

Dean Hill – thirty years on

Receiving the email from the Nuclear Information Service on January 10th about the truck with two nuclear warheads that skidded off an icy road and overturned 30 years ago brought back memories of standing in a field on a very cold night trying to work out exactly what had happened.

As far as I can recall, it began for us in Salisbury earlier that day when someone from West Grimstead was walking his dog that Saturday afternoon and became aware of unusual activity on the road from his village to West Dean, just beyond which was the Royal Naval Armaments Depot Dean Hill. He alerted a friend who he knew belonged to CND and she phoned one or two of us in Salisbury. The message was passed round - all by telephone as this was before mobiles and email were in general use - and four of us arranged to drive the seven or so miles southeast out to the area about 11 pm.

We found that roads were cordoned off by troops and we had to stay about a field's width away from the incident. We learnt that a convoy had been taking nuclear weapons from Portsmouth Naval base to Dean Hill, driving along an ungritted country road in very icy conditions. One huge truck had skidded and overturned on to the field below the road and the next one had ended up skew across the road. I think we were aware that some activists had got there before us and managed to get close enough to challenge the military about the very dangerous situation they had created.

We four waited around in the freezing cold for about three hours and drove back to Salisbury. Being part of Cruisewatch, we'd got used to being up at night, monitoring the Cruise missiles travelling along the A34 and the A303 from RAF Greenham Common to their manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain. Salisbury's patch was usually Countess roundabout, Amesbury, where the convoys had to slow down to turn right up to the Plain. We were there to protest, to expose and sometimes disrupt their movements, as were other groups along the route and on the Plain.

Salisbury CND campaigned in the Maltings on the 10th anniversary of the accident by which time Polaris had been replaced by Trident. The Royal Naval Armaments Depot closed in 2004 and is now Dean Hill Business Park.

Kathrine Sealey, January 2017.



Ministry blasted for 'monumental incompetence'

THE 'IMPOSSIBLE' ACCIDENT

by Julian Peckham

THE MINISTRY of Defence has come under fire both nationally and locally following the nuclear weapons transporter crash at West Dean on Saturday.

Local councillors and national politicians have angrily



Police, press and anti-nuclear protesters look on as the mud-encrusted Mammoth Major weapons transporter involved in Saturday's accident is towed to the Royal Naval Armament Depot at West Dean. Picture by Roger Elliott.

Cartoon Comment

demanding to know why a simple patch of ice led to