# Annabelle Interview 2 – 2 Oct 2017

## C

So, you erm have settled in yourself ok have you?

## Annabelle

Getting there. Too many changes to have actually say everything is settled yet.

## C

Yeh, how long have you been over now about 2 months?

## Annabelle

Well we arrived in July but of course there was the run in, it was chaotic getting the the house rented out then there was 3 days of here unpacking what we had brought with and us then my husband brought up the truck so it was unpacking the truck stuff then it was a case of all the boxes arrived so it was then unpacking all of the boxes erm then there was 2 weeks where the weather was just hideously hot which was fine but we discovered between after 11 you couldn’t iron otherwise you just leaked everywhere

## C

Oh God

## Annabelle

And then erm between 2 and 4 erm you couldn’t do anything you just did nothing you either slept or watched a movie you just genuinely couldn’t do anything just watch television and after that it was fine so we just worked around those timings.

## C

Yeh

## Annabelle

So, it was ok and then erm and we just got settled and my son went school then my mother, we had a puppy for 3 weeks on foster, then my mum arrived and then half way through her week the puppy went back from foster and then mummy left in the morning and our friends arrived in the afternoon and they went back on Saturday evening and yesterday we went to a water park as a family so today I’ve got no puppy and no friends.

## C

OH (laughs)

## Annabelle

So, it’s a bit odd today. I had some friends come round for an hour after, after they had done their, a good hour, after they had done their erm swimming thing and then I went ohh I am just about to speak to another friend on on Skype this is fine this is fine. Its not like I have been left on my own yet.

## C

Yeh.

## Annabelle

I haven’t been left on my own yet. So.

## C

Ohh. And have you met many new people out there is it a nice patch?

## Annabelle

Erm, it is. The biggest problem for me erm is that I am shit at remembering names. (laughing) So and I said to my husband before we needed to come up with like a hidden T-Card system inside our wardrobe door, this is .. and then you find them on Facebook and you print off their picture, or thumbnail. And then you stick it on and go this is this person they have x number of children and that’s their hubby and that’s where they work and this is where they are at. You know you just have a -Card system so you can <><>< work out who they are. (laughing)

## C

Annabelle, I’ve done it in a notebook before. I’ve done it .. (laughs) because it is you are like there are so many new people and you can’t remember them. I’ve done something similar. Yeh I think it can be quite. Yeh. I just tell people now I’m sorry I am useless sorry please tell me your name again.

## Annabelle

Yep I have got to that point quite happily. I just called I found out at the theatre on Thurs night that a lass I have been calling Gemma for two months is actually called Emma.

(laughing)

## C

Brilliant

## Annabelle

Nobody had actually thought to tell me no that’s not her name that one is called Emma. Never mind.

## C

And you husband, is he fine?

## Annabelle

He is fine. He is enjoying himself. He is tired. He keeps trying to put leave in and failing so and cancelling it. He has had 2 days leave now he had Friday whilst we had friends out and he managed a day a week before our son went back to school and we couldn’t work out why he was so tired and he realised he hasn’t had leave since Easter.

## C

Yeh, that’s rubbish

## Annabelle

Yeh

## C

And moved house, its stressful isn’t it?

## Annabelle

Yeh. So, he ‘ll be fine I just need to tighten things up he has something like 70 odd days leave.

## C

That’s ridiculous.

## Annabelle

Which is fine but it runs out at the end of march. (laughs)

## C

Exactly

## Annabelle

Right so take leave now.

## C

Take every Friday off for the next ..til Christmas at the very least.

## Annabelle

Chance would be a fine thing.

(laughs) yawns

## C

Oh, Bless you. Right shall we crack on and we can do a bit of gossip afterwards.

## Annabelle

Okey doke.

## C

Yeh, its literally 8 or 9 questions erm. It shouldn’t take too long but feel free to diverge or whatever if you want if you know what I mean.

## Annabelle

Yep

## C

So, on reflection how do you feel about leaving the RAF at the moment? That decision that you made.

## Annabelle

That’s a good one as there has been lots of reflection on this one. Erm here I am in an environment where I have only been a wife so provided that I stay in this environment, and I mean this street and the shopping centres (laughing) I’m fine. The second I step into the work environment either to see my husband or to facilitate something I need to do for example I have set up a craft club all the paperwork and sign my life away the second I go anywhere there is uniform I struggle erm because I am in civvies and they don’t necessarily know who I am and I am there and it’s like, there isn’t a “don’t you know who I am?” but there’s the realisation that they don’t know who I was, cause you kind of walk into a room and you are used to them “hello ma’am bla” and of course you just get a hello and you go oh I’m not wearing uniform. Now coming through the gate normally my husband is in the car and gets saluted I came through the gate and I was about to go “no salute today” and I remembered the salute isn’t for me it’s for my husband and I’ve not got my husband in the car today so I don’t get saluted anymore so as I just take a deep breath and don’t make an arse of yourself. So its fine but every so often the transition has a bit of a hic up because of the environment that I am in here erm and then there are some places that I go, I went to PSF on Friday and the LCpl was calling me ma’am because instinctively he’d just realised that the words coming out of my mouth didn’t sound like the standard I don’t know what going on spouse and the words that I was using were acronyms and I was familiar with the system as one would expect with my back ground and therefore they just deduced that perhaps it would just be safer to call me ma’am, which I didn’t pick up on until I was leaving. (6.50)

## C

Mm

## Annabelle

So, I’m kind of I keep getting called back into the system even though I am trying to pull myself away from it. But I am also feeling more comfortable, kind of not in uniform. ….. It was never going to be a cut and dried answer from me you know that.

## C

I know I know it’s just it’s it’s a very familiar thing cause obviously I am living in quarters myself so yeh a lot of similarities there between us.

## Annabelle

Yes. Sometimes I find that if I get into a conversation with somebody I feel the need if they are talking about “oh did you serve?” oh yes like that and it’s like people won’t necessarily ask what rank you were but they will ask what you do or where you were last. So, the last appointments that I did were SO1s so then they, its so “oh so you were a Wg Cdr” well actually technically I just need to explain that I left substantive Sqn Ldr but I so happen to have been.. because I don’t want people to think I am going round telling everyone I was a Wg Cdr

## C

Yep

## Annabelle

Cause I wasn’t. But at the same time the last two jobs I did crazy extremely well at that level. At the same time, I don’t want to confined to a box, so yeh it’s a weird feeling. Yeh I do get it mate cause it is odd.

## C

Can you, cause you said struggle you just said 2things it was a weird feeling so I just want to explore that a little bit but you also said it was a struggle and is that because I am just trying to understand why the struggle almost makes it sound like its uncomfortable.

## Annabelle

It is erm so it is interesting because both the 2\* and the stache have asked because they are trying to fill some er reservist slots out here both of have them have asked if I would do a reservist and I have said no. Erm in reality I would quite happily take the jobs on but I'm not putting a uniform back on again and I am not putting a label on my shoulder because when I did take for that short period of time that reservist job because I had promised the boss that I would help deliver on a project erm I happened to work for an individual who was deter absolutely determined to shoe box me back into the boundaries of the rank that she believed I ought to be permitted to operate within at every opportunity reminded myself and everybody in the room that I was but an SO2 and she would be doing stuff like that and it took the Group Captain to overtly erm pull me back out and the 1\* pull me back out and make the point that the reason I was there and brought in in the first place was because of my connections with the higher ups and that no I didn’t need shoe boxing into an SO2 rank because I had done this job and this job and I knew perfectly well (10.10) what <><><>< erm but that made me realise that I wasn’t prepared to play that game anymore. In the jobs prior I had been given so much rope I could do what I wanted erm and I was punching so far above my weight it was bordering on arrogance but at the same time when somebody was trying to shoe box me in just because of what was on my shoulder and not what was in my head I I I can’t go back. I will not put a label on my shoulder but at the same time I am missing that label, because now I don’t know how I how how do I tell everybody who I am? How do I tell people what I can do? how do people know? You know people walk into a room and they go oh that’s … and you are that … and it gets better because at least I didn’t have a fucking brevet or an RAF erm Regiment flash or you know an ATO flash in the Army or anything like that because you get all these extra badges and it’s like yes I have done this and I have done this don’t have to tell anybody I almost feel like I am one of those Harrier wives, how do you know if you have a Harrier pilot moving in next door don’t worry the wife will tell you in 5 minutes. It’s almost like how do you know that you have got an ex-serving member moving in next door Oh don’t worry she will make sure everybody knows puts the bunting out and put all her memorabilia in the down stairs loo just so you know. You know. So, I don’t have anything in the downstairs loo because I refuse to but at the same time I find myself repeatedly falling foul of trying to put the label out there so people know what I am, without wanting a label it’s the most confusing, difficult, ….. perplexing and it depends where I’m at and what situation I am in, I whether I need to prove myself or whether I don’t. We went to the Battle of Britain the other day, sat there, top table, it said Mrs Smith. I went apoplectic, because my husband had been told. What do you want to be? I said it’s a parade, protocol dictates it should say “Sqn Ldr Retired”. It's a parade. I get there it says Mrs Smith. Now Summer Ball I am not Sqn Ldr Retired I am Mrs Smith cause it’s a social function, why does the protocol team not understand this?

(laughing)

## C

Yeh yeh, I have things in my down stairs loo.

## Annabelle

Have you? So, the world knows! (laughter)

## C

No no, I’ve got the erm you know the picture from Brize with the VC10 on its tail.

## Annabelle

Yes

## C

That one, I’ve got that one I love that one cause it makes me laugh.

Yeh yeh everybody knows I am ex-serving as well but erm one of my neighbours is actually a Lt Col, she is next door. So, and there is a Navy so we are a bit Tri-Service actually. Navy Army Air Force.

## Annabelle

Ex-serving? All ex-serving?

## C

Yeh yeh. But I but this this has been fascinating because I think you have hit on so many different things and what it is it’s that weird feeling I want to talk to you a little bit more about because you said “how do people know who I am? But I don’t want to wear a label on my shoulder.” So why is it important that people know who you are? Why is that why is that causing you causing you angst have you thought about that?

## Annabelle

I know, I know why it is because I I have done so much internal reflection and it is the only way for me to be able to handle myself socially is to understand what I am doing and why and I have had 23 years of well actually I have had forever of being wearing a label and everyone knowing who everyone is and who so and so is and the military is really bad at not just knowing who somebody is but knowing their pedigree. You walk into a room and it’s like penis’s out on the table here we go let’s measure er it the wives don’t do that. I mean I do, I have got beautiful nails now erm and I actually paint them, I actually they are not painted at the moment they have had a few days without paint, but that is all have you noticed? hair, eyebrows I am not doing the eye brows they can fuck that I can’t get my head round that one but I am definitely not painting my toenails but nails and and and erm looking right. I always used to look at wives and go seriously? Do you really have time for that? But now I get it, it is the equivalent of having your own label. I have nails and my hair well it isn’t at the moment because I am having a Pyjama day today because it’s the first day in the month I haven’t had any gin <<><><

(14.56)

Well at least until half past three before I have to start doing the taxi service for my son’s social life. But erm yeh I’m there are different badges and you end up realising you are trying to conform to fit in again but that’s why I think I needed a label because people need to know who I am and I am so used to people knowing who I am and I am suddenly like, how do people know who I am? And then its like how do I let people know who I am? And maybe I shouldn’t let them know quite so much so quickly and in their faceness cause I am not really an intense person at all! oh shit run! I just find it really difficult I think it was much easier in the Air Force to walk into a group of people and know how to engage and know what words to use and to know how to act and to know where to be and to know who to talk to and who you shouldn’t spend too much time talking to because it wouldn’t be seen as appropriate because you are monopolising the wrong person and they are too important to give too much time to you and you just learn where you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to talk to and you get thrown into a bunch of wives and kids and you go, what do I say? How do I talk? and people will eventually go “I don’t know what that means” at the minute and other people will come up to me and go “ok you will know what this means” (laughing)

So, they complete use me as a babel convertor for RAF jargon.

Yeh I guess you just the Air Force is really really bad at brain washing you to walking around with labels.

## C

So, it’s a weird feeling then is that is that got worse since you are here or there or when you were in your own house was that different?

## Annabelle

I don’t know. I guess realistically I am having the longest transition of exit known to man because I left and went straight back in as a reservist, so I didn’t really leave and then I left to come here but I am kind of execs wife and expected to do certain kinds of things anyway erm and on Saturday night we were, on Friday we were representing the station commander at a village a big village social sat at this big posh table at this annual village festival and all the rest of it going on guest of honour and all the rest of it a bit giggly for my husband and I cause we were like how the fuck did this happen? you know he was Gp Capt Stache the weekend before so it is all a bit odd. But because of that everybody sort of knows who I am and I have still got to play the game fitting a label but it is a different one and it is all very odd. So I don’t know, I don’t know if I will I don’t know what will happen when we go back to the UK and I will be in civvi street, in my house, no military people any where near me, no need to have contact with military people apart from through my husband at work and occasionally you know I am <<><>>, social shit anyway so I then I think it will be an even more weird drop but I am actually able to extract myself slowly and almost on my terms but it is still odd the weirdest is when as I say going into the work place, I walk through the door and I, I forget I am not wearing uniform, I forget I have not got rank on my shoulder and it is only when I go “err good morning ma’am??!?!” in my head and then go no its perfectly normal to say good morning or hello because he didn’t just go “ughh” at me it’s like <><><><>< because there is actually no need to put anything else on the end. So, it’s erm, that’s how it’s weird its reconditioning my brain, its reconditioning my brains expectations of others. Everybody else is I guess being perfectly normal I just forget I am in the environment in a different mould now, it’s just it’s a terrible reconditioning of the brain and I've yeh I just need to work work out what I am meant to be doing.

## C

If you could describe that feeling in one word or two words what how would you describe it? That sort of ...

## Annabelle

Actually, disconcerting and lost.  .....

## C

That'll do it thank you.

(laughter)

## Annabelle

I hate to <<><> otherwise

## C

Sorry?

## Annabelle

React I can see you react to that erm statement as well.

## C

I right well, I got, we were at the Summer Ball and a young female Flt LT of the Logs Branch looked at me and said so are you just a wife?

## Annabelle

GASP

## C

(laughing) I did I did do that, I went GASPING.

## Annabelle

You see I would have gone No sweetie unlike you being just a Flt Lt.  (laughter)

## C

yeh well she was with her she was with her mother so I didn't erm I didn't want to be harsh and I thought you know what I have probably done that when I was her age.

## Annabelle

I know that is the worst thing.  You are right how guilty I feel being so dismissive and not meaning to be disrespectful of wives.

## C

Yeh

## Annabelle

And you suddenly go Oh my God, Oh my God do they think of me like that? Do you know yeh there was a yeah. It’s weird isn't it and it’s like oh! I know what you are thinking and it ain't nice! (laughter)

## C

Indeed Indeed

## Annabelle

Maybe that's why we feel the need to be quite so overt in letting them all know we weren't just a wife.

## C

I've failed

## Annabelle

>><><>> Because we were so dismissive of them when we were serving.

## C

I don't know if I was dismissive as much as lacked understanding.  Why would you have that understanding cause we weren't ..

## Annabelle

yeah.

## C

of it but I do feel the need to tell them because otherwise I feel like I would be ling to them. Almost you know not lying but miss representing myself almost.

## Annabelle

there are some wives who change how they engage with you they get quite uneasy when they discover that you are ex-serving almost like you are a spy. (laughter) erm or you get that bit well you understand what they are talking about then erm or they will say they are having a problem with something but oh yeh you won’t have that problem cause you know how to fix it. And I'm well yeh well true so why don't you come and  ask me and I can come and help you and  I have engaged a lot some of that is more to do with the role22:06 I undertake here because there will be a I happened to be in the HIVE and somebody was having a problem and I was able to go actually no, I can argument what the HIVE has just told you, you will be able to do this this and this you will be able to do that and the woman was like how do you know that? and I was well I used to be in charge of it a long long time ago so if you go and speak to those people they will sort it and if you don't get anywhere come back to me or where does hubby work? tell them to go and speak to the boss and if you really get stuck come to the HIVE, spoke to the HIVE and they said if this doesn't get sorted go to the OC of the Wg and I will sort it.  Why the OC? Cause that is my husband.  Oh! you know, I was just ..

## C

yeah

## Annabelle

So, its swings and round abouts’ it has its positives and its negatives it helps and it doesn't help it puts peoples backs up or people embrace it.  I think it is just realising people are people and I am no longer important, and I am no longer need people don't need to come and speak to me just to make sure they have put the right tick in cause I am not important enough anymore.  Whereas obviously the last 2 jobs, obviously not the reservist job, but the last 2 jobs being in the 2\* outer office and the 3\*s office people would make sure they spoke to me and were nice to me just in case they needed to ask a favour whereas now it’s like who the fuck are you why do I need to talk to you?  You are not important there is someone over there who is more important, I am not going to put myself out to come and talk to you because you can't scratch my back anymore.

## C

Its

## Annabelle

yeah yeh

## C

That's only question 1. (laughing)

## Annabelle

Oh sweetheart.

## C

No, its brilliant stuff no apologies needed I think we could just talk about that for the next hour to be honest with you but erm I think we need, I understand, I understand, where you are coming from because

## Annabelle

Been there seen it done it wearing the T-Shirt.

## C

very similar.  Ok. Question 2 then.  thinking of your leaving experience then and bearing in mind what you said you feel like you have been in the longest transition in Christendom.  what is the one thing you would change about your leaving experience, this whole transition period?

## Annabelle

I wouldn't I would change everybody else's leaving experience because I believe that when you hit your 2 year point they should seriously look at reducing your hours to ADC hours erm or the system needs to consider making you a reservist for a year for 18 months because when I left, I mean I know I left under a degree of duress because I had to, I kind of felt I had to leave for life for things that were more important.  but it it took that period of time for me to make my brain engage on my leaving now if there is someone that is leaving because they really want to leave and they are not going to have any mental issues with losing their label and their badge and everything else then yeh I get it but for those of us who are leaving because life has got to a point where you have to leave or leaving because erm you are getting old and you have reached that exit point where you have got to leave I think if there was the ability for us to glideslope it down I think it would help us mentally let go and mentally embrace as we leave and join because when you are on the resettlement you kind of save it all to the last minute and go woo hoo I am going to have the world’s longest holiday known to man yeh hey then what am I going to do? and the system doesn't force you to reduce your working hours it doesn't force that glide slope and I think it should.  And I think one of the easiest ways for the system is to stick you into ADC.

## C

So almost you are just at full pelt right up until you stop working

## Annabelle

yeh

## C

and that doesn't give you the time to mentally adjust

## Annabelle

yeh yeh you don’t' you don't you don't do it so it should there should almost be you know how they say you've you have left but you are actually still on our reserve list and we can call you back for up to 6 years or whatever it is. (26.33) that would be something and it's something my husband will raise if he gets the opportunity to.

## C

yeah, it’s almost like it’s almost like tailoring the system isn't it? So, the individual it is

## Annabelle

yeah

## C

presented at the moment as a one size fits all solution.

## Annabelle

yeh, some of us might need a might need a slide down.

## C

yeh yeh, next question you have kind of covered already its it how would you describe what the the leaving process felt like but you have kind of kind of talked about it already.

## Annabelle

yeh

## C

erm so I think we can skip that one unless there is anything you want to add?

## Annabelle

yeh I mean in the matter of sense it was devastating, erm in much of a rush even though you know it’s coming it still comes far faster than you realise and then you are suddenly out there on your own.  Erm I at least knew I was going straight back I could I mean I told you last time about the taking my ID card and putting it safely in the Warrant Officers draw I couldn't bear anything to happen to it, this time it was like I want to watch you shred it I want to watch you shred it. "We are not allowed to do that anymore ma'am we have to send it away".  "what I was all ready to watch you go and shred it!" But last time I was in tears handing it over and the WO put it specially in his draw, so I was in such a mental different space this time than last time so. I have 2 very different experiences and yet they weren't that far apart.

## C

yeh, time wise they weren't far apart?

## Annabelle

yeh.

## C

So so why? why do you think that is then?

## Annabelle

I'd had this glide slope because of the f taking on the ADC reservist job too I had been all the bits that I didn't like, all the being put in a box all the people oh you are only that and you can only be of this rank and therefore you can only do that, being shoe horned into a box.  Erm was exacerbated 10-fold "hi gorgeous" was exacerbated 10-fold by erm the Lt Col that was my boss.  "Do you want to wave hello?"

## C

Hiii/Hello check you out hello.

## Annabelle

The fresh bread is on the side it’s still warm I only took it out half an hr ago, it’s alright.  Oh yeh I am a domestic diva now.02:41 second recording.

Fresh bread every morning and today I have done 4 kilos of apples for the freezer, plums are being stewed down tomatoes that we bought several kilos of are being stewed down to make basic tomatoes which I shall spit half for soup and half for pasta mix erm the other stuff that went in for salsa <<<>>>

## C

Very nice

## Annabelle

yeh I have turned into a domestic goddess.  And the ironing is done. (laughter) I have goals in life you see I do have a record <<><> on my wall when I first got here in the first 2 weeks I went We've run out of toilet roll, the bathroom is looking a bit dirty, erm well my son has run out of pants, Oh and I'm just like how <<<>><> you lazy bitch you have done nothing. <.<><.<><><>I'm thinking I have but yes there are things that have to be routinely so I was right that's it quite literally I did a on Monday so I have an hours chores to do in the morning which does mean the whole house gets done through the week.  Cause out here cause of the dust you have to mop every other day you need to hover every other day cause the ouchees come in and you stand on the carpet and they are called ouchees cause you go ouch! And its fucking painful erm but so it’s all there now then I have a spec chore to do every day but people came out into my corridor and "Bloody Hell" cause I've got a battle rhythm of the chores I do and where all the sports clubs and fitness things are and all the rest of it and then I have got erm my husband’s diary for the month by week printed of DII so I know where he is so I can fit stuff round him or flex stuff or <<><>     and then we have got the our month planner which is already colour coded and (laughter) <><>< it’s a bit like going into ops really our corridor. Erm but we all know what is happening, you have got to with this, so some skills I have taken and it really does mean that I have been running the household a bit like that.  So yeah somethings haven't changed. (laughter)

## C

What What erm what would you say that you miss the most then about the military?

## Annabelle

Being a round peg in a round hole.  Feeling comfortable that's what I miss. I miss fitting and even when I if I think about it logically I didn't really fit I felt more comfortable there than I do here at the minute (laughter).  So, it’s the familiar, I miss the familiar of actually is the sentence I miss the familiar that is all.

## C

Now, now this this next question is a bit silly really bearing in mind where you are erm but do you still see yourself as part of the military family and if so in what way?

## Annabelle

yeh in a big way (laughing) I feel like I feel like erm if you can imagine the station commander's wife as mum I kind of feel like one of her one of her sort of like aunts or uncles or I feel like I am sort of duty mum. Kind of a role that comes with his.

## C

Which I get because obviously being there he is he has got the Wg to look after and but ..

## Annabelle

His Wing is a two thirds of the size of the station.

## C

And do you think you kind of touched on it earlier but obviously as his wife you have a military position almost as you said 06:29 you know you’re going to the summer ball as a Mrs as a wife of

## Annabelle

yeh

## C

But do you find that do you feel that you have more responsibility than the other wives because of his position or do you feel you have more responsibility with the wives to help them because of your background.

## Annabelle

I don't know I couldn't discern right now. Right now, here it is because of his position and it is a role that is expected.  I mean I went on the course I had to go on the erm execs, er station commanders and exec officers’ spouses course.

## C

Oh, I didn't know there was a course!

## Annabelle

Yeh there is a course.

## C

Tell me. Tell me more (laughing)

## Annabelle

It’s at Shrivenham. (husband says something) Erm My husband will send you well he will send hubby through the details.

## C

yeh

## Annabelle

can you do that Smith?

## C

How long is the course?

## Annabelle

Its 4 days at Shriv.  Erm Well its 3 or 4, I slept there 3 times so I thought it was 4 days but It might have been 3 days 3 nights but anyway it is in Shriv it’s enough of a week to cause disruption.  Erm and childcare issues but erm yeh it I was a bit

## C

I've got to go on a course on how to be a wife.

## Annabelle

erm but actually it was a really good course

(laughing)

## C

It was a really good course because you had some of the widowed spouses come and brief you, you had station commander’s wives come and explain some of the things they have had to deal with.  And issues they have had to get their heads round and VIPs sleeping in their house like Her Majesty the Queen. Erm because her helicopter got fogged in and you know so you get to hear all sorts of things that you so for me I went yeh that makes sense or yeh I know about that but some of them were like .. they started off with the yeh whatever I don't even know why I am here, I am here because of my husband, I don't have to be here and I am here to be seen to be doing the right thing.  Some of the wi some of the spouses and on ours were all wives but some of the spouses where like "I'm not fucking going to that, it’s not my job it’s his job" those that did turn up but turned up because they felt they were begrudgingly there were like "fucking hell I am glad I turned up".  Erm ok this is this this is a conj this is a dual job this is not there are things I've got to do and there and there are things that I have got to keep my eyes open for that hubby wont or working spouse in our case all hubby's wouldn't have been able to see cause they don't go to coscuts in the middle of the day when the mum looks like she is ready to just hand herself from the nearest rafters cause she has got 3 young kids screaming around her ankles and dads has gone off to work again. You know Dads don't C

yeah

## Annabelle

see that and my husband certainly wouldn't he would just see hubby at work looking fine.

There have been many times I have already said to my husband yeh I don't know who that person works for but you need to find out because you need to watch that wife.  Because or this because or do you know (the young lass in the hairdressers - hubby) yeh the young lass in the hairdressers, you know she was getting the run around  because she had been with her partner for 5 years but she was out here with her parents so she was here with her parents as the sponsor but as soon as they left island she then finds her out herself as somebody that has been with a partner for 5 years and and suddenly the system kicked off and went "well you are just trying to stay out here on a visa as a dependent when you're not" and because she literally back to back <<><> her parents onto this I've been with this bloke so far what's it called when you are sort of married but not really married

## C

Civil partnership

## Annabelle

yep that's it. So, they wouldn't do (sigh) so there are certain levels of <><><>< serious relationship not in a quarter or anything but just to stay in the sovereign base area on a visa <><> we just picked up on it in the hair dressers now as it was it was getting sorted but my husband monitored it erm but (<><><><><>< husband talking) oh yeh so I was picking up some stuff on <><>< Bay which is basically E-bay but inside the wire.  Erm I went to pick something up and one of the wives was having a really bad day of it and she went "oh I am really sorry I'm just I don't mean to be teary but" and it just all came and I said "What's the matter?"  and I just thought switch heads I am not just shopping right now and I just said well what is going on and it just all came out.  Hubby was supposed to be going back and the date had been changed and they didn't know when and they didn't know where they were going to and they had to get the kids into the school and bla and it all just all came tumbling and it was too much for her.  And she you know erm I was like ok well where do they work and it was ok now I know where you work and I just came back and went Hubby and it was one of his SACs.  But it was so such a big tear erm you know and you just ask the questions and the squadron warrant came back and the squadron warrant did the squadron warrant thing and the next thing you know she was like "woo hoo" on face book.  "We know where we are going we know where we are going" and they don't know I came back and said somebody needs to do something cause they are getting the run a round and they had 2 young boys that start school this year and they are going to spend 5 minutes here and they're going to get booked into another one and she doesn't want them in the same classroom so at least and she was getting and I was like right ok. Let’s see what we can do so yeh I never really get to get away from that. So that question was weird is indescribable I can't delineate between whether it's what I used to do or whether it is the job here because (<><><><>-husband speaks) no you are not.  You are a pain in the ass because I try and tell you how to do your job. (<<><>< husband speaks). There you go did that help any?

## C

yes yes it it yes it has.  Erm so where where, moving on then.  So, where where do you see yourself in a years’ time because you will still be out in Cyprus.

## Annabelle

Lying in the sun going ha ha it’s raining in England. (laughter) Sorry.

## C

Hey it’s a nice sunny day here today autumnal but sunny.

## Annabelle

Oh, it is absolutely roasting here it's now in the high 20's as opposed to the low 40'syes hubby just asked if we needed sun cream at the swimming pool yesterday? (laughing) we did I am brown now.

## C

we were conker hunting yesterday.

## Annabelle

Ahhh cool. yeh we are going pine cone hunting cause I need them for Christmas decorations so but no conquers. Right come on then.

## C

yes, so where do you see yourself in a years’ time do you, you said you have been offered the

## Annabelle

No

## C

reservist jobs but do you see

## Annabelle

I don't know I have stopped I've stopped trying to work this one out now part of the problem was I was trying to work out what I needed to be and I had no idea so I have just decided to stop.  I have decided I am going to try to be play do for the next 12 months and see where I go.  There are too many there's too many things trying to shape me and I'm just trying to be ... for a control freak it’s really hard but I think the only way to do this is to bounce around and see what shape I come out because I don't know what I am supposed to be right now.  So, I am just going to find out what I end up as. It’s really hard it’s really hard because it’s not my natural personality but I have tried taking control and that hasn't worked (laughter) you've got to let go and go right hands off the wheel where do we end up. it’s like <><><plan take your hands off and see where we get. <><><><><>< where do we end up.

## C

Brilliant. Ok. So what erm what do you think has been your biggest personal challenge then as you have adjusted over this last year, 14 months and 3 ,...so much has happened since then, I know but

## Annabelle

<><><>< er what has been my biggest challenge? erm not divorcing my husband because I hated him still having a career and knowing what he was doing and basically doing my career for me.  And not allowing that negativity to poison how I actually feel about him because it would have been very very easy for it to have become a hatred of him and him progressing and him living my life for me and I had given it all up for him and bla and it turning into something horrible and I think last time we spoke I lost my temper with him and I am glad I did because that allowed several15:40 hours of dialogue then for it all to become clear but it allowed me to realise that the bitterness was running up towards him and it wasn't meant to be at him it was just the pain and the hurt and the disillusionment and loss and all the rest of it coming to the fore but it allowed me to realise that I was projecting that him and I needed to realise that it wasn't  his fault. It’s just the way life goes.  Once I realised that I think the biggest challenge was to, occasionally I would throw stones at him and sometimes he would catch them and sometimes he'd say ouch but most of the time we had to have a lot of discussion and work through it together and it has been very much it has had to be a partnership to come through this it's not a one person way of transitioning we've both had to transition we've both had to adjust we have both had to alter erm and I think the biggest challenge has not been divorcing my husband and I mean that in the most genuine terms because I absolutely adore him and the world knows that.  But at the same time, it could have been so easy that it could have poisoned what we have got. yeh.

## C

Again, I can, I can understand yeh.  So where withal that in mind you seem very happy you seem quite positive.

## Annabelle

yeh I think so I still get the occasional I don't get a day of it anymore I used to have blue days. I don't get blue days anymore now and again I might wallow for an hour or so then kick myself up the ass.  But there is too much going on there is a child running round wanting stuff there's <><><><>< it helps the sun shines a lot er (laughs) <><>< it helps it’s like the continuing summer out here.  Erm again like I said I've taken my hands off the wheel that takes a lot of pressure off that takes a lot of expectation away it takes a lot of I am just like let’s see what happens, it’s as scary as fuck. It really is but at the same time it takes a lot of pressure away.

## C

MMM. so what do you think gives you ..... a lot of more questions sort of centre going back to work and you are not and so where do you think you get that sense of sense of self from what what you know?

## Annabelle

(Laughs) you say I am not going back to work, however, on Facebook somebody asked who, is there anybody is there a craft club or is anybody looking at setting one up? bla bla bla sewing lessons and alike and the next thing I know several of my friends are like oh ohoh you and doing screen shots of this is you lark so the next thing is I know on Friday on Friday (says by to husband) ok sweetheart take care. Erm so the erm next thing I know is on Friday I was signing my life away and was setting up a craft club and a Facebook page and we have got a plan somewhere for us to me for a craft club which is social and at the same time my business license is in which had thankfully a couple of lines on the bottom a couple of strands that said you know impromptu ad hoc as requested erm instructions/workshops but it sounds like I might be teaching <><>

## C

It sounds like what sorry?

## Annabelle

I might be teaching a lot.

## C

Cool

## Annabelle

So, we'll see I don’t know it’s a bit terrifying and then I get brave again and then I get terrified ad then I get brave but I will be fine, just take it in baby steps small classes at first on simple things and we will grow it from there as my confidence grows.

## C

So, you are setting this is a social thing but you just said a business license as well so are you setting up as a business?

## Annabelle

yes, so you have to out here if you are doing anything in that gives you any money <><>< you have to have that registered because it is just the way it is inside the wire and also on the island erm but if somebody wants me to teach them how to sew I will be doing a course so to be able to do that I need to be able to take money and I also need to set up a location to do that and all the rest of it and to do any of that you need to have a business license.  So, I think I might be doing 2 or 3 days a week teaching at this rate.

## C

And is that something you are looking forward to?

## Annabelle

Well remember this moulding thing again? I don't know if I if it happens and I can do it and I enjoy it then yes if I get part way down the road and I decide I don't like it I will see if I can find somebody else to take it on.  I might just say look guys I am sorry I am not enjoying this it’s taking up too much of my life it doesn't fit where our lives need to be. Erm I'm having to dial this back or stop it all together I haven't got if lots of people are depending on me doing this I will be like Oh I can't let them down and I am like well no I can do it and if it doesn't work or I have to dial it back or it’s not what people want then I'm sorry I'll offer what I can and if they don't like it tough.

## C

Good.

## Annabelle

yeh.

## C

It’s really exciting as well though isn't it’s nice, yeh its good.

## Annabelle

yeh I am sleeping which helps.  That is probably why I look happy I am not happy I am just sleeping. I am just rested (laughter) I am not waking up at 2 in the morning and writing lists for 4 hours filling out OJAR sentences that pop into my head in the middle of my dream, you know. Oh, I had better write that one down that was brilliant it’s what I wanted to make you know.SO I am sleeping normally and I am having a normal life pattern as opposed to that horrible stressful place that I was for much of the latter half of my career. In fact, from Sqn Ldr onwards it kind of went from this is a game, this is fun this is all great fun as a Flt Lt and then I went back over my career and the second I got Sqn Ldr it went from being fun to serious.  And that that's the change its really quite good fun when you are a Flt Lt.  Maybe I will take an FTRS slot as a Flt Lt, no I will just piss <><>< can you imagine trying to be my Sqn Ldr or Wg Cdr if I were a Flt Lt I would drive people nuts.

## C

No

## Annabelle

And that is another reason why it’s not possible because I can't put myself back in a box so it ain't going to happen.

## C

No, that is brilliant you have given me so much it has been fantastic. I really really thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to to add, is there anything else that you popped into your head?

## Annabelle

Not with your tape recorder on, no.

## C

No.  I can turn it off then.  I will turn it off.  Thank you interview over.

## Annabelle

Good so now there was several times when I said something to you and you reacted.

## C

hang on hang on. hand on. Why do you not want to discuss this bit recorded?

## Annabelle

Because I want to talk about you.

## C

But that can be part of it.  I get <><><><>< I get to do self-reflection as well.

## Annabelle

Ok if you are happy recording yourself.

## C

I am because I have to do it anyway it’s part of the PhD.

## Annabelle

Ok.

## C

yeh, back on.

## Annabelle

There was several times where I said stuff where I clearly hit the emotional nail on the head.

## C

yeh, you went

## Annabelle

And I expected you to be further down the line than you are and you are not and that has caused me to be worried.

## C

No, I don't think so because I well I've talked about this with my supervisors basically moving back onto camp it has made me it makes you it it has a massive effect because you are it’s in your face every day.  And you know I am not living where I want to live I have to have an ID card to get to my own house erm you know coming through the gate those first couple of weeks when I was coming through the gate all the time and you know they are just looking at you like you are nobody, and it is like ok I am nobody. Actually, erm it does takes a bit of getting used to again and like well I've been we moved back in in March and I am a lot more relaxed about it than I was in April.  I am a bit more chilled out about it and it helps that I have friends who are also ex-serving living here, so it is quite nice the three of us, erm can share those experiences but for me I look out of my window and what do I see? I see people wandering past in uniform whereas in Wendover I didn't have that.  So

## Annabelle

But that is a grieving process. We are still grieving its bizarre

## C

It is stretching out the transition process without a doubt. I actually went for a job interview a t Cranwell last week as well for a lecturer on IOT, the

## Annabelle

Oh wow.

## C

Lecturing in erm OS you know operational studies and doing the academics basically because they have got professional academics in there now.  Doing all the OS lecturers and all the SERE stuff and various other ad hoc courses. yeh they are all Kings College lecturers and lecturers from Portsmouth, so the job was advertised and I thought I think I would like that and it was very very strange.

## Annabelle

But you would find that what you would be employed to do instructing would probably change because they would tap into what we are doing now and we would also tap into you can see both sides you are not only going to be lecturing ops studies, do you know what I mean?

## C

yeah. I do but they do have a very strict schedule my God do they have a very strict schedule.

26:02

## C

but it was but also, he said tome cause at one point we did something similar a year or two we called somebody up and we made her a reservist and we did it that way and I just thought, if I come back into that building I am coming back in civvies.

## Annabelle

yeh and I get that I get it I would quite happily do the SO1 job at the HQ but I am not putting a uniform on.

## C

No

## Annabelle

they can make me a reservist they can pay me as a reservist but I am not putting a uniform on and I am not putting rank on.

## C

yeh I think that is part of it I don't want to be boxed in again, yeh it is interesting.28:15

*separate conversation with her husband*

*28:55*

## C

I am quite happy I think because my PhD gives me my outlet.

## Annabelle

I think the craft thing does for me but you have got something you have found something to hold onto. you have something to hold on I was floating around too much then I was trying to shove myself into places and now it’s just like let’s just see where I end up I am not on the flotsam and jetsam of life.

## C

there is no bad thing about taking some time out and taking the pressure off.

*conversation continues*

## C

I think it is a hard thing to ask. It is like swallowing your medicine isn't it coming back onto a military environment when you have walked away from it. And erm yeh its not I don't feel as trapped as I thought I would because we are behind the wire.

## Annabelle

yeh

## C

Like you are I don't feel as trapped as I thought I would but yeh I feel more trapped in the village at Wittering cause you can't bloody walk anywhere cause it is such a small village.

## Annabelle

honey, you used the word trapped but I am more relaxed because I grew up inside the wire so I have gone (sigh) I feel safe.  I don't feel trapped at all.  I don't feel trapped at all I feel safe I am in a known environment I might not have my labels and I might not have my same hole to go and sit in but it is familiarish I don't need to worry about locking doors or anything like that back behind the wire I am ok.

## C

yeh we hardly lock out doors.  Yeh but I have always felt that whenever I have lived on camp I have always felt trapped I have never liked living behind the wire in a mess or

## Annabelle

wow

## C

Yeh I remember at Brize, Cranwell was impressive, Marham is just so isolated anyway but it was Brize it was when I was at Brize and my room in the mess and my office at work were about 100m apart and I though Oh My god my life has shrunk to this

## Annabelle

Gasp

## C

tiny little thing and I thought oh no I have got to get out of here.

## Annabelle

Isn't that funny.  For us when we went to High Wycombe I wanted to be behind the wire I was desperate to be behind the wire and people were like why and I was like its inside the wire.  All the other quarter are outside the wire and I wanted to be inside.

 35:06

*discussion continues irrelevant to topic.*

*Full interview time 26.32 plus 35.06 = 1hr 1.38*