# Emma Interview 1 - 18 Oct 2017

(officer, 16 years, married, yes, -1)

## C

You were in the UAS and you were sponsored?

## Emma

I was so yeh

## C

So, what were you then? 18 when you

## C

So, I went through I went to Cranwell OASC when I was 17.

Recording Interrupted – Check tape.

## C

So, it was just something that really appealed that Air Traffic Control.

## Emma

Do you know what, I couldn't even tell you why. I I literally couldn't tell you why I wanted to be an Air Traffic Controller and I wanted to join the Air Force.  And everyone was like why you want to do it and I was like I don't know. I just do (laughter) So my parents weren't in the military er none of my friends were I wasn't in ATC that was just what I wanted to do.

## C

It just came out of the

## Emma

Erm I figure I must have seen a TV show or something or something along the lines but I always knew that is what I wanted to do.

## C

And you never had any doubts while you were at university or

## Emma

No

## C

You were quite happy then and one of the richest students on the block as well with a bursary.

## Emma

Well yeh, well sort of. (laughter) Bursaries weren't worth as much then.

## C

alright

## Emma

yeh I was quite happy, happy with Air Traffic.

## C

It was just ok

## Emma

It was just what I was going to do.

## C

yeh

## Emma

If I had my time again would I do it? I don't know. Knowing what I know now.  But I enjoyed it so.

## C

yeh, so so when did you start to think about leaving?

## Emma

I'd always, I'd always always said that I didn't think having children and being in the military was compatible.  Erm so erm I'd al (dog barking) I'd always sort of said that as soon as I'd had children I would probably leave and obviously I anticipated having children slightly younger than I actually did so I remember speaking to Sarah actually and just saying that because I've only got a couple of years left now it’s not worth while leaving so erm yeh I only had children by the time I'd done mat leave I only had  a year to do to get to 16 years so

## C

But you still ended up PvRing and that is because of the contract changes?

## Emma

yeh so we sort of looked round it obviously when the NEM extensions came out I wasn't pregnant at the time so I was married but I wasn't pregnant, and erm we had IVF and I don't think we had started the IVF yet so I sort of I looked at it and it their didn't seem to be any disadvantage by signing on to the contract extension because I could still PvR and I could still take my option point.  So, I think there was a very slight penalty in my pension but it was like, minimal from what I could work out. So, I took it thinking well if I can't have children then at least I've got a job for another 5-6 years.  So, I kind of did it through that sort of way of doing things.

## C

ok.

## Emma

Er and then yeh it was it was actually an old desk officer that told me about the 16-year thing when I was pregnant he was like "er you do know you qualify for your pension at 16 years it’s not the 16/38 that people think it is" I was like "Do I?!!! So yes so and its as I said earlier not many people seem to know about that so I knew that my 16 years, well 16 years would have been up in August however because I took 3 months the 3 months additional mat leave I then had to count on <><><>< which hopefully I have done properly and worked out the date properly (laughter) otherwise I will have a really nasty shock in November.

## C

yeh, you could put your uniform back on for a day or something, you would turn up and then they would send you away

## Emma

I think I think I will have something like a week slacks so I'm I am pretty confident so

## C

ok

## Emma

The pension forecast has it on the right date so yeh so erm I think we I played around with multiple different options because obviously I wouldn't of counted as a PvR if I had left on my option point next July but my husband I sort of discussed that and said well the children are going to be 3 by the time or nearly three by the time I actually finish work so for the additional 6months in work, well I haven't really got them so here I've got essentially a full year with them and then pre-school so they are still doing a bit of nursery and things but I've got more time with them which is why essentially I am leaving.  Cause I am leaving to be a stay at home mum I am not leaving to go into another career or anything so yeh its it just all ties in.05:20

## C

so why, you said you have always thought that erm having kids isn't compatible with the military can you just sort of dig into that a bit for me?

## Emma

I personally, I guess, I guess it depends on your upbringing so my mum was always around to take me to school to pick me up for school to do packed lunch to be around for school holidays and half terms, take me to after school clubs, come to sports days, plays and things like that and I guess I kind of I never thought that that's would be something I would be able to do really in the military whilst delivering what I want to do through my job if that makes sense.  Because I know they have got flexible working times and things like that but part of me thinks that I would never be able to fully commit to doing everything that I wanted to do by staying in so it was kind of one or the other very much for me.  I I didn't want to do a half-arsed job staying in and I definitely didn't want to do an OOA and again I know you can avoid commitments and things like that but that is not why we are in the military.  We are in the military because we go away and do things, yeh, yeh.  I might as well get a different job that is more compatible to it than being in the military but not being in the military.  Does that make sense?

## C

It does it is all those extra commitments and that flexibility that

## Emma

yeh yeh its its the extra commitments that whilst I know there are methods of avoiding those extra commitments to me I just don't think you should.

## C

yep. I understand I think that is pretty much where I was actually, yeh.  So erm can I ask you then, 16 years plus this 3 in the UAS what would be your most vivid memory of the military of your military experience?  I big question I think but what's the one thing that pops into your head?07:37

## Emma

Do you know what there is just so much that tying it down to just one thing I mean like the two OOAs that I did were amazing and hard in different ways, so, they are very vivid memories but so I was visiting officer for a erm the wife of a serviceman that died and to me that was still one of the proudest things that I ever did in my time in the military so yeh

## C

can can you talk to me about that?  What was it that

## Emma

yeh so that that was er so th the just after I had been posted to Lossiemouth so second tour so I did first tour at Leeming went OOA to Basra erm which was difficult came back and was posted to my second tour had only been at there for two or three weeks and then had this phone call saying oh could you do this minor admin task for me er yeh oh you need to report to the station commanders office tomorrow ok I am off sick but I can't control but yeh sure. Thinking it was something like photocopying like, yeh, an admin task, no! No thrown in, thrown into, so he was a SNCO who died at another camp and his wife lived in the local village, so he he he also was relatively close to the station commander who had been the boss he had been on prior to becoming the station commander er but the station commander was OOA at the time so OC Ops was acting stache and yeh it was just, his wife who so she was I think early 30's they didn't have any children and his family lived in the North East her mum lived in Scotland and yeh they just sort of met young had been married a long time, I have got a feeling they had been married for 13/14 years so a long long time cause they had been quite young I think when they had met and got married. and it was er really interesting and it was really good to see how the military dealt with it er it was so he died on the Monday night and the Nimrod crash was the Saturday previous so erm it there was quite a lot of challenges in terms of support

## C

ah hence why you were called in off sick do you think?

## Emma

Yeh well they had basically decided that they needed to find <><><><><><><officers training they volunteered because it was a young widow they wanted a female visiting officer they didn't want someone who was going to go out of area, who was going to be posted there for quite a while and that they managed to release so I think it came down to about 2 or 3 of us all within Air Traffic and because I was off sick and bran new posted in they kind of opted for me, cause I think one of the girls was due to go out of area, someone else was due to do something else and there had just been a few bits and pieces as to how it got to me.  So erm so yeh it ended up with the station commander's PA did all the admin side of things she was the only admin person left so I had no admin support apart from her, she'd she'd had quite a lot of experience think she had worked at JCCC previously so she had quite a lot of knowledge of it and bits and pieces and generally was brilliant and we actually got on really, really well and have stayed in contact ever since so I I we went up a couple of years ago and we met up just for dinner and things so erm so it definitely had its challenges there were definitely things that could have been done better, yeh, and I think I was I was quite lucky with the family and bits and pieces and I met some interesting characters along the way er there was an incident that I had at his home base when I went down well a couple of things happened there when we had gone down to see the body er I ended up having to ring the station commander, well acting station commander to go could you ring this person and tell them to back off please.

## C

Really

## Emma

yeh so, but that was good I had quite a lot of support from one of the Wing Commanders there who had actually not long lost her husband who gave quite a lot of support and things and ye her it lasted longer than I thought it would and it was more intense than I thought it would be but yeh it was good to see how the Air force can do things and it was interesting meeting some of the visiting officers who were doing the Kinloss side of things because they had a very different experience to what I's had so yeh, she she was very pro-military she came to speak at visiting officers courses afterwards and bits and pieces and things like that and very much worked with me from that side of it.

## C

yeh yeh that is quite a big job for a second tourist to

## Emma

yeh especially as it is, remember you used to get that blue folder at Cranwell didn't you at IOT of stuff and visiting officer covered about 3 lines of it and that was the sum total of what I knew of being a visiting officer so I texted my friend and said what's this about and  she was like oh its supporting the bereaved family and I was like 'oh!' but there was very little insight apart from that.

## C

yeh

## Emma

But I think in the years afterwards the Ari Force learnt quite a lot.

## C

yeh but you found it a rewarding experience?

## Emma

 I did, I did find it rewarding actually it was it yeh it was in it was in a weird way nice to see how we do things or can-do things.  If they are done well.

## C

OK I am going to pick up on something else you said you mentioned Basra, you did an Out of Area in Basra and what you said that was difficult what was ... that about?

## Emma

er do you remember the Lynx that crashed or got shot down.  I was controlling that.

## C

oh gosh

## Emma

so, it had been quite a difficult time.14:55 shall we say

## C

yeh I bet

## Emma

But that shall we say is an example of how the Air Force treated me particularly badly erm my boss at the time was a complete arse hole for want of any other word what so ever.  Erm and about three days after it happened he said "you seem a bit out of sorts"

## C

Oh my god

Emma

yeh so I am at this point a first tourist newly promoted Flight Lieutenant I think I had only become a Flight Lieutenant in the February and this happened in the May so I or I might have become a Flight Lieutenant the year before I can't quite remember the exact timings.

## C

yeh

## Emma

and he'd so it happened at lunch time I was the only person really in the tower apart from a brand-new SAC, who actually was a really switched on SAC but she was brand new 2 days in Basra brand new and they were all at lunch at it happened. and erm yeh it was that was very strange because I had literally about 2 minutes before we had had the phone call from helicopter ops who said I've not spoken to that aircraft in a while and there had just been a few things that had happened yeh the boss had come back I'd been sort of left to stay on console for a bit and then he had sent me up to the tower, I don't know if you had ever did Basra but obviously

## C

yeh I did

## Emma

its flipping miles to get up to the VCR side of things and he basically left me up there for the afternoon.

## C

After it had happened?

## Emma

yeh and then I'd erm come back down at 5 o'clock and he went well you need to write a report on what happened and I was like .... by 5 or 6 o'clock whatever time it was shift hand over time I was like but the entire time I had been sat upstairs thinking what is happening? what is going on? have they been found? that side of things because we didn't know.

## C

you knew the aircraft had gone in but you didn't quite understand

## Emma

No and he'd sort of said you've got a report to write I was like alright what do I need to write? what do I need to do?  Expecting that my boss would kind of go well this is it, look I'll sit down and help you. and he said well you are a Flight Lieutenant you know where the documents are.

## C

Oh, my goodness

## Emma

and I was like urrrrr ok so I stayed, so this has happened at 6 o'clock at night you need to get it done straight away, the taped transcript needs to get done which the night shift will do and I sat in the tower didn't go back then cause I need to write this report bearing in mind dinner time and you know what mean times were like in Basra erm and at half past ten that night the flight sergeant said, the night shift was Flight sergeant a warrant officer and another sergeant that I got on really quite well with and they were like you need to go back you are back in work at 6 o'clock tomorrow morning and you have not eaten any dinner yet.  They were really good and they sort of chatted through a few bits and pieces with me and dropped me off at the pizza hut to get a pizza and bits and pieces like that but not once did he come back to the tower to check on me not once did he mention anything until three days letter when he said 'you seem a little bit out of sorts'.

## C

Oh my God.

## Emma

and I'm urrmm I wonder why that is?  and then the first person, the first person that actually mentioned anything was the then station commander of Leeming who saw me in the erm you know the rear garden outside the bar at Leeming?

## C

yeh oh yeh gosh

## Emma

so there is like a bar and a bit of a beer garden right next to that and I think I might have been I think there was like a happy hour and it was the weekend I was moving out or something so I had been flitting in and out and he sort of collared me to talk to me and went by the  way I hear I hear you were controlling I don't know how he found out I don't know how he found out whether  it had just come filtering back to him but he was the first person to go 'how are you? how was that' sort of thing, so. and that was like 2, 2 and a half months later. So.

## C

I am just really shocked at that really shocked.  an example of how the Air Force can do things badly compared to.19:25

## Emma

yeh

## C

Cause I knew Sar

## Emma

So, then it was quite nice then almost to go straight in and do the visiting officer to see how they can do things really well.

## C

yeh, cause I knew Sarah Jayne cause I was at Northolt with her.

## Emma

yeh I was on IOT with her as well.

## C

yeh well that is even worse cause you knew her personally.

## Emma

yeh but no never once I, I don't think it really <><><on me19:54 like the <><>< flight commander he came up a couple of days later and he was really shaken up but obviously SATCO is supposed to be in charge of them and he was sort of describing what had happened at the scene and things like that.  And I just don't think he gave any support to anybody I don't think he ever checked on the SAC, I know she wasn't controlling but she was still sitting there when it happened and I don't think she ever checked or sorry he ever checked on her to check that she was alright.20:21 or anything and there had been a lot of faff and things because there had been a bit of confusion over POBs erm so like the number of people that were on board because they had warned out of something they had checked it on our tower frequency on something else and they had checked on with me with something else as well.  So, it they'd all been a bit of faff over everything but yeh I just thought it was exceptionally bad.  But hey ho he got promoted to Wing Commander.  He was also the person that told me I would never ever get promoted to Squadron Leader, which obviously I haven't, because I wasn't prepared to stamp on anybody.

## C

Ohhh

## Emma

He also told me I was really, really girlie.

## C

Right

## Emma

Which anybody who knows me would and that was because one night myself and a female SAC so there were only the two girls in the tower so we had decided we were going to have a night of sitting with face masks on, filing our nails and watching friends. Because we just wanted to do something that wasn't wearing ... yucky deserts and he and I think like the boys were taking the piss out of us the next day in work about it and that was it yeh he decided I was really girlie and I was like ok.

## C

Obviously, you can't actually be a girl and be a squadron leader.

## Emma

No, no I wasn't going to be a Squadron Leader because I wasn't prepared to stamp on anybody.

## C

Oh nice!  Yeh oh nice, my God.

## Emma

Anyway.

## C

(laughing) I don't know what to say.

## Emma

Amazing isn't it.

## C

These people you meet occasionally in your career who are just who just appear to be on a different planet.

## Emma

the funny thing was so one of my my best friends, the person I class as my baby brother in the Air Force erm so we were on IOT he was like 18 going through IOT so he was the same age as my actual baby brother.  We had always had that sort of relationship erm this particular person had been his boss at another camp and erm they got on really well and he got married er about 6 years ago he got married and this squadron leader now wing Commander, who is not actually out, was there and I was like "how are things with you?" and he was like "I think I've met you previously haven't I?" And I was like "yes, we were in Basra together" thinking you were my boss!!!

## C

my God he didn't even recognise you

## Emma

for 3 and a half months

## C

He didn't even recognise you!

## Emma

Apparently not.

## C

Mind you maybe you were all glammed, were you all glammed because it was a wedding?

## Emma

Apparently not, but I was like you were my boss for 3 and a half months. I remember people I have met for like a week on a course.  Or if I can't you you kind of oh I recognise you type for thing but when you have worked with someone for that period of time so anyway I was just like it just kind of shows what a complete arse hole you really are. So.

## C

yeh gosh.  Still, I am just still appalled that they didn't ..... that there was no proper care.

## Emma

No but it was 2006.  What care? we didn't really do it.

## C

I know but just on a there might not have been an official package in place back then because what happened was very unusual wasn't it? But still that there wasn't somebody who ..

## Emma

And I and anybody who I have ever told that story to like it’s come out a few times over the years to people that have been my bosses or that I've worked with they are like I'd like to think that as a boss I wold have sat down with you.  Not written your report for you but just sat there with you or taking you to dinner and said we will come back together and write it together.

## C

Yes.

## Emma

And that was all it needed it didn't really need anything else.  I it I probably didn't need anything else I just needed somebody to check. And Mary just needed somebody to check on her but he never did.24:47

## C

Ohh my lord, ok.  I despair sometimes, ok. So, I kind of, I kind of erm I'm trying to <><>, the answer to my next question but erm ..... I am going to ask it anyway because something else might come to mind.  Is there anything that when you were in the Air Force that worried you about erm how how your life was if you know what I mean was there anything that you thought oh I don't like doing this, I am not happy with this?

## Emma

No I mean obviously that but I don't think it’s easy to look back now where I am 16 years down the line and think oh well actually we really didn't do lots of things very well when I first joined up I mean there wasn't the safety culture there wasn't any side of that side of things but at the time I didn't really know any better, whether I was just naïve whether we just didn't do it I think it was probably just a mixture of both.  Where looking back no I think Woooh we got away with quite a lot of stuff when we were when I first joined up.  So, I do think we do things I do things we do a lot of things better now I think we have the tendency to go the other way but, yeh.

## C

So yeh but there is nothing that er there's nothing that ever made you think oh this is wrong this shouldn't be happening

## Emma

not really no

## C

outside of that particular incident.  Is there anything you are particularly concerned about now as you are sort of in that resettlement phase?  You are is there anything that springs to mind where you think oh I am a bit nervous about something.

## Emma

Erm, no I don't think so, sorry I just need to grab my phone and text my mother in law back.  Er, I am like no <><>< erm I don't think so obviously I think it is going to be a massive change because for me I have spent the better part of 20 years being in the military because even when I was at university I was very aware that actually I was joining the Air Force, I had I had a job because you were sponsored type thing so I think that for me it is kind of a little bit strange and a little bit of a loss of like oh it’s been this massive part of me and everything but at the same time as I said to you the other day my husband is still in so there is very much an element of I am going to get a lot of erm those side of things erm from him. So, I don't I won’t really know until I am out I guess but I am still going to have that sort of connection.  Erm I guess, yeh I don't really know it’s kind of   ....       yeh I haven't really thought about it if that makes sense cause although I'm leaving and I know why I am leaving so

## C

and you are content with that

## Emma

yeh I am content I am not I am not I guess a lot of people when they leave are worried about if they are going to find a job or whether  the job that they have got  is going to work out or anything along those type of lines but I am not finding a job I am going to be sitting at home with my children which is ultimately what I wanted to do. So yeh

## C

So, it’s all coming together really, I suppose isn't it?

## Emma

Yeh

## C

Ok the next question is erm it’s not that I want you to go over everything that happened in Basra again but if that is the thing that springs to mind then that is fine erm but the question is If you had a magic wand and you could change one thing about your Air Force experience what would it be?

## Emma

Hhmmmm, (long pause) oh that is a difficult question because I wouldn't necessarily change anything in Basra I just wish he was better. So, but I (long pause) oh I don't know.  No.  (big sigh) part of me wished that I had done more and made more of my time if that makes sense.  So, I wish I had done more AT I wish I'd done things like ski champs or something along those types of line because I didn't do them and I've wasted quite a lot of opportunities that I probably had. Erm

## C

So why, why didn't you do those things do you think?

## Emma

Mostly because I could never get time off work to do them, being in the environment I was working in, but I might of tried to kind of fight a little bit more to get those type of things.  Erm I don't know it’s kind of weird, I sit here as a 16-year Flight Lieutenant, kind of going well like our promotion board got released yesterday and it is all people that where I've mentored going through their first tours that are getting promoted.

## C

yeh

## Emma

as a third tourist and I think well cold I have done more but I was always quite I think I was always too honest with all of my reporting officers that I wanted to leave as soon as I had children.  So, I always worked hard, I always did everything that was asked but I never really got written up for that. So I was always written up quite well but reporting officers were not very good at writing the reports but then I always said I didn't want to be a squadron leader so and they were all quite aware of that so maybe I should have kept my mouth shut a little bit not that I would have taken the promotion if I'd of been offered it if that makes sense.

## C

yeh, why not?

## Emma

because I wanted to be a controller I didn't want to disappear into the deep dark hole of

High Wycombe.

## C

That's fair enough. 31:32 yeh

## Emma

unintelligible

## C

You liked being in the tower that is where you wanted to be.

## Emma

yeh.  I enjoyed doing the job that I was doing, so, yeh

## C

that’s' good

## Emma

It was funny because I always sort of said I wouldn't do anything to harm being promoted but I didn't but I wasn't I was never oh my god I want to be promoted, like 3 or 4 people that I was on IOT with are no Wing Commanders but I've done exactly the same jobs as them so I've done tower exec jobs I have done themes committee jobs I've done the organising functions I've had AOCs commendations I've been a flight commander I've done all of that side of things but it  is marketing yourself isn't it.

## C

That is an interesting way to put it, and you didn't think you did that.

## Emma

I don't know no definitely not.  I haven't been helped by bits and pieces like really bad reporting officers but yeh.

## C

But ultimately it wasn't your goal anyway so

## Emma

So, no no yeh

## C

That is fair enough I think if you were happy and you were doing what you wanted to do I think that 's

## Emma

Exactly, in some ways its weird cause in some ways it would be nice to be recognised for everything that you did but at the same time I am quite happy with the lot that I got. So

## C

yeh that is fine. SO erm how how would you describe military life, this is the question is really just for me to try and get to the bottom of how you perceive military life and how you perceive if differently from civilian life is going to be.

## Emma

woooh, erm I think it is more disciplined than civilian life in terms of like say for example resettlement33:44 the course I was on was a mixture of civvies and military.  Whereas I would always be there 10 minutes early while they would walk through the door at 9 o'clock when the course started and things like that.  So, I think it is going to be little things like that er like haircuts <><> my son is going to be short none of this really wild hair that my nephew has got (laughter) that type of ingrained sort of, have to iron your clothes, be early type side of things which I don't really get from any of my civvi friends that I have got.  So, I think that yeh

## C

That is quite interesting.  I think Steve is the same with Toby's hair.  He is right like hairdressers.

## Emma

My son has got this tiny it it comes down like that and his hair is like really, really short and my husband went I hope you are going to go and get his hair cut this weekend.  I was like really? he needs like half a millimetre off it.  So yeh I can't what was your original question?  What is military life like?

## C

yeh how would you describe it? yeh

## Emma

(sigh) do you know (sigh) you know I just think, I just think it is going to be really different in how things operate and how just in terms if I do go back into the work place like obviously we have obviously got a very clear rank structure and we do this and we report to this person and there's all of this side of things and I talk to my brother who works in the construction industry and it is a completely different kettle of fish when he is like talking to his managing director or anything along those types of things and it’s all and I guess a lot of it is back to the discipline side of things it’s all first name terms it’s all jokey friendly type side of things which we never really have, we are very structured.  Cause it is a very structured type of existence.

## C

ok.  Erm so how long have you not been at work now, how long have you had off?

## Emma

so, June 30th was my last day at work.

## C

so, 2 or 3 months now so how do you feel you are settling into it?

## Emma

Its good I guess it’s been quite weird cause I had sort of a month at home when I finished work and then I went to Devon for 4 weeks to do my first complete resettlement course and then I was back home for 3 weeks then I've had 2 weeks on my next resettlement course then I have been back home for a week now so it has been a bit all over the place.  And then I have been doing a few other things as well so I think it will be a few months before it settles down a little bit.

## C

yeh so you are not actually in a steady routine yet cause you are still taking off for your

courses and stuff?

## Emma

yeh I mean all of that has finished now so yeh I, I am enjoying that fact that erm yeh I am enjoying the fact that I can do what I like and I can commit to things that I couldn't commit to before.  So if I want to go and do something on a Thursday I can go and do something on a Thursday so I have been doing huh so I volunteer for a premature baby charity and erm part of being involved with that I've got involved with essentially NHS STANEVAL so I am a parent representative on the STANEVAL team that they run through the <><>< neo-natal units and they like rank me up yesterday morning going "any chance you can come and do a review the parents just gone sick?" Well yes, I can as long as I can sort my baby sitters out which I could do.  And it is quite nice to be able to do that side of things and then erm there's a world prematurity day fund raising event at the local hospital happening I've been able to go and do that, I'm going my friends starts back from maternity leave next week in work but we are going to soft play on Friday where I was having to miss all of that side of things . So that is nice being able to do that.

## C

yeh ok cool.  So that that decision to leave, the actual decision when you made it how did you feel about it, that?

## Emma

Quite relieved I think, so, it’s kind of strange because we talked about it for so long and it had been it was just a question of when I left as opposed to a precise date as to as to I was definitely going to leave. So I was quite relieved erm I definitely I felt really relieved in June when I finished work because I think the last few months I didn't really enjoy the last year that I was in work erm a lot of that was due to the personalities that I was working with but at the same time a lot of it was I was just waiting to finish, so.  yeh I didn't particularly enjoy controlling I didn't enjoy going into work.  I enjoyed adult conversation cause my husband was Out of Area at the same time as well which probably coupled in quite a lot of things I had post-natal depression as well so that probably didn't help matters either but yeh I just felt kind of relieved that it was all happening. But it was kind of a fait a complete really because I'd gone in we had sort of talked about it I'd made the decision, I'd told the new SATCO that is what I was doing, this was months in advance I rang the desk officer and said this is what I am doing, he spoke to me, he tried to encourage me obviously to stay and I was like at the end of the day my child care bill is £1700 a month and that is with my husband’s parents taking them for a day and a half a week.  I only take home £2500 so it’s just not worth it, so, even taking out any other sort of reasons so I kind of done all that and I was waiting for my pension forecast to come back before I submitted the final clicks on JPA as it were saying yeh so it was a bit kind of like yeh it’s been done but everybody knew that is what I was going to do beforehand.  And then I definitely felt more relieved I think when I finished in June I was like huhh this is better but I think it had just been waiting to leave at that point.  My cousin has just PVR’d as well erm I was chatting to her and its similar sort of reasons.  She finishes March/May I think, also Air Traffic.  Also working at the same tower.

## C

(laughing) That's nice.

## Emma

Well we never actually worked together weirdly she was on the school and has just been out of area and come back and moved across to the Tower and PVR'd at the same time.  It’s quite funny. (laughing).  They were you like your family doesn't like this place does it.

## C

So, a relief well that is nice feeling, isn't it to me it was almost like well now I can move on with my life now.  I can go to the next stage.

## Emma

I think for me it was now like I can really enjoy having the children and spending time with them, and don't get me wrong they do my head in looking after little ones, my husband is like you are more shouty since you finished work, and I'm like hmm you trying bargaining with 2 children all day every day.  He said "you chose to leave you can go back if you want" (laughter) so yeh so yeh it has its challenges but no I think I don't if I had enjoyed the last year would I have felt differently?  I don't know.  But but it has been in the back of my mind for as long as I can remember.  I mean I remember this is going back a long time going on holiday with Steve, as in your husband Steve, and the others and we we went to Egypt.

## C

yes

## Emma

And I remember Louise and I sitting and talking about having children and leaving and what we would do.  And things like that so that is going back a few years (laughs).

## C

But that is interesting isn't it because even back then there was a realisation the two worlds of being a mother or a parent, it’s not necessarily just being mam is it, and er and that Air Force career aren't necessarily ...

## Emma

No, and I like I sat I sat in Bastion and I watched my room rate and the DSATCO both had left their children a t home and I thought I don't know how you can do, I just do not know how you can do it and my cousin had just come back from the Falklands and she really struggled with it and I thought I can't I can't do that.  So

## C

No no it was fundamental to my decision as well if I had stayed in I would have gone away.

## Emma

Were you Admin? Supply?

## C

Logs yeh yeh, logs and the only reason I hadn't was because my kids were so close together that there wasn't time to fit an out of area in between them so yeh.  So, I just from your point of view again just for the tape just to sort of contextualise it, what exactly cause I know my thoughts, but I am interested in yours.  what exactly isn't compatible between the family and the Air Force Career.

## Emma

I personally don't think you can fully commit to doing both and doing a good job of both.  I think you can be a really good mother and be in the Air Force erm but I just don't think you can fully commit without sacrificing a huge amount and it is not something I am prepared to do.  So, my God Daughter her mum is at ACSC at the moment so she is there Monday to Friday and erm my friend is coming back at weekends.  Well I did 4 weeks of that and I wouldn't want to do that for the better part of a year to get on. yeh its I I just couldn't give everything to my career and the Air Force and ultimately, I guess to the people that were working for me as a flight commander and things like that I just couldn't do that without sacrificing something of my children or I would sacrifice that they would need.  So, I didn't want to ever be in the position where they needed something but I couldn’t' t give them it because I had to go and deal with my children, type type thing.46:03

## C

thank you that is fine that is fine.  Erm so what do you think is going to be the biggest challenge you are going to face after you have left?

## Emma

ohh, I think just getting used to not being in the military as I say its 20 years virtually of my life, you could I know UAS is UAS but it was still a commitment and a way of life even back then of things that I could and couldn't do like can't have weird haircuts or weird hair colours or have a glass of wine at lunch time or any of those type of things wear what you like when you want, do what you like when you want without trying to think about necessary consequences and yes I know there are consequences over actions that I do so the type of person that you are is still very it’s not going to change a huge amount but there are still subtle things you don't walk into a shop and think ohh well that is a nice top and that will work well in an officers mess type if you get me that side of things.

## C

yeh yeh I do yes, yeh ok happy with that and you you have chosen to live in your own house and your husband is doing the commute.

## Emma

At the moment, yes.  yeh so like I said to you the other day there are reasons why we are doing that at the moment so how long we do this for I don't know, a lot depends on where his next job is. whether he gets promoted, bits and pieces.  He is fairly disillusioned with life at the moment.  So yeh I think he is almost at the point with the desk officer, send me back I don't care about a career anymore I just want to go home.  Erm and I think if he does that he won’t stay in that long. so yeh what we do or where we do or bits and pieces I don't know.  We have always said he will do this tour and because of the reasons I was staying where we were we would probably move as a family after that if we needed to until the children got to nearly secondary school age and then we want to sort of give them a good foundation and things but I guess we are still relatively flexible to what we are going to do.

## C

So, is where you are now close to your family?

## Emma

So erm my Dad is about 2 and a half hours, my brother is about an hour and a bit and my husband’s parents are about 40 mins away.   So ironically, we are living in the same town as they were when they first got married, ironically.  (laughter)

## C

I suppose it is see what happens next, see how this weekly commute impacts on family life and see what happens.

## Emma

mmm yeh and it is definitely impacting cause my little boy is massively "my daddy" and gets really upset when he leaves, yet it is definitely impacting on him.  My daughter is not quite she seems a bit happier with life, yesterday she was like "is Daddy at work?" "Yes, Daddy is at work", "Daddy back later back later?", but I know by later she kind of means in a few days while my son was like "my daddy I want my Daddy",

## C

yeh its tough.

## Emma

So, I think she has adapted more to it but he is very much a daddy’s boy.

## C

yeh its interesting I think we, I mean Toby gets a lot more upset when Steve goes away than Connie does he is a lot more visibly I mean he is 7 now but he still doesn't like it when Steve is away even for just a night and that is why we ended up moving back to Wittering.50:51 with Steve.

## Emma

yeh, I think as well because I think I think we will move after this because I know my husband is finding it quite hard and definitely the kids are finding it quite hard but it just because of the timing of when he started his job, and the children's medical care and things like that it it just wasn't feasible and my husband was like well you could move down now but he he wanted me to give living here a bit of a go and get to know people and its quite hard getting to know people when you are 37,

## C

you have got to make new friends

## Emma

I know, so especially when you don't really work and the kids don't go to school yet so yeh I I need to work on this which I is guess going back to one of your previous questions probably one of the things I will really miss about the Air Force is the camaraderie and not really having to, it sounds really bad but not having to make an effort to make friends.  Because I haven't spoken to your husband in years but I still know I could sit down quite happy and have a brew with him and catch up and it would be like we spoke 2 days ago so that is what I miss which I don't think you really get in civvi life like my best friend from school it is always quite difficult in some ways when I see her because neither one of us are particularly good at keeping in contact but it is always really awkward for the first hour when we chat because oh ok I don't really know that much about your life anymore whereas with military people you never really get that.

## C

Why do you think that is?

## Emma

I don't know whether it is just because we're so used to moving around and so used to doing a course there and working there for a couple of years and bits and pieces you just have this really wide network don't you of people? Everybody knows everybody who know somebody type scale of things so you very much sort of pick up and move on again so I don't know I guess I guess there is a common theme between all of us and you do get hugely different characters within the Air Force or the military but fundamentally we are all very very similar we are all very similar people in your mindsets because you are in the military so you kind of need to be.

## C

yeh, good point right I think, I think that is all I have got in terms of proper questions is there anything you want to say about this transition experience that sort of comes to mind.

## Emma

No, no I think I am going to be a nice easy case for you. (laughs)

## C

It's all its all really fascinating and I think I have done a dozen or so interviews now and everyone they are all slightly different but some common themes do come out.  Some people have PVR'd like yourself some have actually retired cause they have hit 55 some were made redundant ..

## Emma

You get quite a even amongst the people that have PVR'd though I suspect you get a lot of people that are very bitter and the people who are very happy.  I know there is another girl who said she would do an interview, I don't know if you are doing an interview with her who was Air Traffic now ABM who I was actually on IOT and JASTY with and I expect she would be quite bitter about it.

## C

yeh

## Emma

Even though she PVR'd

## C

I am getting the sense that people are either quite cross and angry or just content and there doesn't seem to be any middle ground.

## Emma

Have you got anyone who has been medically discharged?

## C

Erm I think I might I am still teasing it out,

## Emma

Cause I think medical discharge would be quite interesting.55:16 She's left, when are you looking for people to leave?

## C

Well I have kind of opened it up a bit I found that when I got speaking to (*continued to discuss other potential participants and giving birth) 1:13:48*