your interest and theirs.
- **Look out for people who appear not to be in groups,** and ask them to join yours if possible; make them feel welcome, sometimes affinity groups can be a bit exclusive.
- Please stay together in your affinity group
- **Please don't hassle the people on the walkie-talkies** too much. We hope that messages over the walkie-talkies will be kept to a minimum to allow vital information to get through quickly.
- **Keep each other feeling good** with songs, games, etc.
- **Don't run.** This quickly raises the temperature and increases the likelihood of aggression.
- **Don't be disappointed if there is no confrontation** with the police, that is not why we're here. The base may be 'closed' for the day in which case we will have achieved what we set out to do. Talk over any feelings of 'letdown'.
- **Remember** that this blockade is one of three actions planned during these two days which are intended to complement and promote one another. Please consider the possible effect of your actions in this context.

If you are arrested without anyone acting as legal observer for you, ring Newbury 35108. Write this number on your arm where you cannot lose it. This number is for emergencies only. Use it only if you have not heard from our lawyers after three hours.

Legal briefing for Greenham Common

DEALING WITH THE POLICE

- If the authorities want to get vehicles through the blockade, the police will try to move us. You may be moved to one side and then released, or you may be arrested. You may be warned that you will be arrested if you don't move, but not necessarily. Whatever happens:
- **Keep calm.** Singing, holding hands etc will help.
- **Promote goodwill.** Don't be hostile to individual police officers.
- **Do not run.** If you have been moved and then released you can return slowly in your own time. Rushing about is far more likely to lead to violent confrontation.
- **If people around you are getting upset, angry or violent help to calm and comfort them.**
- **Don't shout.** Again this only raises the temperature.
- **Don't struggle** if you are being moved or arrested, either cooperate or go limp.
- **If you see an arrest** make a note of what you have seen and give your name, address and phone number to the person's legal observer, or later to the lawyers via CND.
- **Do not interfere** in someone else's arrest; this can lead to many needless arrests and it is seldom possible to prevent the original arrest. Talking steadily and calmly to the police officers asking them not to hurt people can sometimes be effective. On the other hand it could get you arrested.
- **If you are arrested** call out your name to your support person who will pass the information on to the lawyers. It will also help other people to know whose arrest they witnessed.
- **You may be driven away and 'dumped'** out in the countryside. If this happens ring Kingsclere 298512 and let us know a.s.a.p. This number is for emergencies only.
- **Don't worry.** your arrest should have been seen by your support person and CND lawyers will be nearby. If you think your arrest hasn't been noticed you will be able to phone the lawyers from the police station, so again don't worry.
- **Smile!**

What you could be arrested for

So far, the police have not used the full weight of the law against us, and we have no reason to believe that they will on March 31/April 1. But it is important to understand that is they who decide who, when and how many to arrest; even if thousands of us are doing something for which we could be arrested, they can still decide to arrest just a few. So it is important to understand what laws they *could* arrest us under and be prepared for the worst whilst hoping for the best. The charges are likely to be minor ones which get tried in a Magistrates' Court, without a jury.

Obstructing the highway

A highway is any road, path or track available to the general public and an obstruction can be caused even if it is only partially blocked. Maximum penalty: a £50 fine.

Obstructing or resisting a police officer

This means 'resisting' or wilfully obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty' and is likely to be used when people are sitting down somewhere which is not a public highway. It can also be used against people arguing about or trying to prevent someone else being arrested. Maximum penalty: £200 fine and/or one month in prison but the likely penalty would be less. (First offenders in particular should not be sent to jail.)

Threatening behaviour

Under the Public Order Act, saying or doing something which is 'threatening, abusive or insulting' which could cause a 'breach of the peace' is when someone (it doesn't have to be you) uses or threatens to use force. A police officer can arrest if s/he thinks a breach of the peace might happen, even if it hasn't yet. The maximum penalty is a £1,000 fine and/or six months in jail. Again, the actual penalty is likely to be much less.

Breach of the peace

Most of the women who have been in court for actions at Greenham have been faced with being 'bound over to keep the peace' rather than a specific criminal charge. Binding over is explained in 'Possible Penalties' below.

Less Likely Charges

Criminal Damage makes it an offence for someone to deliberately destroy or damage property which belongs to someone else; eg cutting the perimeter fence, spray painting etc. If the damage done is estimated at less than £200, the maximum penalty is £1,000 fine and/or six months in jail. If the damage is over £200, the case can be tried in a crown court before a jury and the maximum penalty can be an unlimited fine and/or ten years in jail. The likeliest penalty in both cases, though, would be a much smaller fine and an order for compensation to the owner of the property damaged.

The Official Secrets Acts could be used against people demonstrating (or organising demonstrations) in or near 'a prohibited place'—in this case Greenham Common airbase, Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory and Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. It seems very unlikely that such charges will be used against us at the moment, but they were used against members of the Committee of 100 for organising walk-on (rather than blockade) demonstrations in 1961 and 1963, so everyone should be aware of this as a possibility.

Other Legal Problems

Camping

Newbury District Council recently obtained a possession order against the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp and an injunction against 21 named women. As this leaflet went to press, Newbury has not yet carried out the eviction from their land under the new possession order, and the Peace Camp itself has moved to Ministry of Transport land. We think it is unlikely that any such eviction will be carried out during the blockade and we believe that women camping near the Orange Gate at Crookham Common are unlikely to be hassled. The injunction only applies to the women named in it. Camping on private land is not a criminal or arrestable offence.

Children and young people

'Juveniles' are treated a bit differently from adults; between 10 and 14 years they are called 'children' and between 14 and 17 'young persons'. They are entitled to have their parents present if interviewed by the police and should demand either this or to have the CND lawyer present. Juveniles can appear in an adult court but are more likely to be referred to their local Juvenile Bureau unless the charge is very serious. If it's their first offence (and probably if they say they are sorry) they are likely just to get a telling off there. If tried with adults in an adult court they can get the same sorts of sentences as an adult (fines, binding over, conditional or absolute discharge) but cannot be sent to jail even if they refuse to sign a binding order.

Women from other countries

There is an extra briefing sheet for women from other countries; please ask the legal advisors or at Registration for one.

Being charged

When you arrive at the police station, you may be held in the 'charge room' for some time before your arresting officer takes you to be charged. Life moves slowly in a police station, so again don't worry.

You will be asked for your name, address, date of birth and possibly other personal information, including previous convictions. If you want to be set free on bail before the court hearing you would be well advised to give at least your name and address but you don't have to if you don't want to.

The charge will be read to you, you will be formally cautioned (the 'anything you say will be taken down and may be used in evidence' line) and you will be asked if you have anything to say. *Do not* say anything unless you have very good reason to. This is a good rule in a police station at all times: 'verbals' are easily distorted to mean something you didn't intend. You could make a very brief statement about your political motives or if you are ill or injured ask to see a doctor. **But don't say anything about whether or not you did what they are charging you with until you have seen your lawyer.**

Property

Most of your property will be taken from you. You can ask to keep essentials such as handkerchief, glasses or contact lenses, sanitary protection, any special medicines, paper and something to write with. All your property should then be listed down and you will be asked to sign for it. Make sure everything is written down, that nothing has been added and if it is correct sign your name immediately below the last item. If it is not correct, refuse to sign.

Telephone call

Ask to make a telephone call. If you think your arrest was not seen by a legal observer, ask for the CND emergency legal number. Otherwise, a CND lawyer will be acting for you already. You may therefore want to phone a friend or relative.

Fingerprints and photographs

The police have no authority to photograph you, do not allow them to (if you can).

They also have no authority to fingerprint you without an order from a magistrate, which they are unlikely to get. Refuse until you see a solicitor. If they are refusing to bail anyone not giving fingerprints you will have to decide what to do.

Bail

Getting bail (being set free till the court hearing) nearly always depends on having 'a verifiable address'. It is important, therefore, that there should be someone at the address you give or a neighbour who will confirm that you live there. Police sometimes refuse to allow squats as 'verifiable' addresses. You may want to give the peace camp as your address, in solidarity with the women at Greenham, but this may not be accepted as a 'verifiable' address, although it has been so far.

You may be asked to find someone to be your surety for bail. Such a person should know you, should have no criminal convictions and be able to produce evidence of having enough money for the surety (such as having a steady income, owning a house etc). They don't have to produce the cash, again unless you default. We suggest that groups should prepare 'surety lists' for their legal observer.

If bail is agreed, you will be asked to come back to the local

Magistrates' Court for the case, which may be the next working day (on this occasion probably Tuesday, April 5) or a day some time away. If you don't get bail, you will be held (usually in the police station but possibly in jail) till the court hearing. Bail is nearly always granted by the courts for the more common offences.

In Court

If you have been held without bail and have not already seen your lawyer, they will certainly be in court to help you. You will have the charge read out and asked how you plead. We are asking everyone to plead **not guilty** whatever the charge: it is important to talk to the lawyers and other defendants before making up your mind. A 'not guilty' plea can always be changed to a 'guilty' one, but if you plead guilty the trial will go straight ahead without your having a chance to say very much.

If you plead not guilty, the case will be 'remanded': that is, another day will be fixed for the hearing to take place. You should now ask the magistrate for bail (even if you already had bail from the police) and for legal aid. The lawyers will be there to back you up.

The date for the next hearing may be some time in the future and there may be several days of hearings (sometimes spaced out over weeks). This is one thing to bear in mind when deciding to risk arrest, particularly if you live a long distance away or might lose your job.

Possible Penalties

Fines

So far the penalties people have faced have been fines or binding over orders. If you are convicted the magistrates should be told what your financial situation is (for example, whether you are unemployed) before they decide a fine; you can also ask for time to pay.

Binding Over

A binding over order is something which the magistrate can impose as a punishment either for a specific charge or even if you have not been charged with anything. The order is made for you 'to keep the peace' (which means effectively not getting arrested again!) for a specific time, such as a year; if you break it you can be fined a specified sum of money (say, £100). You may refuse to sign a binding over order, but you are likely then to be sent to jail. Women from Greenham have gone to prison for fourteen days in this way.

Jail?

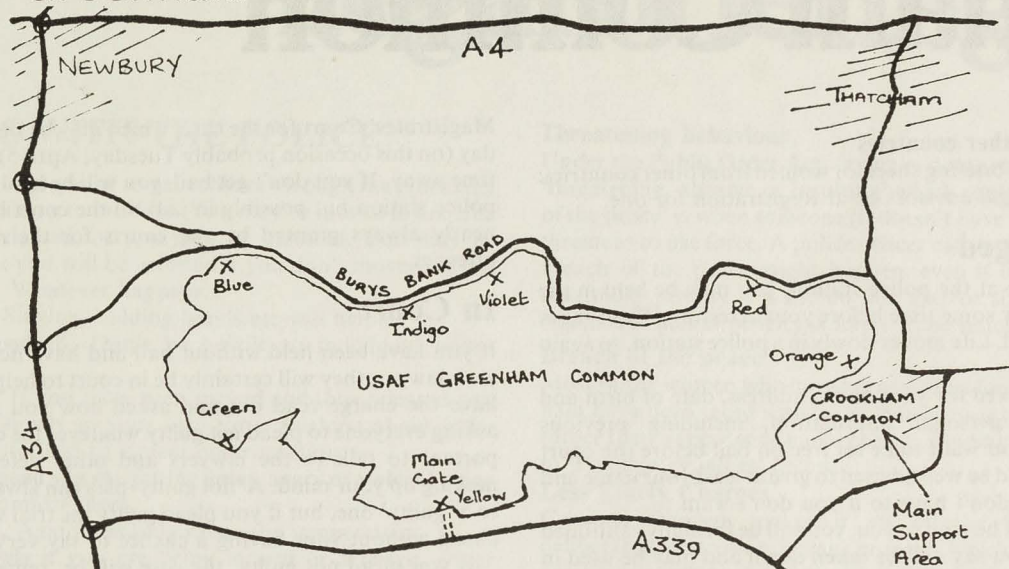
It is very unlikely that anyone being found guilty for the first time would be sent to jail unless the charge is a serious one (such as under the Official Secrets Act). So far, women from Greenham who have gone to jail have done so after refusing either to accept a binding over order or to pay a fine. So even if you are found guilty, whether or not you go to jail is likely to be your choice. Don't feel you have to go to jail in order to take part in the blockade.

On Release

When you are released you may need to return to your own areas quickly. It is important that proper organisation is made early on for your defence so please ensure that:

- Your name and a correspondence address is with a solicitor (or sent to the Greenham office in London: 1 Crowland Terrace a.s.a.p.).

Greenham



Practical Information

- You write down exactly what happened when you were arrested a.s.a.p. and names of witnesses.
- Fill out a legal aid form and return to your solicitor. If you cannot remember which solicitor you saw, contact the London office.
- Ring the London office to find out about meetings to organise your defence: 01-226 1474 (01-251 3133 from 14 April).

Understanding the law and coping with police and the courts can seem very daunting. If we support each other by sharing our information, experiences and feelings we can all gain the confidence to deal with this aspect of our struggle for nuclear disarmament. When we stand together, we are strong!

The Blockade

USAF Greenham Common has seven gates (identified by colour) and eight 'gaps' which we plan to blockade. The perimeter fence is nine miles long.

The blockade will start at 6am on Thursday 31 March; women arriving on Thursday will join the blockades during the day after briefing and registration.

If possible we hope that the blockades will last until Friday lunchtime when tens of thousands of people will form a Human Chain between us and the men and women blockading the gates of ROF Burghfield. We suggest that no one should try to blockade for the full period; when you are tired it is much more difficult to respond positively.

Camp Site Arrangements

Keep the camping area tidy—we are all responsible for our own litter!

Plastic sacks are available from the Information tent.

Please respect the local area and residents. Do not damage fences or any other property nearby.

Water is in short supply, so use sparingly.

Please use the toilets provided on the site and around the base. We are all responsible for looking after the loos!

Candles in tents can be dangerous—take care.

A creche is available if needed, but please think carefully before risking arrest if your children are with you.

We have had to pay out a lot of money for facilities so we are requesting a donation (£1 if possible) to help defray this cost.

The blockade by women at Greenham Common supports and is supported by the mixed blockade at ROF Burghfield. We are all determined to stop the nuclear arms race by nonviolent means. This is a collective action—thoughtless behaviour by one individual could reflect badly on the whole peace movement.

We cannot take responsibility for anyone taking any action that places others at risk. Please follow the guidelines outlined in this briefing.