# Lisa Interview 2 – 18 Oct 2017

## C

I’ve got two questions which I forgot to ask or probably did just forgot to write down ages ago. How old were you when you joined the Air Force?

## Lisa

I was erm twenty twenty-two. It was just before my 23rd birthday so twenty-two.

## C

And what, what what’s your date of birth?

## Lisa

It’s (clears throat) it’s the 11 June 1975. Unintelligible (interrupted by husband).

It’s Caroline for her PhD.

Yes (unintelligible laughing) It will take her years to do her PhD. Go go you have got ironing to do.

## C

Hello.

## Lisa

He’s in his underpants you don’t want to see that.

## C

No not really. No (laughter) I’ve just seen my own husband in his underpants (laughter). What’s

## Lisa

11 June 1975 is my birthday.

## C

And what is your what is you out of service date again remind me?

## Lisa

It was 31 July

## C

Yeh

## Lisa

20 er 16

## C

Right. Easy I will just launch straight into it then we will get into all the good stuff. Get the boring stuff out of the way first. Its lovely to see you. (unintelligible) miss you miss you.

## Lisa

(unintelligible) more than I do it’s not fair.

## C

It’s the lighting.

## Lisa

I doubt that.

## C

Right. So, on reflection how do you feel about leaving the RAF?

## Lisa

Erm I think it was most def the right decision for me there are elements I miss about the RAF and I have found elements of the transition erm to be tougher than I anticipated but on the whole, we have a better quality of life erm and I think that erm I don’t feel as pulled as I did as I did so I think me leaving the RAF at my stage in life was absolutely the right decision.

## C

When you say pulled what do you mean?

## Lisa

I think the Air Force I find on reflection even though I think at the time erm because of the fact that I was struggling with the juggling and childcare and full-time employment I think I unfairly put a lot of my anxiety and negativity at the Air Forces door. So, although they were very very supportive of the fact that I was a full-time time mum effectively

(Interrupted by husband) unintelligible annoying write that down

Yes, I know sweetheart yes, I will, off you go.

Erm they were very understand erm I think that they still in order for you to have a career and that is what the Air Force is all about it’s all about you know you progress into the next rank you go onto the next job etc erm I constantly felt guilty that I wasn’t giving them what they, what they wanted or needed and I always felt I was coming up short and never truly fulling erm my kind of obligations .. will you go away

(laughter)

He comes in naked and he thinks it is hilarious. (laughter) I Erm you know I have completely lost my train of thought…

## C

ooh. After 4 children your husband can still make you blush. Awesome

## Lisa

Ohhhh Caroline what am I to do?

## C

I am going to write this up. “Husband walked in naked to distract ..”

## Lisa

“to distract candidate from …erm yeh I just you know having I think having joined the Air Force with a very clear plan of what my career was gong to be and being able to give then everything and then being in a situation where that wasn’t that wasn’t feasible. I know there are people who do it but for me I just couldn’t default parenting to you know a third party full time you know it just wasn’t me erm and so from that perspective I just never ever felt even though it may not have been overt I just never ever felt that I was the kind of officer I was before I had children.

## C

Yer, which was

## Lisa

Erm and so obviously if you take that element away that is one less bid on my time or my brainpower.

## C

So that’s that’s a really interesting comment the fact that you said erm what you just said you were a a different type of officer after you had children.

## Lisa

Yes

## C

Could you just explain that a little bit?

## Lisa

So, I think before children they had, you know they had me kind of erm I was able to drop everything and go to where ever they wanted me to do erm I was able to do all the extracurricular activities whether they be dining in nights all of that all the ancillary things that make up being in the RAF. I don’t think I was as effective when before having children because I never saw any urgency you know deadlines were fluid to me after having children erm I had a very erm real demand on my time and concentration. But I think that made me a more effective employee because rather than wait ‘til the last minute which is what I had a tendency to do before I had children I had to do it as it came in and one of my erm reporting officers on one of my prev on one of my last jobs before I left said “if, if I know you are dealing with something I know it will get done, I know it will get done before the deadline” because that was the kind of mind set I had got into.

## C

yeh

## Lisa

But what what I really struggled with was this attitude or or this inability to be at their back and call because actually now that I had a child who was far more important to me and who relied on me completely, I was their mother. Erm that I needed to you know the Air Force had to share me you know effectively and so I was a different officer in many ways I was better … I think, I had more compassion I had more empathy erm I had a better I would argue ethic in terms of you know completing tasks and you know not leaving things to chance so even if some <<<<><> happened I was completely on top of it you know

## C

Yer

## Lisa

For a large percentage of the time. However, I couldn’t go to things you know that I had done before

## C

Yer

## Lisa

so, you know there was no last minute.com emergencies you know or perceived emergencies erm that I could just drop everything and go to and I think that would have prevented me from going back onto an operational squadron. Erm and essentially you know put paid to my career in the RAF because I could never go back to that type of emp you know employment. If I had stayed at High Wycombe you know HQ Air er doing a lot of the HQ stuff quite easily but that wasn’t that wasn’t to be

## C

Mmmhm

## Lisa

they wanted me to go onto a squadron and I couldn’t have done that, especially not on my own which was essentially what was going to have to happen.

## C

Yeh, yep ok. So, is there anything you would change about your leaving experience on reflection?

## Lisa

Erm, I don’t think so actually I have thought about this a lot because there are elements I do miss I think that there was no recovering in my career from having kids in so far as I was so far behind the drag curve having had 3 children very very close together I I didn’t have the time to make up and so therefore I would have been in a job where my peers some of which I felt you know .. I’ll be really honest who I didn’t feel were as effective as I was were surpassing me because they didn’t necessarily have the you know the personal commitments that I had or effectively they had a wife at home to do all the bits

## C

Yeh

## Lisa

And they could go off somewhere at a moment’s notice to a you know a job <<<<><>< where I couldn’t do that.

## C

Yeh.

## Lisa

Erm so I think I left at the right time in terms of I am glad I didn’t leave it any longer. The transition that’s a tricky one I think I wish I had been more selfish in my transition I wish I’d said I to them on many occasions I really need this is no longer my primary concern erm you know I have a course to go on or you know I have interview prep to do whatever and I think that led to me being quite lazy in my selection of erm employment after I left and I went into the reserves because it was easy whereas I had the opportunity of going into you know I number of different industries but because I didn’t feel that, I didn’t want to leave a job half done in the Air Force

## C

Yeh

## Lisa

and I wish in hindsight I had been more selfish. I just thought actually they are not going to bat an eye lid when I go, and quite rightly so, erm and I need to think about me and what I want to do and I do wish I had been a bit more selfish when I left.

## C

Why, why quite rightly so? Why shouldn’t they bat an eye lid?

## Lisa

Erm because I think at the end of the day there is it’s it’s a an organisation it’s a machine I am a very small part of that, a tiny little part of that, and you know where I step off somebody else will quite happily you know step into into that place. I think what they miss out on is that erm you know they have invested a lot in me in terms of skill sets, experience that you cannot replicate by going on a course erm you know contacts, networking that has taken years to get has been dis-guarded and somebody else even though they can step into my shoes in terms of the actual job may not have all of the soft skills or ancillary skill that erm that I spent a lot of time and effort you know erm getting erm but I think I took the Air Force very personally when I was in and now getting out the other side I kind of wish I had seen it in a much more business type perspective if you see what I mean you know you know I wish I hadn’t taken things so literally and so personally and being to a certain extent you know erm quite erm quite moralistic in you know certain decisions I made and just seen it as a as a career but that’s you know that’s in hindsight it’s very different when you are in.

## C

So, so the actual erm leaving process itself then would you say that is fairly uncomplicated did you find it …ok?

## Lisa

I actually found it (laughs) it was quite it was I think it was the first time in a really really long time I actually felt invested in. Because even though I struggled with erm taking full advantage of it I know there are people out there who take absolutely full advantage of it erm there is an awful lot of support and and erm you know kind of financial support out there for you to transition I wish I had thought longer or or kind of lea<>< leading up to the leaving even though it was quite a relatively quick decision to take my option point I wish I had really thought what I wanted to do when I left and how that would fit into my projected lifestyle but I actually think that erm I actually genuinely feel that the actual transition process was actually very straight forward and you were invested in. I had you know I had money at my disposal I had any number of curse I could go on I mean there is a whole catalogue of of things that that you can do and whereas I had struggled before to spend my Standard Learning Credits because it was all this isn’t in the interests of the Air Force I could do anything I literally choose anything I wanted to do.

## C

Yes

## Lisa

Erm, and I figured they’d invest, if I had felt as invested whilst I was in erm you know I’m not sure I they probably would have got a few more years out of me. But you know I think for me I left at the right time. The transition was actually very very straight forward and even now I still get e-mails as I am sure you know erm I don’t know if you still do Caroline but you know I am sure you did afterwards they ask me how I am getting on do I need any help erm you know I am a member of the or or I.. you know I subscribe to the Facebook page of the Officers Association and there’s always really useful erm podcasts on there about networking about how to use linked-in.

## C

Yer

## Lisa

So actually, most other any other organisations erm those elements I have been really impressed with.

## C

Good. Excellent.

## Lisa

Even though I have no intention of using them

## C

(Laughs) But you know they are there. So, what

## Lisa

Absolutely.

## C

So, what is it you miss most do you think?

## Lisa

The camaraderie and the community and whilst I have you know Have started to set up a little bit of a network here it is not the same it’s just not the same you know. There is something very unique about the Armed Forces and I don’t know what it is. But you know I I genuinely miss I mean I bumped into a girl who I lived round the corner from in quarters and she’s moved back here with her husband he has not quite moved across yet he is still doing the weekend commute but I I was so happy to see her and I mean genuinely beside myself and I hugged her so tightly that afterwards she sent me a text saying that was such a lovely hug you <<><><> erm we have to meet up for coffee and I knew I knew that we will do but I was so it was such a strange thing because she and I wouldn’t necessarily been big friends when we lived so close by, we mixed in the same circles you know we walked to school to do the school run but when I saw her it was like this really familiar comforting you know it was very strange you know I I don’t remember feeling that way when I saw my family when I moved back to NI. (laughter) But yes. I am being dead I am being absolutely serious when I saw her “Oh my God”, it was just like you know it’s something really familiar and I miss that more than anything else and that’s even with the work colleagues that I shave still kept in contact with erm you know I miss the banter, I miss the banter and I miss the going for coffee and I miss having a laugh. I I miss that bit.

## C

So, would you say you still consider yourself part of the military family, the extended military family?

## Lisa

No.

## C

No?

## Lisa

I feel very no. I absolutely feel on the outside of it and it might be for where I am living erm but the friends that I have, I think it transcend transcended the Air Force if you see what I mean? you know erm even friends that I haven’ like, you know like yourself I genuinely get a kick out of speaking to you know you and people that I I wouldn’t necessarily phone everyday and speak to on a regular basis but it’s it’s just lovely it’s a very warm comforting feeling but I very much feel as as an ex, I don’t quite feel as though it’s a veteran I don’t like that term. Erm I may have the badge but I have no intention of wearing it for at least 30 years erm (laughs) but I definitely fell and it’s really strange because when people ask you what you know did you have a career before you had children and I…….. (recording broken)

## C

You’ve gone …

## Lisa

….. and I’m telling, those that I do tell, that I was in the Air Force. I am very proud of it. But Erm I mean I get there is a reserve Sqn here that had a job going and it was right up my street it was a training job and erm I spoke to the 2 ic who I know and I was having a long conversation with him and it was really strange “you should come and” and I thought I really don’t want to. I’ve I have left now and actually I am quite happy to be ex you know if I do go into employment I want to go into something else I I don’t want to relive any glory days. It’s it’s a nice memory now. But I don’t feel part of the brethren at all.

## C

So, with that in mind then do you think that your military experience has any day to day or weekly impact on your life in terms of how you go about doing things?

## Lisa

Oh God yeh, I think, Yeh I do I think it has shaped me as an individual without a shadow of a doubt I think it gave me opportunities that I would never had otherwise erm I think it made me in many ways a better person. Erm but I think it also, because it is such a unique bubble, I am very very scared of and I will use that word I am very scared of going into civvi street. And even though my friends who have transitioned, my friend Gale, who is living here she is ex-Air Force she has set up her own business very successful you know and she has said you have nothing to worry about you really have got nothing to worry about I am absolutely petrified of going into civvi street and either not living up to expectation or you know just not being able to hold my own. But I think erm there are many things that the Air Force has taught me and has shown me that actually it has absolutely shaped who I am without without question you know erm your sense of community getting involved in my children’s schools whereas before I would probably of never you know of put myself forward and said Oh I will help out or I’ll organise this or whatever things like families’ day I am in the middle of it because Jesus if you can’t organise a family’s day or a summer ball or whatever it’s just the same thing so I think it does but I I don’t I don’t necessarily think about it everyday and think Oh you know erm but it has it absolutely has shaped me.

22.38

## C

So, what do you think the future holds then?

## Lisa

Erm Lisa I think for the imm yer erm I think for the immediate future it’s about erm I mean I have obviously got >><><> so its about getting them to you know where they need to be erm I have looked at I have updated my cv I think this time next year I will start to look at what opportunities are around here erm I think I am quite lucky as I say my friend erm is in the sort of employment that I would like to go into and said she has said she would be quite happy to, she does like contract work so she would be happy to give some work my way so I could dip my toe in and see how it went I think the difficulty over here is it is a very small market there isn’t a huge selection of opportunities it is somewhere er so I think it is immediately just getting us settled really but I would like to go back to work I just don’t want to go back full time. Erm you know I am not saying I wouldn’t I wouldn’t go and work for the reserve sqn but to be honest Caroline they would have to make it pretty damm appealing for me to consider it you know working this antiquated you must turn up at half past eight and you must be there ‘til 5 o’clock come rain or shine whether you’ve got work or not is not I have moved past that really you know so yeh I am quite happy where I am at the moment I must confess

## C

That’s good, that’s brilliant.

## Lisa

Yeh I think I am lucky in the fact that there’s no pressure on me to go back to work you know my husband erm is in a fortunate position that for for financial reasons I am not having to go back and full-time work that earns this much money. But you know there will come a time where actually that will have, you know naturally, especially as we send all 4 of them to the same school (laughing). Erm but I think I would also like to you know. I don’t think I would like to be pottering around on my own with nothing to occupy myself and whether you know I do study or part time work or volunteering or whatever it might be I need to do something

## C

Yeh

## Lisa

I don’t think I could sit (25.28) you know and and <<>>> be a quintessential housewife who you know cooks and cleans and does laundry and that would bore the tits off me it bores the tits of me now I can’t imagine having that as my you know main focus in life it will kill me, <<><>< kill me. <<><>< supposed to say that word. Sorry. Erm

(laughing)

Yes it yes it <<><><><

(laughter)

## C

Its too late now. You can’t take it back you have said it.

## Lisa

(laughing) I know. Can you take it out I don’t want people thinking ill of me? I’ve got a right potty mouth.

## C

My supervisor loves it when I get a bit or swearing in. So, I er

## Lisa

I’m quite sweary Mary I’ve had to say to a couple of mums I’m really sorry. Cause you know they don’t swear as much as I do, at all.

## C

No, I I so it’s great that you erm that you you seem happy.

## Lisa

Och I think I am. I mean <<><>< find there is huge aspects of my life that I find really boring and I miss as I say large aspects of the RAF, erm the community and camaraderie and even some of the work even some of the work I was involved in I really got a kick out of. Erm but I think on the whole things couldn’t have gone on the way they were I couldn’t kept on being a flight lieutenant, I couldn’t kept being you know passed over for promotion because I couldn’t you know I couldn’t deliver what they wanted me to. Erm and then never being able to really be a parent I was just I wasn’t doing anything properly you know nothing was getting done properly there was always something that was suffering so it it couldn’t have gone on the way it was. I had to get …

## C

And how that

## Lisa

It was only about a week ago one of my one of my friends who used to working employment policy erm and when we were having this discussion about you know flexible working and working from home and all that kind of stuff and she was saying oh you know it’s just we just need to change attitudes and stuff. And I had a chat with her the other day and she said oh I’ve been working from the RAF club for the last week, cause her husband on some course, so she said I’m not coming into work I’m going to work from the RAF club and I thought you know you have got no children and you have got no commitments and yet it, you know, for every parent for every mother who has had to **fight** just to even get out of work on time you know who is still delivering exactly what the, you know, you my lady have just been able to swan about where ever you want to. You know and even Charlotte who used to, her husband was out in the ME and she used to go out to the ME for months on end working from home by the pool.

## C

Really as a regular?

## Lisa

You know Oh yes Oh yes, she’s. I mean she just lovely and I would you know and I don’t mean to speak ill of her cause she is a lovely girl, very conscientious, but her husband happens to be a Senior Officer and she happens to be a Flight Lieutenant at the time erm you know who they were married he was out in XXX he was out in the middleast somewhere you know so he could get promoted and she was back in the UK and erm she couldn’t go with him so they were happy to release her for months on end to go and work out in the ME and you think you know I used to feel guilty about taking a lap top home and working from home when when one of my kids was ill. And it was across the road!

## C

<<><>I’m shaking my head because I know exactly who you mean. (29.27)

## Lisa

Yes.

## C

And yer Some people seem to manage to make things work for themselves don’t they, although she does have a child, doesn’t she? I thought she

## Lisa

She has. So, the reasons she couldn’t go was because erm er she wasn’t allowed to take her child out of the country which is fair enough and I don’t envy her position at all.

## C

Yeh

## Lisa

But I ……. (recording interrupted)

## C

Oh, I have lost you it has frozen again.

## Lisa

can you hear me

## C

Oh, you are back again

## Lisa

<><><>< Hello Toby.

## S

Come on Tobes.

## C

Ni night say ninight.

## Lisa

How tall is he? you won’t remember me but I remember you you were in my little girl’s class at nursery.

<<><><><><

Toby (blows a raspberry)

## C

Excuse Me!

## Lisa

(laughs)

## C

He is being

## Lisa

I wonder where he gets that from Caroline?

## C

He is being removed.

## S

Sorry

## C

It’s alright, its nothing to what Lisa’s husband did earlier.

## Lisa

Oh no no no you don’t want to know.

(laughter) <><><><><><

## C

Well not on camera

## Lisa

Thankfully thankfully I don’t think anyone would want to see that.

<><><

## C

I’ve been told to turn you down.

## Lisa

><><><

## C

Can you go can you turn it down?

## Lisa

Oh, Sorry it’s my big booming voice.

## C

No, it’s the volume I’ve got on the erm the speaker to make sure I can record properly but that’s fine cause I have go the digital anyway. (31.08) so yeh yeh that is interesting some people just seem to be able to make it work or or are somehow really able to make the compromises to make it work.

## Lisa

Yeh

## C

I don’t think anyone gets it on a plate. That

## Lisa

No no absolutely I don’t think they do. I don’t think I mean she is definitely you know she didn’t have an easy ride they had just got married when he got posted erm but I you know spending months away from her job

## C

Yer

## Lisa

<<><><>< didn’t do her career any harm cause she got promoted after it so you know I’m I think if you have a sponsor I think you can make anything work but if you are just a plebe like me then you know everything is just a bit you know a bit more black and white in terms of what you can and cannot do

## C

Yer

## Lisa

I don’t regret it I don’t regret it at all but erm I maybe should of left a little bit more sooner than I did.

## C

Well (laughs) yeh I think I think well I left at the first opportunity I could really well no I extended for 6 months cause I couldn’t make my mind up so it wasn’t exactly the the first opportunity but erm I certainly don’t have any regrets.

## Lisa

No you see I mean I I mean I think I struggled mentally and emotionally with the transition, nothing to do with the Air Force, but just the thought of going from being fully employed with a wage and a<><>< and a purpose outside of the home to then become an almost a nobody and I felt a bit of a nobody when I left but I think I have got my groove back and I think I’ve realised that actually the Air Force wasn’t who I was I was just somebody in the Air force and so while there are elements that I have lost there are elements that are easily replaced with something else, something that I would argue are more applicable to my life now. Than erm than the RAF cause I wasn’t making the most of it I wasn’t going on, you know, expeds and I wasn’t going to happy hours on a Thurs night and I wasn’t going to Dining In Nights and I wasn’t going to all that stuff so actually it ended up just being a job and a bloody pain in the arse at that. So

(laughter)

You know. I kind of figured that yeh I left at the first the first pensionable option that I had so actually stayed ‘til the right point but …. So it kinds of feels a million miles away my brother-in-law has applied for the Air Force at the moment and I still find that I get very protective of the Air Force almost cause he’s he is quite erm well he is 18 so he is quite young, he’s quite lazy and he thinks the Air Force is just going to give him a job and I have had to try and explain to him you know there is a lot of people who want you know what you are planning for and you need to work for and you need to prove that you know. And I almost got quite protective of the Air Force cause, you know, unless you are worthy you are not getting in. (laughter) My old recruiter hat came on again <><><X, Y and Z. I think he will enjoy it and I think he will be an asset to them but I did kind of think flippin heck erm you know I still I still feel quite protective in many areas of the RAF erm even a little bit you know they haven’t necessarily erm afforded me the same courtesy but heigh-ho. How is life up at Witt sorry sorry we are still in interview mode.

## C

Well actually that’s about it unless there is anything you want to add, so?

## Lisa

No no no I think it’s erm I think a big part of I think the longer you stay in the bigger part of your life it becomes. But I think the further I move away from it the less significance it will have, other things will fill its, you know, I I I actually remember going to the Battle of Britain erm service in Westminster Abbey and speaking to the old <><><>< women who had served in second World or or even afterwards or who had been spouses who had been you know out in erm Aden etc you know during the kind of post war era and I kind of listening to them and I could never imagine being alive as an adult longer than I had been in the Air Force. Cause actually I was only in the Air Force 18 years there will come a time when I will have been a civilian, an adult civilian, for longer than I was in the Air Force erm and whereas that used to absolutely freak me out I can’t I can’t think that I I I can see that the further away you get from your service career the more that you leave some of the negativity behind and you start seeing it in a more balanced view. And maybe a bit of both <><><><>

## C

yes

## Lisa

I can only remember the good bits.

## C

Yes (laughs)

## Lisa

Like the Falklands.

## C

(laughing) Yes right I am going to stop there. Cause you have given me some good stuff.

## Lisa

Oh have I. I like to be of use.

38 Minutes