Title
God's Own Country: A Documentary

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ABSTRACT

God’s Own Country: A Documentary looks at the on-the-ground effects of governmental austerity in the United Kingdom, through the prism of the inequality and activism in Oxfordshire. The work follows a campaign of domestic violence victims, single mothers whose domestic violence services are being taken away from them by a government that claims that economically and politically they cannot justify the very social fabric and safety net that has supported the most disadvantaged in Britain since the Second World War.

SOURCE LIST

The Oxford Mail
OpenDemocracy
The Guardian
BBC
Novara Media
Dawn Foster, Amelia Gentleman, Danny Dorling

SCRIPT

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<tr>
<th>VIDEO</th>
<th>AUDIO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shots of Oxford Protest / Chanting</td>
<td>Jill: Without universal services, families that are struggling, families in need, families suffering from abuse, become invisible. People don’t see them, they are not in their communities, Oxfordshire County council, might be happy to just help people, once they get into crisis, I say that is immoral. That is wrong. We need to help people before they reach crisis point, prevention is proven. And you know what a lot of people say about, you’re only 2 pay checks away from becoming homeless, it’s very similar with family crisis if you take all of these things away from people, and leave them no place to go, they will hit crisis point.</td>
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<td>Jill campaigning</td>
<td>Oxfordshire environmental [Title Card]: Since 2010, successive Conservative British Governments have chosen “austerity” – cutting social welfare – to deal with a struggling economy Radio montage This is BBC Radio Oxford Toynbee: What’s coming up next month is so horrific, I mean another 40% cut to local authorities, Tory authorities are absolutely appalled by it Butler: the pain has effectively been outsourced to local councils, their budgets have been</td>
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<td>Jill's home</td>
<td>Jill and Jo: Children’s centre</td>
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<td>Jill 0.40 ... basically we’re fighting the Oxfordshire County Council’s proposals to close all 44 children’s centres in the county.</td>
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<td>2.10 basically the biggest problem of our campaign is that a lot of people aren’t really aware of what children’s centres do,</td>
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<td>2.20 so I mean they do lots and lots of universal services for everyone, you don’t have to be referred to them, like baby groups, health visitor drop-ins, stay and play sessions, and there’s all sorts of like a range of course, they also do some great things for referring things for post-natal depression and other types of depression, and they also run courses for people escape from domestic abuse in their homes.</td>
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<th>Jo’s life</th>
<th>Jo Lovell’s story</th>
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<td>11.40 There was no awareness of what was going on, and certainly not in our little village where you know, everything’s happy and all got white picket fences and things like that, it’s very much an “everything’s OK here”, (take a beat)</td>
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<td>I was constantly ridiculed for what (croaky) I was doing, constantly put down, I was not good enough, I was pathetic I was ugly I was stupid.</td>
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<td>6.50 (?) he pushed me and I fell in the bathroom and cut my head open, and he, I drove to the hospital with blood pouring down my face</td>
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<td>all the time we were there he was telling me “you did it to yourself, you did it to yourself, you did it to yourself”, so you start believing that actually you did do it to yourself, when you know you actually didn’t...</td>
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<td>... You’ve got so little worth, so little strength, how the heck are you supposed to start a whole new life?</td>
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<td>24.45 I was told about the childrens’ centre and literally went over and burst into tears</td>
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<td>26.10 You’re not on your own, you’re not making it up, and it’s just that sisterhood, that solidarity,</td>
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<td>43.40 and without the children’s centre or the backup of the early intervention hub going “No, JO, you’re a great mum, you can do it”, things would have – yeah, been very very different, and I probably would have gone back,</td>
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| Danny driving | Dorling: Car & SMC |
around and up St Mary's Church

68.30 Oxfordshire is where you can afford to live if you’re from the English elite where the new overseas elite haven’t yet worked out to be, ~63.55 it’s God’s own country for Tories, it’s a bit like Yorkshire for the Labour Party. This is where you want your plumb seat.
you’d have to go back to 1913 to find it not being Tory, everything’s as it should be. The hunts are still going on Boxing Day. The high street of Woodstock still looks the same. Nobody’s begging outside of the city of Oxford.

102.40 Across the whole county, social services are being cut, services for children are being cut, and visits to the elderly. The budgets for schools are being cut, they haven’t yet cut collecting the rubbish, but they are cutting the children’s centres and the community centres,

108.50 So there’s a growing gulf within the city and within the county, between people who are struggling and people who used to rely on public services or the local buses which of course are also being cut, to people who would never think about getting on the bus.

106.40 And of course you’re seeing rising food banks and people going quietly in shame, first of all to a doctor to ask the doctor to write them a letter, and then along to the church hall, to go and get some tins of food that they don’t really want to eat, because it’s not the food that they would have chosen, but who are they to choose?

107.05 A lot of this happens quietly and in secret. A lot of it is done in shame.

Gowain and Jill walking around and Campaigning

Gowain: : So we’ve be-, basically we’ve been out today signing people up to a pledge campaign which we’re about to launch, we’re asking people to pledge that they won’t vote for any councilor who votes for cuts to children’s centers. I mean one of the important things is ultimately although it’s the county council making those cuts, those cuts have been handed down from government, so I mean ultimately it’s David Cameron who holds the responsibility for this, so we thought while we’re trying to pressure county councilors, we should start this off where the real responsibility lies, and it’s you know, here, in his constituency.

Witney...
we'll use this, whatever details you want to give us, to contact you and let you know how they voted. So you're aware of whether they did the right thing or not. Thank you.

**Dad:** I'm afraid the new, the last, the New Labour administration didn't exactly....i mean they did a lot of good, but they also got involved in stupid wars and they still managed to try to privatize half the national health service

**J:** Well they gave us children’s centres in the first place

**D:** Yeah that's true

**J:** I'll thank them for that

**D:** But also when the Tory, when the coalition government started kicking off about how it’s all their fault for giving us no more, they didn’t fight them back

### Danny in Hinksey

**Danny Dorling – Oxford’s housing & preservation**

116.10 This is a very strange place to suddenly arrive to when you’re 18 years old, you’re put in one of these bedrooms here. It’s all exciting, it’s all new to everybody else, and you probably had quite a good time, or if you didn’t have a good time, you can convince yourself later than you had a good time,

116.20 and then when people talk about changing it, changing the groups who might come in, or changing things around the town, or building on the edge of Oxford, they're talking about changing your childhood, they're talking about changing something that was quite dear to you, that was one of the biggest achievements in your life.

11.55 But the problem is, this is the biggest town between Birmingham and London, the pressure for housing here is immense, and the city has built almost nothing since the late 1970s.

24.45 And so this place is particularly precious to a group of people in Britain who have an extraordinary amount of power. At the top of civil service, the top of the BBC, the top of government, the top of the judiciary, the top of the press. This is where they all lost their virginity.

### Witney

**Video campaigning**

**Gowain:** A fistful of pledge cards, pocketful of pens and a dodgy mobile phone, we're good to go.

**[Witney Children's Centre]**

- **Megan:** As a nanny, children's centres are everything for us

- **Blonde woman:** It’s one of the highlights of our week, so without it, we’d be maybe stuck indoors, or just really struggling to find things to do, so I can’t even describe how fantastic the children’s centre is for us, and without it, you know, (new shot) you know, I can’t begin to describe how that would affect us, really. Keep them open!

**Gowain:** Brilliant, Thank you very much,

**Woman:** Thank you, thanks, bye!

**Jill:** That was great, I’m really pleased. I know and they were really willing and really on
it. I love it. Well, we’ll see...

(looks to Aurora) I know! He’s gone to give the pens back.

**Jo (VO):** She’s just so passionate and powerful. And I’ve learnt a lot from her. And she is so strong. I don’t know how she does it, she’s got two little children. But I think both of us have really struggled with wanting to be invisible and now celebrating our power and being able to be visible. So, between us we kind of play bad cop good cop. But the council haven’t taken very kindly to her. She’s referred to as “that woman”, which we find quite amusing because it means she’s got under their skin.

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**Radio montage #2**

**Bentham:** *We’ve been talking all this morning about cuts to frontline services in Oxfordshire as the county council looks to make 70 millions pounds’ worth of savings over the next four years.*

*Where is the axe going to fall? Right across the board by the looks of it*

..bus subsidies, shut most of our children’s centres, cut back on homelessness support, the list goes on and on

**Liz:** *I have never seen anything like this since 1981, you know through the years of Thatcher we thought things we dreadful, ermm, this is worse, this is far worse.*

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**Town Hall meeting:**

**Hugh 10.45** from June of this year, all subsidized bus services in Oxfordshire will cease to exist. Overnight. They will all go!

**Leslie 29.55** We know that if we all have to close, you’re going to see somewhere in the region of 300-600 more people potentially sleeping rough on the streets of Oxford, under bushes, in allotments, around the county, down the riverbanks, in tents, in shop doorways, just walking around you will see that happening

**Jan 5** We feel very strongly that the cuts, that are being proposed by Oxfordshire County Council will have a massive impact right across the community and that will impact a, in several area, because it will impact on the families who are caring for relatives with learning disabilities and it will inevitably impact on the level of support that people with learning disabilities themselves get.

**Jo McGhee 14.05** Of all the parents with learning disabilities that I’ve met over the years, most of them if they were honest, would admit to at some stage in their lives, feeling like killing their children and themselves because they had no trust in society. Fortunately you do come through that stage, I did years and years ago. But it is a thought that sometimes people trust or don’t trust society because there doesn’t seem to be much there worth
Driving around

Dorling – Car 2

66.40 And you know to give the county council some due, they don’t want to be a truly awful county council, they do not want to make the next set of cuts, that mean that there are almost no children centres, to mean that the visits to the elderly people of Oxford have to stop happening.

67 Their problem is, they can’t explain to the Prime Minister of their own party, that what his chancellor is doing to them requires them to make the cuts that even a true blue conservative area doesn’t want to make. So it is a very bizarre time to be in...

Protest & Cabinet meeting to vote on cuts

Homeless worker:
The cuts are extremely damaging already, if more of them come through, You will see more people on the street, you will see more people in the hospitals, you will see more people in prison, You’ll see families split up, you’ll see increases in people being trafficked, abused, it will be a lose-lose situation, and it does not save money, in the medium to long term. (Either this soundbite or Lesley’s at previous meeting re: homelessness can stay/go)

Jill: .......and children and families will be at risk without these centres!
(Then casual mingling, joking around with campaigners)

**John Tanner** [speech]: In every other county council, where these cuts are being proposed, the Tory and Labour county councils, the local MPs are fighting for their people, but not in Oxfordshire! In Oxfordshire, every Conservative MP is backing these cuts, it's a disgrace.

(booing).

**Jill** [speech]: *Without universal services, families that are struggling, families in need, families suffering from abuse, become invisible. People don’t see them, they are not in their communities, I know for certain that when I suffered from domestic abuse, my abuser would not have let me attend this referral-only, stigmatized service that they are offering. He would not have let me attend, and I would have not received the help of children’s centres to escape that abuse. We do not want another Bullfinch or something similar, in five or ten years’ time. We need prevention now. STOP THE CUTS, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH* [chanting]

**Jill VO:** 28.05 if you get involved in just campaigning for one party nationally you can't necessarily see the difference you’re making, if you get involved with something locally, you can see the difference you’re making.

28.20 but for me, even if it was completely fruitless, I would still shout for children’s centres until the last day because they saved me, and without them, my son and I would have been at risk every day.

**Cabinet meeting**

**Jill** [cabinet meeting testimony]:
Before children’s centres, it was 8 and a half years of domestic abuse, of being beaten on an almost daily basis, then having a baby in the middle of all of that.

**Jo:** but what I do not understand and what I refuse to accept is how this will change the lives of families and children and young people forever. And the system will have failed them.

**Jeff** (Green Party councilor)
Look at this budget and if you have one ounce of humanity, you would never put your hands in the air to support it. You would never this inhumane, immoral budget. And I ask you now to put your hands on the table and say ‘I will not vote for this, I will resign my position,’.

**Leader of Council Hudspeth:** All councilors have a legal requirement to set a balanced budget with no borrowing, so it is a very big challenge for us all.

... But I’d just like to say thank you to all speakers, you have all spoken very eloquently, I can assure you your comments will be taken no board.

(Will you resign then? Heckling)
Councilor Stratford.

**Councilor Stratford:** Thank you.
No-one can be happy with what we’re trying to deliver today, that will go forward to full
council, Nobody wants a budget that is this challenging (resign heckling louder)
The notion of resignation has passed many of us
Jill: Might help you sleep at night!
Ian: Everybody’s had their opportunity to speak, thank you very much, if we could just allow the members of the cabinet to deliberate please, thank you.
LS: What would happen is that a mandarin from Westminster would come down, set a budget, that you would have no say whatsoever, you would have no local input, it would be imposed on you. You can argue whether it’s better if we stood and make cuts, or walked away, maybe of us don’t like what we have to do, it’s easier to stand and fight, than just walk away and say ’let somebody else.

Ian Hudspeth goes to the vote
Voted through
“Shame” from crowd

Titles:

*The council voted through a budget that will close all 44 of Oxfordshire’s Children’s Centres.*

*Social care, homelessness services and disability packages will also all be defunded in Oxfordshire, and across the UK.*

*None of the Conservative Councillors nor the Members for Parliament in Oxfordshire wished to speak in this film.*

[Credits]