Claire Interview 3

C

So there has been a few big changes over the last few years, do you still feel attached t the RAF?

Claire

I'm attached in a way because I work at DE&S so the RAF is a customer but I see it from a customer point of view, I don't think I feel any more for it as such

C

Why do you think that is?

Claire

Because I have gained my own self, sense of identity.  I think historically my sense of identity has come from being Flight Leiutenant Jones, Flying Officer Jones all of that but I have my own sense of identity now so I don't need that and I have moved on.  I don't feel as though I need to belong to that, I've got my family and I have got me so.

C

So when you say your identity has shifted somewhat or morphed or your own understanding of what it is or was has changed?

Claire

Its how I view me I don't need to be in a career job its how I define myself, I'm quite happy to be Helen although I quite liked being the Flight Leiutenant it gave me, Squadron Leader was even better because it gave me that feeling that perception of position I couldn't I don't feel that I need it now, whether that has come form maturity, whether that has come from having my daughter and being a mum but I don't feel the need to hanker on to that.  I had a great time and I have some great stories and I still tell the stories but my sense of self comes from internally now it doesn't have to come from that external source.

C

So we havespoken about when you were in the RAF and what you  might miss about it, camaredarie is always quite a key point would you say you have a sense of caarederie in your work environment at the minute or is it just different.

Claire

Its just different we have a mix of military RAF and MoD civil servants within DE&S so I still get the, if I go and sit with EA there are all engineers you get the banter you get that team identity come on we are going for team coffee, we are going to have team butties we are going to have team fish and chips do you want in and I am always included my own ILOC team are it is really difficult to even get people to go for coffee or anything else I don't get the same sense of camaraderie but I like the camaraderie from the engineers is very similar because they are all ex-RAF anyway there are 2 civilians out of 12 and it is that mentality so I kind of get involved in that spirit so it is different.04:00 no where near as much harsh banter real wooh, its a very sensitive environment in that respect but you could say that most of the environments over the last 20 years may have been acceptable 20 years ago in societies become less acceptable.

C

That has pretty much answered the next question actually about discourses and behaviours, there has been a societal change and you can see that

Claire

Choosing to be really offended by something, I always think that is really interesting because its just choosing to be massively offended by I said something at work a year ago which led to the harrassement case between myself and my colleague because I said "Well we can't, we don't have the levers any more between us at our levels I don't have the levers this is something we are going to have to staff up to the grown ups" and its just a phrase, I've heard plenty of other civilians since say it within DE&S it was just a phrase I had used over the years and the individual choose to be really really upset by that but it is quite an interesting one cause I also look what that triggered something internally within her she can choose how emotional or not there is certainly a trigger there and I often think I am being, in this environment its not acceptable but in other meetings within DE&S in a room full of civil servants I've heard that same expression so it was a, it was an interesting dynamic.

C

So it a reference t moving something higher up the command chain its a very colloquial way of putting it.

Claire

yes and the civil service is as hierarchical as the military is, my perception.  People are very interested to know what level I am before they speak to me or before they will book a meeting with me and so I have had my e-mail address changed to say professional 2 which gets me further than C2 cause its seen as a little bit more its seen as a C1 in old terms.  So DE&S has changed its gradings so C2 is a level 2 C1 is a just about a level 3 or a professional 2 its the same thing.

C

So you put now what?

Claire

Professional 2 which is more

C

Opens more doors.

Claire

yes, go figure.  But we don't like the RAF because its very full of rank, but your like - right fine.

C

How would you describe someone who is the porotype RAF officer, how would you describe them.

Claire

Hmm I wouldn't I would chose not to now.  And this goes back to my leadership training at Cranwell where I used to say to people we don't want Borg I think when you join up as a young person there is a perception based on what you think you should be and what you think is expected of you and I tried really hard as an instructor at Cranwell to just be you, you were chosen because of you we don't want Borg, the Star Trek, be yourself.

  So I don't think I would describe it in any way.

C

Let me put it slightly differently then.  What qualities would you admire in a RAF officer?  Or not.

Claire

The confidence factor but without being arrogant and that is something I can ...…. ability to make decisions, emotional intelligence.  I've seen a lot who I would consider to be really good officers but they have got a quota of emotional intelligence whereas I have worked with very analytical, very detached etc but funnily enough those who are detached probably have an easier time of it than the guys I see who are very emotional intelligent.  You have got to be bright you have got to have spark.  But I think the higher up the organisation you go you almost they beat you to play the game and recognise there is a game to be played.  Regardless of your thoughts about it that is the organisation.

C

Do you feel in anyway the need to live up to any of those qualities?

Claire

No and it is quite nice.  Its funny when I went through what 2 year ago.  I can't remember the time lines but when I went through thrive programme a chap called Doctor Rob Kelly I think, that is not the Iraq guy who was shot since.   The chap who has come up with a ,.,.,.,,><>< that you have a choice, you have control influence, you can't control everything you may choose to influence, you may try to influence an environment a person or whatever but if its an environment its luck, that is it.  Nothing more, there are no spirits involved, there is no it was a lucky day.  And if its people you can only influence those who chose to be influenced and its a real eye opener and it made me realise I think the military attracts certain characteristcs the people who are perfectionists, you know completer finishers almost those kind of character traits and you can almost become a characiture of them once you go thorugh and it was that "oh I don't do I" I've been signed off work for 2 weeks because I was having a tough time I don't have to do anything I can be kind to myself or I can choose to look at this in many different ways and that was really interesting.

C

you have done a couple of things like that now since you have left, have you found that instrumental in your ability to move on? and open up a different perspective?

Claire

yes.  10:48 And I was struggling to do that without that help, so the lights have been off through training and before ,<><><><<> there were elements <Brandon Gates><><><> of called whats called the journey programme which is all about blocked energy and is quite avent guard for a lot of people certainly for the environment we have come from its very <><>< working through all of those bits.  There has been takeaways from each of those things that I have done, I've gone so much so that I saw insert name of mutual colleague Millar the other day I thought oh great we can do some mutual coaching I'm seeing her next week or the week after, I don't know when.  And I was like that will be great that will be brilliant but I don't need any work, I don't need to be coached because I am really quite content with where I am in life right now, this is my and I am really enjoying it.  Well I don't want to waste time but I will go along because I think it will be an interesting couple of hours anyway, but I was like I don't feel like I need to be coached to find an answer to any problems there don't really appear to be any.11:57 Cause I am choosing not to make anything a problem.  Yeh it is quite liberating.

C

Do you think you would have been able to explore any of those avenues had you still been in uniform?

Claire

I think I still would have done them because it is interesting for me and I always had going back to 14, 15, 16 I was a hippy as a teenager and my mum and my dad have said well you always were in to that and I think I knid of put a blocker on it for a while, but I think yeh I still think for me I would have still explored them probably less I more open with my civilian friends about The Journey and emotional energy and crystals and all the things that you do the Thrive programme and you go well that is a load of bollocks Claire, you are putting your faith into something that is a rock quite frankly but I actually quite like it I am happy to keep going because and I recognise that but I am more able to be more open to my non-military friends and colleagues a really good example there is a lot of stress in our office in our workplace and I put myself forward and said well I will take some mindfulness sessions I am quite happy to take some people through I am not trained but I get the principles and one of the engineers in the office said ughh he spoke to me as if .. he knew my background he was an ex warrant officer he knew I was a squadron leader and he said well that is 2 hours of my life I wont get back and he was really not being very complimentary about somebody who was trying to give some resilience type awareness which is quite good <><>< doing that in a way.  they are trying to do something they are aware of it, there approach isn't quite working with everybody.  I just turned round and said "I meditate with crystals, Brian" well he was floored and he was like "fuck me" and it was like yep never judge a book by its cover.  But it was …

C

So what do you think is the difference about what motivates you now and what used to motivate you when you were in the Air Force?14:20

Claire

I don't think I need the I think a lot of my self worth and a lot of my self esteem came from my position in the Air Force arguably and I don't think I need that anymore.  Its like well I motivate me I want to go out to work because I like to be challenged but also like to have 2 days at home because I can catch up.  I can do this I can go into town and an ability to do that makes me a nicer person when I am at home so I get more value out of it.  My relationship with my daughter is a lot better because I am not as stressed, my relationship with my partner is a lot better and that's my nucleus.

C

What was your biggest challenge do you think in transitioning out? If you had any

Claire

yeh I've had a few.  Going into a known known what really triggered me was when the ladies at work said you are transitioning Claire you still think you are in the military and I thought how dare you judge me of course I have been of course its going to be different its a different organisation its a different culture and it really triggered in me it took me about a year to accept in the working environment that the organisation is different I don't have the same levers, I don't have the same freedom of action.  I can't make decisions at the same level it took me a year to stop fighting that and just to accept it so that was hard.  Harder than I realised but I can only see that looking back I could not see it at the time.  All I can remember is I was really triggered which tells you everything doesn't it, and I am at the stage now where I don't feel the need, unless its like some Flight Leiutenant twat the other day - I don't feel the need I've got Miss Claire Jones on my

C

That is a response to somebody isn't it? As opposed to its a response to a social situation as opposed to a ...

Claire

yep now I could have chosen to not react but I was triggered and I'm like fuck this.  You're going to ….

C

But he responded to you differently because of that …

Claire

yes he did, there was an absolute shift change in the meeting, my colleague noticed it as well.  She said I wondered how you were going to play that.  I said I know you were I could catch your eye .. I just couldn't quite play him quick enough and it was maybe unfair I shouldn't its a bit like playing with a mouse isn't it.

C

It brings home the reliance military personnel have on that structure, what rank you are wearing and that judgement you are making on someone else in civilian clothing.

Claire

He was he didn't know how to judge me so he took me to be the lowest common denominator rather than being … I laid out my experience and my rank

C

on the table

Claire

on the table he was able to put me into a box in his own mind and go ok all of a sudden the conversation got easier now whether that is now because he could equate to me as he may not have worked with the civil service before or he was just being a knob. I don't know.  I ought not to think he is a knob I ought to give him the benefit of the doubt but although I know I am judging him he is a knob and always will be.

C

What advice would you give to somebody who is just about to leave?  And then maybe somebody who is maybe a year down the road?

Claire

Firstly, whilst you are in a very comfortable environment that pays you a very good wage.  Take it where you can, and where there are things you can do qualifications you can do while you are in while you are still being paid.  Take it.  A friend is about to PVR and I am going go sick, <><><><, it gives you thinking time you can actually go down the preferential  treatment because you are not happy where you are and that is what that system is for <><><><><< there are options  you don't have to PVR while you are in that mindset but I would say take it for all that you can do because you don't get the opportunities that you do when you are a Miss or a Mr, that would be my advice.  Somebody who is a year down the line, I don't know I don't think I would give them any advice.  It depends on how things are going.  Some people would want it some people wouldn't.  You are mater of your own destiny. I'd focus on that cause you are really aren't you, I choose to whinge about my job every now and again but I choose to stay. Cause its convenient if I didn't <><><>< funnily enough there has been an awful lot, this time last year I'd just gone fuck it I've had enough I'm resigning and I was going to resign with no job to go to, no nothing and it took me about 6 months to get to that decision because I thought if I loose my job there is no security I've had 18 years worth of security blanket even if I got made redundant I would get a very nice package and it would be worth my while and I'd still have my pension, going into DE&S I don't know if its brilliant for me certainly on current terms and conditions its not quite right for me but I don't want to leave because, shit, what am I going to do and that whole fear of not knowing what to do I'm really, really threw me for 6 months and I got to that stage and I went no something will come up because I will either make it come up or opportunities will open up to me because I am working and therefore looking at other things.  <><><> get to that stage, don't be afraid of not knowing what is next.  Don't let that hamstring you into doing nothing and being stuck some where where you are potentially unhappy because you are scared of the unknown scared of the I don't know what the next job is going to be.  Whereas if we had been a little bit more entrepreneurial rather than joining up, that fear of the unknown might not be a fear it could be seen as an opportunity.

C

Is there anything else you would like to add about the whole process?

Claire

I am very glad I can walk into a room and be judged on me, on what is in front of people I do like now being judged on me not and what comes out of my mouth rather than these (pats shoulder indicating rank) I find that quite liberating

C

In the professional environment.

Claire

yes. yep I also like the freedoms that I have got.

C

What kind of freedoms?

Claire

I know where I am going to be for the next year, 2years 3 years, 5 years unless I chose to do something different.  If we have to move we have to move but we have got more control.  And I love the fact that I don't have to worry about where I am going to be next year, where is my next posing? I really enjoy where we are now I am really enjoying the house and I am really enjoying not worrying about when that will end cause that is not our forever house we are going to move at some point when we can afford to.  We have probably got 2 more house moves out there at some point, it doesn't really matter but we will be ready rather than being in a position where we have to.

C

Brilliant. The end.