

One & Other Project

My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm here today to interview Kirsten Broome on the 29th of July, 2010 and we are at the Wellcome Trust and we are carrying out the interview on behalf of the Wellcome Trust for the One & Other Oral History Collection. So Kirsten, as I mentioned, I'm really just interested in knowing what it was like to be on the plinth now you're one year on. Would you like to talk about that?

Sure, yes it was, it was a fantastic experience and I never would have imagined that I'd get an opportunity to stand on the fourth plinth so I was just, I was so shocked when I was selected, so fortunate, I had a great experience. It's a fantastic view, I hope there's some other opportunity in my life to get back up there because it's just... it's really hard to explain what it looks like from on top of the plinth. Um but yes, so one year on, I'm just so happy to have been a part of it, and also been able to promote the Millennium Seed Bank walls up there.

How did it feel to be up there?

You know, before I went up there I was very apprehensive about sort of the height of the plinth and you know if I'd get a little bit of vertigo or something. My husband calls it maiming height, you know, where it's high enough that you'll hurt yourself but not so high that you're ... and then I was also very, very concerned about how I would get the devils seedpod sculpture onto the plinth because it wasn't very heavy, but it was very unwieldy. I think it was you know three meters long and two meters wide. But, you know, once I got that on, you know I got out of the little lift and got onto the plinth, it was fantastic. I you know, I wasn't concerned about the height, it was a beautiful view, you know, looking out and my mom was over from the states so she saw me on the plinth. My husband was there and then a lot of people from Kew. And it was just fantastic, and it was um, I was kind of surprised by how many people, tourists walking by or just you know people commuting, walking by, um took time to stop and read the signs and look at the statue, and... I shouldn't say, look at the sculpture. And they seemed really sort of interested in it and engaged in it and I had kind of anticipated that not many people would stop and you know stop and look, you know. It's London, I had a fantastic timeslot, I think my timeslot was four to five pm on, I believe, it was a Wednesday. So some time during the week, so you know a lot of London sort of city commuters going by, and it was just, it was great that people stopped and looked and kind of engaged with the project.

Did anyone talk to you during your time on the plinth, from the Square?

You know I shouted down, said hi to some people and they waved hi to me, and I really liked how the whole One & Other experience was very multimedia, so you know that was being sort of not live blogged but you know streamed

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live on the internet so I actually had a lot of my US friends you know watching online and made comments and some of them called them on my mobile phone, so there's you know a part during my time on the plinth where you hear me talking to people in the states, so that was fun you know, it was a really kooky experience to be on top of the fourth plinth in Trafalgar, talking to your friends in San Diego who are watching you online, you know it's just... technology's getting really interesting and you know, folding that into a kind of an art's project and a public arts project was, I thought was really interesting.

You mentioned in the pre-plinth interview that you like Anthony Gormley's work and you follow him and that's one of the reasons why you decided to apply.

Sure.

What I didn't really understand from the pre-plinth interview, how you got to apply. Was it through your work as a group of people or was it you as an individual?

Oh no, no, it was me as an individual. I don't even think there was an option to sort of apply on behalf of an organisation or a group. I think it was just individuals applying on the website. I think that you know the earlier you applied you were in the drawing multiple times. And I just, I applied as an individual and couldn't believe when I got selected, I was like, I never, I never win anything, I never get the tombola prize, you know, I never get selected in raffle and so I was kind of happy you know, this is one time to be selected out of such a large number of people. I was happy it was this project. Yes I really was.

And then how did the idea of supporting these Seed...?

Oh the Millennium seed banks? Sure well I got selected and then you start thinking oh you know, what am I going to do up there? I'm not someone who has a particular talent. I'm not a dancer or performance artist, there's nothing that I could have done up there sort of physically to promote something that I either do professionally or as a hobby. And I really didn't have anything, you know. real personal that I wanted to express up there, so you know starting to think about what I'd you know do with an hour up there, it kind of hit me because I'm a professional fundraiser. My vocation [?] role is to help raise money for non-profits and charities. So in general my mind kind of goes in that direction with any opportunity that crosses my path you know. Is there some scope for me to use this opportunity to help either raise awareness or raise funds you know an organisation and you know generally, it is the organisation that you're working for, because for me I really couldn't work for some place I didn't passionately support the work that they did, so I couldn't fundraise for a

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charity if I wasn't you know sort of inspired by the work that they do and if I didn't feel that it was very important. So you know once I started thinking about what can I do on the plinth, it was, you know a no brainer that this is a great opportunity to promote the Millennium Seed Bank which is a project of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, to a very wide audience and then what actually happened and how I promoted it was creative and big and unwieldy but I think it brought a lot of attention to, to the Millennium Seed Bank. And you know even this is a great example that I'm here speaking to you, obviously my time on the plinth had some impact and that's, that's wonderful.

Presumably you went and spoke to your work colleagues about it and then came up with the idea of what to use and, and what kind of support you get?

Sure, sure yes, I went to... I first brought it to my team, which was the Major Donor fundraising team and we talked about it a bit, and we said well actually there is a whole you know marketing and pr and sort of communications department and they are, they are professionals so we should talk to them. Um so we spoke to them and they had some ideas about what I might be able to do up there. Then the, the director of the Millennium Seed Bank, Dr. Paul Smith got involved and he was really impressed by the devil's seed pod sculptures that had been on display at Kew for a period of time and they were actually being taken down a couple of days before my day on the plinth and so Paul thought it would be a great thing to, you know, bring the seed pod up with me on the plinth so that, so that it started a whole logistic nightmare for how we'd get everything transported to Trafalgar Square, how we'd do it, you know would I be able to even get it on the plinth, getting all the, all the permissions and sign-offs that I needed from I guess I can't remember the name, but the corporation that kind of supervises Trafalgar Square, One and Other, Artichoke, you know just it was, it was a lot of leg work and paperwork to get everyone to go ok yes, you can and we think you will be able to you know bring this huge sculpture up in the lift with you and onto the plinth. Plus getting the artist's permission to display his work. So yes it was a lot of people involved in Kew to support my time there and also a number of people from Kew came to Trafalgar Square to hand out leaflets and we have these little creative sort of seed packets that have information about the Millennium seed bank and they had little t-shirts on saying 'ask me about the Millennium Seed Bank.' So that was nice to have eight or nine people from Kew interacting with the public in Trafalgar Square and answering questions and, you know, just kind of supporting it, which I think was really helpful because you know I'm up there holding this big weird sculpture, what is it, and to have people go well actually, it's a you know, it's a Devil's Claw Seed Pod, and blah, blah, blah and so on and so forth. So and then to talk about the Millennium Seed bank itself which is you know such a really interesting project and it's such a huge conservation effort and you know it was my experience working at Kew when

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I'd speak with other people you know, really the Millennium Seed Bank is not in the public awareness as much as it should be.

Did you do any fundraising on that day?

We did a little bit. You know I think with fundraising, it's always really important to support awareness-raising as well. So I mean if people don't even know this project is in existence, how would they even consider supporting it. We did have a website to accept donations and were soliciting donations. I had a sort of placard I was holding up and that would direct people to a website where they can make a donation. I don't think my time on the plinth brought a significant amount of money directly as a result of my time so that, you know, the donations we got to the website where people might have put a little comment in saying, you know I saw your person on the plinth, I'd never heard of your project, here's twenty pounds. You know there's a small amount of that, but you know sort of the intangibles, how many people, you know maybe saw it in the local newspaper. It was covered in my little local Alcom [?] or a couple of other places I think it was covered or just people who walked through Trafalgar Square who maybe later would go look up information about Millennium Seed Bank and you know months, years to come have that in their kind of vision for what they, they might consider supporting... so I think that's... you know one thing with fundraising when you do these sort of creative things is you never really know the long term results. But, but hopefully they're good.

Did you find out how many people visited the website during that hour or just after?

The Kew Millennium Seed bank website? No I don't think I did. It wasn't a phenomenal jump in traffic, otherwise they would have mentioned like you know, our server has shut down, but it was ... I think it was a couple of hundred. So I mean it was significant for the site, you know, compared to the normal traffic. So that was good.

So what was it like when you came off the plinth, just to compare to your personal experience?

Sure, I was actually; I was really disappointed when my time was up. It went by so quickly, you know. I was thinking, I've got an hour on the plinth you know it's either going to go by really quickly or really slowly and it flew by. I didn't want to get down, you know, I was enjoying the view. I also didn't want to have to pack everything up and try to you know navigate onto the ... I guess the platform or whatever you want to call it, they had a name for it, but I always think of it as like a cherry picker. Both my time getting onto the plinth and getting off of the plinth, what they do is have the, they bring someone up

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to the plinth when they're taking someone off, so you basically have to cross paths with whoever is the person before you or the person after you on the plinth and me with my huge seed pod and my signs and my bag, you know I had all this stuff with me and I also had the good fortune of the ... I forget, if it was the guy in front of me or the guy behind me. The guy in front of me had a lot of stuff with him, so we had to kind of try and hand off and swap and there's all these rules about the, you know, the One & Other support staff couldn't step on the plinth so they couldn't help you carry things off so you had to be capable of carrying all your own props and junk and whatever. So the, you know, I had to kind of swap back and forth when I was getting on the plinth and then when I was getting off the plinth, you know. I had all my huge two by three meters fiberglass seed claw and the guy getting off the plinth was dressed in a gorilla suit and was riding a stationary bike, so there, that was, that was the trying you know navigate between the two... but it worked out great, just kind of went, Jeez I should have been in a gorilla suit too! But yes, so, I guess I answered your question yes? Okay.

So did you get any media attention from Sky Arts when you came off the plinth?

No, not to my knowledge, I didn't. I think my time on the plinth was fairly challenging because of all the, you know, kind of the props I was carrying, there was a lot of consideration for that. Also there were a lot of people involved from Kew and then also the artist himself and some other people who kind of supported his side of the project, which was a previous installation for Kew and he was allowing us to use his sculpture, you know, a further time for my time on the plinth. But since there are so many people involved, trying to really sort of maximize the impact, so I had, you know, sort of the media and photographer, photographers from Kew, I had the artist trying to video and photograph the whole event. I had some other people you know wanting to ask me questions so I was really torn between so many people before and after my time on the plinth, trying to get the, you know little bit of content they wanted to get out of my time on the plinth, so I don't even know if Sky Arts was around, but if they were, they couldn't push the other people out of the way. You know I just think that it was such a unique opportunity that so many people wanted the chance to, you know, promote it to their best ability.

You mentioned media, was this organised media attention from Kew?

Yes, yes absolutely, it was because I had gone to our PR or Kew's PR and communications department so they had tried to get bits set up, press release, try and get some media attention. Also the Kew web content developers wanted to have some video and audio that they could put on the website, you know, some pictures that they might want to use in a newsletter, you know. I'm not sure what extent the different, you know, materials they got

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were used but everyone wanted to have a little bit of something, in case it could be used in whatever area they worked in in the future. So it was, yes more Kew driven, smaller levels of media than anything super large and exciting or really intimidating. And besides that, my experience after getting off the plinth, immediately after the plinth was trying to get you know to handle everything and get the sculpture to the right place, to the truck and ta, da, da, da, da, but it was so much adrenaline, I mean I was really pumped up. I had a really great time and you know I still just had a big rush from it and so, so it was fun. Then we tootled off to a pub and had a half pint and then went home exhausted you know from a very long day of dragging sculptures around.

We talked about briefly the interactivity of the project such as having the profile, the [?] people writing to you. How do you find that, receiving comments?

Oh it was, it was great! You know I liked the interconnectivity of it and you know I sent emails out to you know everyone on my contact list, letting them know that I was going to be on the plinth. And you know reminding them before hand. And I was really surprised at some of the people who logged on and watched, you know. There was some people like you know my best friend in San Diego, of course she was logged on at work and all of her workmates were there and they made comments and she's the one who called me on the phone. But there were other people you know just friends from a long time ago that you know I wouldn't think that they'd, you know bother to write it on your calendar and remember, you know, ten am on a Wednesday, to go online you know and look at the website. And they left comments. My uncle in Alaska logged on and then watched it and left comments. And I think probably one of the things that you know kind of surprised me is you know that some people actually watched my whole hour up there and were really paying attention, because having [?] been miked for audio, you know I'm not any sort of performer or professional. So I'm not used to being miked and being videoed, and you know the camera's kind of up in the corners looking at you and people you know taking photographs and people walking by, you know I remember a tourist or just people commuting, that part wasn't intimidating but it's just not something that I'm used to doing so I'd be, I'd talk a bit into the camera about the Millennium Seed Bank, read some facts, and then I'd wander over and wave at my friends and then I'd forget that I was miked and on camera and I'd mutter something you know, and one of my friends, Bennett, who's actually ... he is a Native American and he lives on the Hopi reservation now, but I grew up with him in San Diego. He logged on and Bennett apparently watched the whole thing, from one end to the other and it was like listening to my audio and you know with carrying everything around the plinth, it's kind of, it's actually really embarrassing, but my jeans kept sagging down, so I had to keep pulling them up. And, you know, a bit of a joker, so I mumbled to myself, you know, Millennium Seed Bank, I need a

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millennium seed belt. And he caught it and he's like, yes, you did need a belt. Next time you do something in public, you know, wear suspenders or have something to keep your pants up because you know, and I was, that was impressive to you know, just ... it's amazing how technology is developing, that you can have something like that and you know someone that I haven't you know spent time with face to face in twenty years who lives you know half a world away, can be so engaged and involved with something I'm doing as part of an art project by Antony Gormley in Trafalgar Square on the plinth. I mean it's just, it's fascinating. It's a little bit scary too; kind of reminds you, watch what you mutter into the microphone, it's going to be on the internet. Anyway, yes.

You have Internet on your phone right?

Yes.

Were you doing any tweeting or any Facebook updates when you were up there?

I'd planned on doing that and I tried to, I don't know if I ... my friends did call, I don't know if I did much, and I think that because I had so many other demands on my physicality and my time, you know, I had people asking hold up the sculpture so they can get better pictures and they actually came up with one image that's just ... it's so nice. I mean I was talking a lot so a lot of the photos of me have my mouth open and kind of looking rude, but this one's really nice, I'm kind of smiling and holding up the, you know, the devil's seed claw sculpture. It's kind of looking up, you know, onto the plinth and is it Nelson's column in the background? Blue sky, I mean it's gorgeous, you know really sort of striking image. I think that's probably why my time on the plinth went so quickly is so much of my time was trying to get everything set up you know the signs hanging off the sides of the plinth, the sculpture, I had a big placard I was holding and then beyond that, you know kind of interacting with people in the square and showing them the placard, because you know one side had a image and a statement about the Millennium Seed Bank and the other side had the website to you know donate to support the seed bank or to find out more about the seed bank so, yes there are parts of the project that maybe, maybe I would have liked to have participated a little bit more. Sort of the, the online, the Tweeting and sort of, the interacting I guess on a digital or internet level, but my experience was much more um physical in the moment, interacting with people, you know actually there. But I guess you know, in a way I was you know virtually interacting with my friends in California, my uncle in Alaska, you know the other people who were watching and also some, there, you know there were some people who I didn't know who commented on my blog and watched a part of my time on the plinth and that was pretty surprising too, you know, but it was great.

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So what would you say it was like for you as an American in London, or Europe, of course you may have a British passport, I don't know, to be there in the center of London, in Trafalgar Square?

Sure, it was fabulous, it was fascinating. I've lived in the UK for four years. I'm actually married to a Brit. We met in San Diego and came back here. So I am getting you know, over the years, more and more acclimated British culture and society and we've lived around the London area this whole time. So I wouldn't call myself a Londoner, but you know it's an experience when you live in a city and actually you know how many times do I walk past the fourth plinth or walk through Trafalgar Square or walk through these different areas not even take note, because really they're just, you know, on my path from point a to point b, whatever I'm doing in my day, be it work or social or, you know. I crossed Trafalgar Square the other day and went there's you know there's a big bottle with a ship in it on the plinth now and you know I'd noticed that kind of crossing over to go to the bookstore on my way home. So my experience as an American on the plinth, you know, I'm sure it was unique but for me it just, you know I ... I'm in London all the time so seeing these things, I think I interacted with it more as someone where you know the plinth, Trafalgar Square, you know the British Museum, are just kind of part of things you pass by in your day to day life, as opposed to looking at it from like a tourist stand point as American. But it was still fabulous, I mean I definitely, you know, it's very ... when was the last time someone was able to stand on the fourth plinth and be involved in something like this? I did appreciate the uniqueness of it and like I mentioned before, just the view of it, it's such a unique view of that space and it's one that being an American or being a British person, unless you've actually stood on the plinth, it's just not one that you can get and so I loved having that. Now it has affected how I sort of view Trafalgar Square and the plinth and interact with that space because I'm really fortunate that in my mind I have this other vantage point of it. I know what it looks like, you know, five meters up or three meters, or however high it is, you know from that unique vantage point. And there's nothing that you can replicate that from that area, there's not a building window you can look out of and kind of see that same unique view. So yes, now when I go into that space, I kind of imagine it from not a bird's eye perspective, but from that which is fantastic. I think probably one thing being an American, how, one way that it might have impacted my experience in a way that might be different to I'd say a specifically British person or a Londoner, is I don't really think I got across to some of my American friends and family, what a unique experience this was. I mean they thought it was exciting, it was fun, it was great but you know if they haven't been to London, that they really understand what that area, what it means, that it is such a unique event. So that was kind of funny, they're like you know, oh yes I went online and I saw you standing on that statue thing, was that fun? And I was like yes, okay good, by the way... my

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neighbor bought a dog. I'm like okay. One time I stood on something, oh okay Uncle Jim, so yes, I guess that's probably the best I can answer your question.

That's fine. It was great, thank you. So what do you think your family and friends thought about you going on the plinth?

I think that there probably was a wide range of reactions. They were all supportive; I mean I was so excited about it that they were happy for me. I think some people understood a little bit more than others as far as sort of the unique opportunity that this doesn't happen all the time, that this was specifically, you know, interactive installation project, there are only twenty-four hundred people who'd have this opportunity to do it. Once it's done, you know, it's very likely that there won't be that opportunity again in our lifetimes for anyone to spend some time on the plinth, I guess unless you climb up there and express yourself in whatever way you wanted to and especially in such a, you know, interactive manner where, you know, your friends half a world away can watch you know in real time while you're doing it. So I think some people got that. I think other people didn't but they still ... Jeez, maybe I'll go to England and go to London and stand on the plinth and you're like, no you won't, I wish you could. Yes, so I think it was, it's a huge variety, as far as I think appreciating sort of the part of the ... playing your role in this large art installation that was thought of by Antony Gormley. I think some of my friends and family got that, got that aspect of it, and other ones just really didn't, you know. They're not familiar with this work, they're interested in that sort of art or theatrics or expression or interactive media thing. So yes, I guess, I don't know if I wandered off track there, but ...

That's fine, thank you. Now what would you say overall, the impact of the experience has been on yourself?

Myself, I mean, it was a fantastic experience to get ... I keep hammering on about that, but you know, I love new experiences, I love seeing new things, you know. Traveling around new times, everything, so to get this opportunity to have this sort of unique vantage point is just fabulous. To be part of something that, you know, in a way it's sort of a historic thing, it's great to actually have been chosen out of this big number of people, kind of won this golden ticket, sort of Willy Wonka style, that was great too. And on a personal level, I think ... I don't think I've learned any huge life lessons but it's sort of reinforced some self-knowledge that actually, you know what, I was fine getting up there on the plinth. I was fine kind of having that attention, I was fine having people take my picture and being so public and you know sort of talking about the MSB, sort of being, knowing that I was being filmed and on the Internet, and all these other things, and the interview beforehand, this interview now. So I'm really happy that I've had that reinforced within me that

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I'm comfortable doing these things because I know that I definitely would not be comfortable if it was some sort of performance ... you know, I'm not an actor, I'm not a thespian, I'm not theatrical, so I think it was very important for someone like me, going on the plinth, that I had the opportunity of, I wouldn't say using it to some other good, but that I could be promoting MSB and sort of have this activity, something that I believed in, to be doing while on the plinth. I think it helped take away probably some of the trepidation I'd have if it was just me standing up there, you know, doing something, yet I'm really glad that other people had that opportunity, they want nothing more than to be the centre of attention, the center of Trafalgar Square, doing whatever it is they do. Or, you know, dressed in a gorilla suit riding a stationary bike.

Now just to go back to your own life story, you mentioned that of course you were born in San Diego, that's where you lived, and you came over here four years ago, so what were you doing back home?

I was fundraising, so yes, I've been in fundraising for a while. In the States, the job I left to move over here was with the Burnham Institute for Medical Research, which is now called the Sanford-Burnham Institute, which is great, they secured, I think, a seventy-five million dollar donation or something like that. It's just fabulous, the work they do there is cutting-edge biomedical research, cancer, neuroscience, again, you know youth illnesses, there's a whole spectrum, infectious and inflammatory diseases... just, it's so interesting and so impactful and I loved working there, you know, being able to interact with all these scientists and see all the labs and machinery and the geeky stuff. So yes, I was fundraising for the Burnham Institute while I was in San Diego. And then do you want to know what I did when came over here? Sure, I met my husband in San Diego, he was working in there on [?] for a British company and they decided to bring him back to the UK and by that point in time we were in love and very close and the decision wasn't who's coming with who or should we stay together, it was just you know are we going to stay in San Diego or are we going to move to the UK? You know, what's the decision we're going to make as a couple? And, you know, it was... I'm like hey an opportunity to go live in the UK and work there and have that experience. I was like yes, let's move. Sometimes in hindsight I'm like, San Diego is beautiful, you know, the weather's great, you know, the ocean, just there, it's a completely different sort of lifestyle and environment, um but I've really enjoyed being here, and we're still here. We bought a place; we'll be here for a while. And so yes we moved over her and I got a job in fundraising in the UK and just kind of stuck with that.

So what attracted you to fundraising as a job in the first place?

Oh, well I had a couple of roles in sort of the corporate sector, I first sort of, I worked my way through university, working in restaurants and bars and stuff

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which was loads of fun, very busy schedule, I'd be working one or two jobs and going to school full-time, so I was very busy. But my first sort of professional career job out of university was for a website company, a start-up website company, and then from there moved to sort of the marketing support position for a pharmaceutical company, they were a small pharmacology company in San Diego called Aragon and they only produced one drug which was a protease inhibitor which is a HIV treatment drug. And so I worked there for a number of years. At a certain point they were purchased by Pfizer so things changed a lot within the organisation, you know, as it happens. But you know from that experience I kind of, I'd learned a lot about research science. I found that I was fairly comfortable working with scientific terms, working with the thoughts behind it, speaking about it, you know, coherently, correctly, presenting it and so when Pfizer purchased the company there was an opportunity to sort of take a redundancy package and give yourself a little time to think and secure a new position and it was at that point that I moved to the Burnham Institute so it has that kind of science tie in but in a fundraising role. And my background in sort of marketing and sales support and customer support that I had in my other roles translated very well to, to fundraising. And it was fabulous experience, you know I got to be involved in a lot of really interesting things, really focused on you know a high value major donor fundraising so as opposed to raffles and tombolas, it was you know sort of glamorous star-studded galas that raised you know seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars on the night and things like that so that's great. So that was kind of my move into fundraising and I didn't really make a conscious move, you know, I didn't make a decision saying I want to go into working for non-profits and I want to be in fundraising. It just happened organically once I was there, you know, I was like wow, okay, this is the career I've been looking for because it combines a lot of hard-work, professionalism. I think you have to be very focused, and driven and committed, um and competitive too actually. Fundraisers are pretty competitive, but being able to do all these things that would allow you to be successful in sort of the for profit corporate world, you can use that, those attributes to support a charity or a non-profit that are providing these services, or supporting different types of research or actually doing you know that research, that, that wouldn't happen any other way, so it's sort of, it's a combination between you know, having a decent professional career that you enjoy and doing something somewhat altruistic. So I like that I can combine the two, that I can be sort of committed and competitive and involved in and engaged and professional and drive my career forward, but do the benefit of something like, you know, at the moment I'm working for Action for Children. So all the work I'm doing is going to support vital services for children and young people and I think also with charities and non-profits, it's important to keep in mind that they fill needs gaps and service gaps, so they provide things that the government, the NHS, whatever it may be, either does not or is not at this point in time, capable of providing, so I just, I really see a lot of importance in what, you know charities and non-profits.

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You mentioned that you worked for a small charity called Get Connected.

Yes.

And NSPCC as well before Kew. So just to give me a snapshot of the different changes in your career throughout time perhaps, the things, how you've told me you've changed as a fundraiser throughout?

Oh sure. I think when I say the UK, my first job was with Get Connected, and you know had a kind of interesting career pathway in fundraising in the UK. So this role was with Get Connected and Get Connected is a national helpline for young people, anyone under the age of four, so it's a free phone helpline and basically what they do is they have a whole directory of vetted services and different types of support that are available to young people and that volunteer helpline workers that get connected speak with the young people and help them try and figure out what's going on with them and what sort of help they need you know. Do they want to meet with a counselor face to face; do they just want to talk to someone on the phone? Do they need a safe place to stay? Okay and Get Connected can you know give them contact information, but can actually transfer their call to that organisation. They absorb the cost of that call; also any calls made to Get Connected are completely anonymous. So if a young person had worries about, let's see, parents or someone else finding out that they've made these phone calls, it won't be listed on the phone bill of the young person. So it's a very interesting charity, kind of unique service it provides, but very small. When I started there were about nine and a half employees and about a hundred helpline volunteer workers who worked four hour shifts once a week. And it was just myself and one other person, Lindsay, in the fundraising department, and it was kind of the first time they really had formalised fundraising within that charity. I think that happens a lot with smaller charities, they have a couple of key supporters, they grow to a certain point and then they have a need to develop a professional fundraising aspect of the charity. So it was great that I was there for that portion of it and I had a lot to do in developing their strategy and sort of bulking up the professional aspect of their fundraising. And there it was really funny too because I had head of the ... strangely I don't know misdirecting title of head of fundraising, which I think when people you know see on your business card, 'head of fundraising' they, you know, expect that there's actually a decent sized fundraising department or apparatus that you head. And I was like actually no, I line manage one fundraiser, you know, at the charity, so I'm, you know I'm head of myself and one. I guess it was more of an aspirational title so that was kind of funny. So my experience with Get Connected was developing and professional a whole fundraising programme and strategy for a small charity. I did that for about two years. It was a wonderful experience, but then I got to the point where you can always

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improve things and grow them, but I felt like I'd had a significant impact at Get Connected and I wanted a different experience. I wanted to go into an organisation that had a very large fundraising department that had a lot of resources and assets and knowledge that I could use and just kind of do it, and different type of fundraising. And so that's when I moved to the NSPCC. That's just ... it's a fabulous organisation and the fundraising apparatus within it is just top-notch. I mean it's kind of the gold standard that a lot of other charities aim for. And it was a great role for me. It was in the volunteer fundraising department, which kind of works with volunteer committees and supporters and it was a maternity cover contract, and, you know, there was scope for a possibility that the person would not come back. If not, they really try and retain, kind of the resources within the organisation, so they're hoping that if at the end of the contract you know that the woman who's on leave did come back, that they'd find another role for you in the organisation. Unfortunately, that kind of intercepted with a time when there was a huge change in the economy. You know they're having a lot of hiring freezes within the organisation really making a lot of the hard decisions, a lot of the charities are having to make and you know have had to make for a couple of years.

So at the end of the contracted time, there really was no place for me to move to within the NSPCC. So that was disappointing but it was a great experience working for them. They're a great group of people to work with. Also it was fantastic for me because I hadn't line-managed a larger team of people for a long time and at the NSPCC, I line-managed four fundraisers who each led a team of two to three fundraisers so that was, was a really good kind of you know get that experience and to kind of revisit it, because in the past I had managed a fairly large client support department, but I hadn't done that for a number of years. After the NSPCC, I moved to Kew and the job at Kew was very different and it was a kind of, in hindsight, very much a career misstep on my part. I went from, you know, line-managing a decent sized team and having a lot of input into department strategies, you know, strategic thinking within the fundraising department, a lot of more of kind of background decisions made in a charity and for some strange reason I felt that I really wanted to get back into the majority of purely face-to-face major donor fundraising where you know I'd be spending a lot of time out of the office, you know visiting potential supporters, you know bringing them on tours, talking to them, trying to figure out what it is that they'd be interested in supporting and figuring out a way to convince them to commit. You know large amounts of money doing that. And that was kind of my role at Kew. So I got there and just you know... it's a fantastic organisation. I was able to promote the Millennium Seed Bank on the plinth but in the end it just ended up not being the right role for me, and I was kind of ooh you know that was sort of a side-step of my career, you know I go from kind of being at a certain level to kind of taking a, what was kind of presented to me at the time as a lateral step, but it really kind of was apparent it was a step to the side and down a bit. So you know

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you live and learn and I did learn a lot about myself that I really like being involved in some of the more strategic decisions within fundraising departments. So, very fortunate to get a job with Action for Children so I'm back in fundraising for a children's and young person's charity again so that's really good. Obviously I think fate is, you know, kind of giving me some input into, you know, the charities I should work for in the UK because if you look at it, you get connected you know, young person's charity, the NSPCC, come on children charity, Kew, a bit of misstep you know, fabulous interesting, fascinating, beautiful, really an important significant place of scientific research, great place to go visit for a walk around the garden and they have like thirty listed buildings and just a ton of things you would never even know about. But now I'm back to a children's charity. It's actually my fourth day with Action for Children and I'm working in the high value fundraising department. My team is the major donor team so it's a combination of high value special events fundraising and major donor individual fundraising, so it's great. The people I'm working with, my team, seems excellent. We're gearing up to a big event, in October, which is bite night, which is an overnight fundraising sleep-out for people in the IT community and so that's great, so yes.

Tell me more about this night, what will you be doing, sleeping outside?

Yes, bite night, it was started, I think, thirteen years ago by a man named Ken Deeks, you know, probably not a name most people know but if you're within the IT industry, I've been led to believe that he's very, very well known. So now I'm learning more about who's who in the IT industry in the UK. But he's a really nice guy. I had the opportunity to meet him on Tuesday; they were having a committee meeting for the ... they have a couple of different sites where people sleep rough for the night. One of them is in London; one of them is in Thames Valley. So I went to the Thames Valley committee meeting and Ken was there chairing it on behalf of the chair who couldn't make it. And he's just, it's really fantastic when you start to work for a new organisation and you know within a day or two of starting you've an opportunity to go to this committee meeting where it's all people volunteering their time to kind of run this event and to just see them so engaged and so passionate about the charity and to learn that, you know, Ken thought up this event and he's been kind of like you know masterminding it and kind of leaning from the top from it, for, you know, it's going on thirteen years. So what bite night is, it's sleeping out rough for one night. We have a site in London, a site in Thames Valley. We're doing it in Cambridge for the first time this year. There's also a site in Glasgow and one in Manchester and basically people from the IT industry put together teams and they commit to raise a certain amount of money, a certain target for team. And then they come to this event and basically have a, we have a reception and the little dinner and the little fundraising auction but the main activity is then you go outside and you sleep rough in you know, in London the site is Potters Field so it's kind of by you know London Bridge I

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believe, no by Tower Bridge. And I think the activity with that, it's kind of like a challenge fundraising event but it's a little bit more insightful because how many times with ... unless you're forced to, anyone can really sleep out in London and, you know, there are safety aspects of course. We're going to have security; they're going to have proper sleeping bags you know. They aren't at risk like, you know, a young person, a vulnerable person sleeping rough would be, but that's kind of what the event is raising money for, is to support action for children's activities and a number of areas that are basically trying to prevent or address the circumstances that might lead to a young person running away from home, running away from care, possibly when they're phased out and leaving care, if they don't have a place to go to, you know, ending up living rough on the streets, which is hard for anyone, but you know, these children and young people are probably the most vulnerable group out there in that situation.

So what's happening now in your life?

Oh in my life? Started my new job. My husband and I bought a house in Eltham about a year and a half ago so we've been trying to fix it up you know. It's one of those, we got a fixer-upper and it's our first house so we had no idea what we were getting into. Most recently I've torn the carpet off the stairs and discovered that they're actually quite nice under layers and layers of paint. So I've been stripping paint off the stairs and stairwell and kind of we stripped a lot of wallpaper and, yes, so I mean it's kind of... this definitely has been probably my time since I've been on the plinth you know, last year, year and a half has been a huge transitional period for me, for myself, where I feel like I'm, turning into a stogy old person but you know I'm becoming an adult and growing up like what do I do on my weekends? We go to B & Q or Homebase and we get paint stripper and a saw and then we go home and we work on the house or we potter around the garden. We've grown a lot of tomato plants this year. So it's just, it's, you know, it's a new and interesting place that I'm at in my life. It's fun, I like it, but if you would have asked me, ten years ago, what do you think you'll be doing in ten years, I never would have said oh you know, I'll be living in London and looking forward to the weekends so I can tend my tomato plants and strip paint off the stairs but you know, I am.

I didn't ask you earlier what did you study at university?

Oh sure, I went to the University of California Santa Cruz and I studied Women's Studies and language studies. So, it was fascinating, it was just an amazing, amazing experience. Santa Cruz is basically the forefront of women's studies, or feminist studies, so just encapsulated, I loved that, that major because it was such a breadth of things that you studied. From feminist theory, political theory to history to literature, to art, to social movements, to

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just, you know, science, just such a breadth. And I took a course with Angela Davis and she wrote me a letter of recommendation so I could go into an internship programme that they had through the university in Washington DC. But I mean, getting a letter of recommendation from Angela Davis was awesome. You know I had classes with Bettina Aptheker, who was one of the leaders of the Berkeley free speech movement and it's just this fantastic mind, with Wendy Brown who's this you know really well known feminist theorist, Suzy Bright who's an author. She taught at the university for a while and then I ended up securing a position of being her personal assistant so it's like wow but, yes, so I studied women's studies and language studies at the universities. Oh God I loved it, it was a fantastic, fantastic time and though those are two degrees that ... what are you going to do with yourself afterwards? Sort of like, well, you know because I, do you want to be a translator, no. Do you want to be a French teacher? No. Do you want to teach women's studies? Maybe, but probably not. But it was just, it was an amazingly strong academic and intellectual experience and I think it's had a huge impact in what I've been able to accomplish between then and now, just writing, thinking, theorising, you know, more complex understanding of some sort of social situations or appreciation of the impact of some certain social situations but it was fun and I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of the campus of Santa Cruz. But it's literally in the Redwood forest, so you hike through the forest between classes, you can't see any buildings from you know, you can't see the buildings from each other, you just see the forest, so you know how many people between classes hiked through the Red woods past a herd of deer and then go on to their next class. It was fantastic. I highly recommend it. If you have a chance to go to Santa Cruz, do it.

What got you into choosing to study women's studies?

I was always you know sort of interested in that sort of field of study subject and = I got to Santa Cruz and in America you don't necessarily have to declare your major or your focus of study immediately when you start university, so you can take a year or so to take general requirement classes and kind of think about what it is you want to specialise in. And you know I had definitely been considering women's studies, so I took the intro to feminism course that was taught by Bettina Aptheker and yes. that's it, I was sold. I was like well, I know what I want to focus on at university and she was just amazing, engaging and fascinating and it's a very sort of engaged programme. It was very, very supportive of the students so a lot of the courses, even though it was at undergraduate degree, were taught by some of the professors you know, who really mainly focus on the graduate programme which is how, you know, I got to take a class with Angela Davis. I took a fascinating course, it was the introduction to feminist theory and that was taught by Donna Harroway, who's just brilliant and just so engaging and fascinating and you know with the programme itself, later on in my studies,



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when I was a senior and kind of finishing up my time at university, Bettina actually used undergrads to TA her intro feminism course so it kind of went full circle, that the class I took that convinced me to try and follow this pathway, I was able to, you know, be a teaching assistant and kind of support that class at the end of my time at university and so it was great.

Thank you very much.

Sure.

I hope you've enjoyed the interview?

Absolutely, I hope you've gotten what you were looking for. Okay, wonderful. Thank you.