

Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN



Issue One
September/October 2013

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Myths, Legends and Fairytales

editor@heredit.com, www.heredit.com
@her_edit

editor: Jayne Phenton
Ann Clark
Sue Christoforou
Allison Lindsay

contributors
Toni Brown
Uta Frith
Di Harney
Maev Kennedy
Bryony Kimmings
Merlyn Riggs

thank you
Chris Couldrey
Warren Johnson
Andrea Tanner

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Her Issue One

3 Her Team

Meet the team

4 Her Editor

Some words about our first issue

5 Her Story

Uta Frith looks back at the female role models she found in the stories and fairytales her mother told her

9 Her Words

Journalist Maev Kennedy celebrates the fierce women who have inspired her

13 Her Culture

Her Edit talks to Scottish artist Merlyn Riggs about her work and an ambitious project to empower the women of Aberdeen

17 Her History

Two women who took part in the legendary protest at Greenham share their experiences at the peace camp

22 Her Questions

Performance artist Bryony Kimmings tells us about the Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model she's created

24 Her Agenda

The events we're looking forward to in the next two months



9



17



3

Her Team

Jayne Phenton (Editor)

After years spent shivering in draughty art studios, the recognition she wasn't going to be an international art star led Jayne to divert her creativity into the world of PR and media. She has led PR campaigns for charities such as Alzheimer's Society and Gingerbread and engaged the national media with scoops such as 'The Search for the Witham Bowl'. Jayne's career has led her to working with high-profile figures and celebrities ranging from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir David Attenborough and Sadie, David Blunkett's guide dog.



Ann Clark

From early days 'mudlarking' on the Thames foreshore to her work as a field monument advisor, Ann's career has been dedicated to the exploration and conservation of our heritage. She is involved with the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group and edited books on single and pregnant women; drug companies, art history and archaeology. In 2009, Ann led a BBC film crew on an all-night stake-out of 'nighthawkers' at a protected heritage site in Sussex. More regularly she is seen 'in the field' with a local women's running group.



Sue Christoforou

Sue is a committed feminist and political activist. As a policy analyst and campaigner she has worked extensively in the third sector with charities such as Mind, MacMillan Cancer Support and Drugscope. Passionate about social justice, Sue has given talks and presentations in the United States and Europe on the social and economic benefits of a more equitable society. Sue's devotion to equality is only matched by her dedication to a rare groove; she is nominally the best disco dancer in south London.



Allison Lindsay

Allison is a business psychologist working in change management for a major communications agency. After several years working in the events industry she decided it was time for a radical career change, and retrained, completing her Masters in Occupational Psychology in 2010. She has a deep interest in work life balance and well being, and enjoys coaching others. A keen traveller, she has visited 75 countries to date, her spirit of adventure has seen her cycling in Mongolia and crossing Africa on an overland truck.



Welcome to the launch issue of Her Edit

Her Edit is born out of the frustration of four women who could find nothing on the newsagent's shelf that reflected anything about their lives and experience. Tired of the usual pap which claims to serve the interests of women, we have aimed to create a publication which will inform, engage and stimulate debate with insight and humour.

Each issue of Her Edit will be based on a theme and, for our first, we chose Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales. We hope these articles by very different authors will challenge some of the assumptions and paradigms about women, both real and imagined, which have shaped the archetypes which pervade our culture and affect all women's lives.

Her Edit is not a consumer magazine. We will not feature advertising or products we believe endorses negative perceptions of women. This is not a fashion or a beauty magazine and you will find no advice on men or relationships here. This publication is about women's autonomy, the journey we've taken to get where we are and how we can shape our future.

It's taken over a year to get here and it wouldn't have happened without the hard work and patience of my fabulous Her Edit team and the generosity and words of our authors to all of whom I am extremely grateful.

Please visit our website at www.heredit.com or tweet @her_edit and give us your thoughts. If you would like to receive further issues of Her Edit in your email box every two months, then don't forget to subscribe. There is no charge and we will not share your contact details with anyone else.

We have no financial backers, no funding and, to cite a cliché, are very much doing this for ourselves, so if you would like to contribute an article or share some expertise, please drop me a line at editor@heredit.com.

We want to create a community of women to influence the issues which affect us now and build a different future for generations to come. We look forward to hearing from you and hope you enjoy the magazine.



Can we find role models in fairy tales?

Developmental psychologist Professor Uta Frith's pioneering work on autism has earned her countless fellowships and awards and an honorary DBE. Notably she is a Fellow of both the Royal Society and the British Academy and founder of the science&shopping network for women in science.

In February 2013, Uta was a guest on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs. For her luxury she chose the doll's house made for her by her husband Chris and her two sons, then aged six and nine, which is populated with furniture and items from the doll's house she had as a child because "it takes me into a perfect miniature world and triggers happy memories". Hear Uta's choices here. You can follow her on twitter @utafrith

Photographs WARREN JOHNSON

When I was a child growing up in Germany, I was deeply immersed in fairy tales. There is nothing like the word 'Marchentante', literally an aunt who tells fairy tales, to conjure up childhood memories for me. I actually did have a real life Marchentante. She was an old woman living on a farm, a distant relative. One time I remember vividly I was staying there and there were a few cousins and neighbours' children, aged, I guess, between five and eight years. We gathered around this aunt in the twilight when she was ready to tell her tales. We were already familiar with them, but she had a way of dramatizing them. She told them like nobody else and she added her own embellishments. I was enthralled. It seemed to me that there was nothing better in life than have huge

treasury of tales to tell and enchant the children around you. Perhaps this Marchentante had a long lasting effect as a role model, since in my work as a scientist I have always been motivated to write so as to interest and hopefully never to bore my peers.

Now we come to my most important role model, my mother. From very early in my childhood I remember my mother reading me poetry, and telling me stories. Again I seem to remember a lot of this happening in the evening twilight. At later ages I always begged her for a 'twilight hour'. This meant we could sit together just talking. My mother actually disliked Grimm's fairy tales and thought them unsuitable for children because of their harshness and violence. Think of the shocking ending that

Uta Frith



Her Story

violently punished the wrongdoers. She preferred Hans Christian Anderson's tales, but here too, there were stories that she deemed unsuitable. It seems my mother freely changed stories she did not like or wished to censure, and I discovered this only later when I read them myself. I followed her example when I told stories to my own children.

I remember with nostalgia Hans Christian Anderson's tale *Thumbelina*, which I wanted to hear over and over again. However, my mother never exactly repeated the story. Every time she spun a new chapter, and as far as I remember it was always about the countries and places that *Thumbelina* would see on her travels on the butterfly. These were not faraway places, but places and people I knew well, but excitingly transformed in the imagination. I always longed for repeats of each of these extra bits, but they were never exactly the same. My mother inspired me to think of new stories rather than merely repeat familiar tales. By her selecting the positive over the negative, she also inspired me to take an optimistic attitude to life's unpredictable course.

Some stories my mother heartily approved of, and these are still among my favourites. For example there are some marvellous stories by Wilhelm Hauff, a writer of the Romantic era, but hardly known in this country. One story I loved is about a boy who was transformed into an ugly dwarf with a long nose. I can't resist giving a synopsis. The boy carelessly insulted an ugly witch and she changed him into a dwarf and made him serve her for seven years. When he came back his mother did not recognise him, and then he realised how changed he was and how much time had passed.

However, he remembered that he had learned to cook during his servitude and he became a master chef to the local prince. Then one day he nearly killed a goose when he realised that this was a girl who had also been transformed by the witch. Both vaguely remembered a herb that they were given to smell by the witch and rightly inferred that this herb would restore them again to their original form. With diligent search the goose found the herb and a happy ending ensues. Don't such feats make you cheer? Role model number three is the hero of any tale who makes the best of a difficult situation and overcomes terrible odds.

'Perhaps in many of the tales we tell each other, the heroes are reversible.'

Role model number four is taken from the well-known Grimm's tale of *Hansel and Gretel*. It is an easy guess that I would have identified with Gretel, as the resourceful little girl who managed to save her brother from the witch, by a clever ruse. She gave a chicken bone to her brother to let the witch feel when she

came to test whether Hansel was sufficiently fatted up to be eaten. With the bone she made sure he would be considered too thin. When the witch was no longer deceived, Gretel used another ruse and pushed her into the oven, just when she was about to push in the two children herself. Again, what resourcefulness in a difficult situation!

But this belongs to role model number three. So what is role model number five? Not the witch, surely? But yes, it is the witch! When I was a student in Germany, in my twenties, I learned of a sensational pretend fact-finding version of the fairy tale. It was published in 1963 under the pseudonym Georg Ossegg. Nothing like this parody ever made me laugh so much. Here the witch was the hero and Gretel was unmasked as a ruthless thief. I was enthralled. Here, in a pseudo-scientific



and detailed research report supposedly based on archaeological findings, the author, Hans Traxler, claimed that he had at last found 'The truth about Hansel and Gretel'. These figures were not children, but devious adults, who were out to deceive the poor old woman and steal her gingerbread recipe. After they killed her they set out a story of lies to convince others of their innocence. And they got away with it – so far! But now we knew better and underneath the fairy tale there is, now unmasked, another fairy tale.

Perhaps in many of the tales we tell each other, the heroes are reversible. History teaches us that fame one day can turn into infamy the next, and vice versa. I have always found it fascinating to uncover

an unexpected dark side in otherwise shining heroes or heroines. It is also uplifting to hear of some redeeming goodness in what otherwise seem to be the villains.

So here we have role model number five. The old woman who possesses highly prized knowledge and who is at last given the credit for her expertise as a gingerbread baker. Nobody doubts that old women can possess very desirable knowledge. They can be wise old women, and powerful old women. To call them witches is a slur. Or, should I, now as a typical old woman, embrace the witch icon with good grace? I don't mind, as long as the other role models are still with me, too.



In praise of the battleaxe

Maev Kennedy is a Dublin born writer and journalist and reports on heritage and archaeology for the Guardian. She is the author of the Hamlyn History of Archaeology, regularly broadcasts on Radio 4 and is a former winner of the Current Archaeology award for archaeology in print. In 2006, she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in recognition of her contribution to archaeology and the heritage.

Here Maev celebrates the fierce women hidden away by history. You can follow Maev on twitter @maevester

Photographs ASGER KJAERGAARD, MORTEN SKOVSBY
ODENSE BYS MUSEER



Her Words

A few weeks ago I came face to face with my woman of the year, waiting in a museum to meet the Queen, calm and immaculate. When I first set eyes on her, she was covered in mud and slush, emerging from a frozen midwinter landscape in Denmark, but even then her composure, strength and superior hairdressing skills were instantly apparent.

If an alien crash landed into almost any archaeology museum, it would get a very odd impression of half the human race. The men fight, build, sail, light fires, fell woolly mammoths, chip giant boulders into towering phallic symbols.

The women clutch babies, wear jewellery, and spin. Lordy, do they spin. Bronze Age, Greek, Roman, Anglo Saxon, thousands of years of women are represented in many collections by the dullest objects ever excavated, dismal little beige heaps of spindle whorls.

From Penelope to Sleeping Beauty, the spinsters dutifully work their way through folklore and fairy tales too, when not fast asleep and waiting to be kissed into adult life. But my woman was shaped with a different cookie cutter, and has no hands free for spindles or babies: her hair is knotted neatly into a pony tail to keep it out of the way, and she has a nice little round shield in one hand, and a short sharp sword in the other.

She is, it is true, not tall, but she has formidable presence. I have to admit, only having made her acquaintance online, I was a little startled when I actually saw her in the spectacular Viking exhibition in Copenhagen, which will travel on to the British Museum next year. I had described her as “thumb sized”. Thimble sized would have been more accurate.

The exhibition has made news for restoring a more

traditional view of the Vikings than the recent attempts to present them as sailors and farmers prone to occasional regrettable lapses of temper. The poster boy is a towering figure wielding a battle axe, against a blood red backdrop.

You might think there literally isn't much room for women in a narrative involving longships crammed to the gunwhales with hairy fighting men, but although the inevitable blessed spindle whorls are there in the exhibition, there are other women who clearly weren't just angels of the hearth stirring the cooking pots while waiting for the raiders to sail home.

**‘I am a pacifist...
and wouldn't
actually recommend
witchcraft.’**

There are Valkyries, like my little woman, news of whose discovery went round the world. Tiny though she is, she is the only Viking three dimensional image of a Valkyrie ever found.

She and her sisters may be better known from soppy 19th century images of pinup types with flowing locks and voluptuous bare breasts, but the original Valkyries were sinister figures, often appearing on horseback and escorted by ravens, who combed battlefields choosing which would live and which would die. Several others are included in the exhibition, represented as striding figures – reminding me of Elizabeth Frink's Walking Madonna in Salisbury cathedral close – which, although minute, pack a considerable punch.

There is evidence too that there were flesh and blood women held in as much awe and probably terror. The warrior men were buried with swords and shields, helmets and daggers, but some of the women went into their graves with truly remarkable possessions, including pots which once held hallucinogenic drugs, knives and daggers of their own – and magic wands which might make a Harry Potter set designer blink a bit, made of twisted forged iron.



Most tourists to Roskilde, the former royal capital of Denmark where the great warship recreated in the exhibition was found, only visit the wonderful ship museum. But in the small and charming town museum, there is an extraordinary double burial, excavated in 1981. The woman was about 40, buried with jewellery and a needle box – but also a knife and an iron spear. The man by her side has crossed ankles, evidently once tied, and his head is contorted to one side. They are interpreted as a woman warrior, and a slave hanged to keep her company. Somebody wanted to be sure she stayed in her grave: her ribs are crushed with a great rock.

I was named for the ancient Irish queen Maedhbh,

who chose her own men, owned her own herds, and went to war because her husband said he owned a better bull than her prize specimen. She is said to be buried standing up, shield and spear in hand, gazing out to sea from the top of a hill in Sligo, where I carried a stone to add to her cairn.

I am a pacifist, not to say a coward, and wouldn't actually recommend witchcraft, war launching, or battlefield haunting as ideal career choices for a woman – but anything has got to be better than sitting at home spinning. The fierce women deserve representation in the historical narrative as much as their meeker sisters.

Her Culture



left to right JO BAYBUT DR MARYSIA ZALEWSKI SARAH GORDON THERESA DAY MERLYN RIGGS
SOPHIE FROST LUAN GRUDGEON LAURA RIDDELL

Hands that do wishes...

In March last year, the artist Merlyn Riggs created a piece of public art exploring how our fairy godmother might have the potential to change the lives of women in Aberdeen.

Merlyn spoke to Her Edit about her work and the positive responses she received from the women who took part in the performance.

Photographs ALISON REID

The artist Merlyn Riggs lives 20 miles north of Aberdeen. Since graduating from Gray's School of Art with a first class honours degree in sculpture five years ago, she has pursued a socially engaged art practice focusing on participatory, collaborative and interactive art works. Merlyn says:

They can be termed as events, performances, installations or happenings, but essentially they are not passive observations but active experiences and predominately dialogical.'

Merlyn's work is person-centred art which relies on the engagement of the viewer or participant to complete the piece. The artist Suzanne Lacy is an influence on her work; it was at Lacy's [Silver Action](#) performance at Tate Modern that Her Edit met Merlyn.

Sharing Lacy's focus on the social and urban, Merlyn creates non-threatening, everyday situations in which people are invited to participate. The aesthetic of her works lies in the process, rather than the product, embracing the heritage of women

artists such as the American [Judy Chicago](#) who have sought to define and occupy a constituency of the art world outside of the its proscribed and patriarchal parameters.

'The work is not about looking at art, it's about being in the space and participating. There is no object but there are objectives; there is nothing to see, but you may see the light. There is nothing to buy but you may buy into something.

'I create contexts, identify contents and open conversations to provide a platform for further action.

I use the invisible materials of feelings, thoughts and speech and give them substance and form."

One area of Merlyn's work is to raise awareness of issues affecting women. For the past four years she and her collaborators have celebrated [International Women's Day](#) (IWD) by creating an event in a public space in Aberdeen.

Her Culture

In March 2012, in line with that year's theme, Connecting, Girls, Inspiring Futures, they performed 'Consider the Girls' in Golden Zone outside Marks and Spencer.

To make the theme visible, relational and easily identifiable for a wider audience, Merlyn chose the genre of Fairy Tales.

'Everybody knows and loves a good fairy tale; they take you to an imaginative place where we cannot go in everyday life. Happy endings make you feel good inside, although they do not reflect real life. Little girls and big ones can relate directly to them.

'Originally these tales were told as parables and so it was from the parables that I adopted the title. Mathew 6.28 'Consider the lilies of the field how they grow...'

I used the lilies as a metaphor for our young girls and asked what nourishment can we give them? From our own experiences how can we advise, guide and help to shape their future? What legacy can we leave them?'

Merlyn wanted the experience to be as universal and democratic as possible and enable every woman they encountered to get involved. Seeking a communality of knowledge and experience, she concluded that all women are daughters and all potentially are godmothers.

She invited women from a variety of eclectic backgrounds to join her in dressing as fairy godmothers and meet at 11.00 on 8 March in the city centre of Aberdeen.

Her collaborators included Professor Marysia Zalewski from the University of Aberdeen, the Chief Executive of the charity [Drugs Action](#), Luan Grudgeon, two of her co-workers, Jo Baybut and Laura Riddell, artists Laura Duncan and Sarah Gordon, headteacher Alison Reid, motivational coach Theresa Day and Phd student Sophie Frost.

Merlyn describes the slightly surreal scene which followed their appearance in the city.

'I don't know if you have been to Aberdeen but it is a grey city. The morning was damp and overcast and we burst on to Union Street like a living rainbow. We were dressed in flowing dresses with wings, tiaras and holding wands. We had erected boards and were armed with sticky note pads.

'We stopped women in the street and asked them, if they could have three wishes for little girls, what they would be? We could not grant these wishes of course, all we could do was to collect them and display them on our boards.'

Unsurprisingly, Merlyn and her associates attracted a lot of attention, particularly from young girls who identified easily with the 'fairy godmothers'. In turn, they brought their mothers with them.

'We were opening up a conversation, asking women to review their own lives and experiences and identify and recognise what their wishes might be. We wanted to awaken the thought that only we, individually and collectively, can shape and mould our lives and the lives of those we care for. We wanted to plant the thought that once we know what our wishes are, there is a possibility that we can take action to achieve them.'

Merlyn and her team provided seats and tables to allow people time to contemplate their wishes and engage with the process. There was also an email address in case people wanted to think further and send their wishes later.

Over a period of four hours they collected around 400 wishes from the women of Aberdeen with many more arriving by email later.

'There were many duplicates. The most common wish was for girls to be safe.'

Luan Grudgeon reflected:

'(I) loved the day and was so impressed by the wisdom of the older ladies who I spoke to. What they wanted was exactly the same as that which I want for my daughter; to be heard and treated with equality and respect.'

Merlyn Riggs



MERLYN AND GRANDAUGHTER SOPHIE

For Theresa Day her strongest memory from the day was how the initial weariness of the participants changed when they encountered Merlyn and her team and the smiles as they gave their three wishes. Merlyn says:

‘One man asked why we were not asking him for wishes and his little daughter replied, ‘But Daddy, you don’t know what it is like to be a wee girl’. Out of the mouths of babes ...’

The concept of women accentuating their presence in the cityscape and challenging the constraints on their free movement imposed by notional fears for their safety after dark, has been explored in events such as the projected display of women’s art

in Berlin in 1994, *Frauen Erlichten die Nacht*, and protest actions such as [Reclaim the Night](#).

Merlyn now intends to collate the collected wishes and transform them into a night time laser display over Aberdeen, signalling a reference to the Aurora Borealis and an opportunity for the wishes of the women of the city to be publicly asserted.

Merlyn is seeking funding from arts and women’s organisations and individuals to create the laser display. If you can help or are interested in hearing more about Merlyn’s work, you can contact her via editor@heredit.com

Greenham Common: The Legend and the Reality



Illustrations MARGARET GREGORY

Greenham Common

The day of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's funeral in April, writer Beatrix Campbell posted a comment on the Guardian website entitled 'The legacy of Greenham Common has outlived Margaret Thatcher'.

The British Government's announcement in 1982 that 160 Cruise 'first strike' missiles would be located in the UK at a cost of £16 million precipitated a Welsh group of 36 women and four men to walk 120 miles to express their opposition to the proposed missiles at Greenham Common. So began the peace camp which was to remain there for 19 years.

In December that year, 30,000 women engaged in peaceful protest surrounding the nine mile perimeter fence, augmented to 50,000 by the time the missiles arrived in November 1983.

Although the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty was signed by the USA and the Soviet Union in 1987, missiles were not finally moved from the airbase until March 1991. On 1 January 2000 the last of the Greenham protestors left the camp and today there is a memorial peace garden on the site.

Di Harney and Toni Brown spoke to Her Edit about their involvement between 1984 and 1986 and the camp's legacy.

Toni recalls that when the camp started there were men who would sit and chat about the actions they would take. The women were expected to shop, cook and look after children. Then the women said, 'but we can think for ourselves' and so they asked the men to leave.

What motivated you to go and take part?

Di: I'd gone on some of the big CND demonstrations and stayed the night or a weekend. I found the demonstrations fascinating; there was a gut feeling that a lot of people can do something together. It was very powerful. I was nicknamed Di Ditch because when I first came to stay I fell in an unmarked ditch.

Toni: I became involved because, as an American, I

was so appalled at what my country was doing. There were 85 American bases, but Britain had no control over them at all.

What was the atmosphere like and how did you decide where to stay?

Di: Each of the nine camps developed its own character: the green gate were philosophical vegans; the blue gate were the young rebel punks; the orange gate was known as the family gate because there were children and that was where I stayed. When I first visited, the camp was far too tense for me and it was only when it split that I decided to stay. There could be four or six people at each gate or twenty if visitors came.

Toni: The violet gate had the stalwarts who dated the squaddies and worked in the tree nursery nearby. It was difficult living there as it was a bitter area on the edge of the road which was windy and close to cars driving by.

Di: Before the bailiffs there were benders and I stayed in one of those when I wasn't

well.

Toni: Benders were cut saplings which they bent over and covered with plastic and tarpaulin.

What was most challenging about it?

Toni: When the camps first started the police were sent in with fire extinguishers. People would come in for night watch to keep the fires going. These were often little old dears who kept watch for weeks and months. The extinguishers made the fire and ashes fly everywhere and in their faces. The police, mostly women, didn't like doing that. They were upset and refused to do it.

Di: The bailiffs were called in to clear the camps, sometimes four times a day. The protesters had walkie-talkies. So the message would come through on the walkie-talkie saying 'Bailiffs at blue (gate)' and that was the signal to collect all the stuff and put it on the road. The bailiffs couldn't touch it if it was on the public highway. If stuff wasn't moved in time they put it in the muncher.

'I remember Yoko Ono visiting.'

Her History

Toni: We stored as much camp equipment as possible in prams so that you could wheel it off when the bailiffs came. Then CND designed an efficient tent that collapsed very quickly and could easily be carried off.

Di: Once one of us was really ill. I pleaded with the bailiffs to let her stay in the tent, but they pulled the tent along with her in it. There was one horrid bailiff; I can still remember his face.

Toni: The camps would not have survived the winters if it hadn't been for the CND organizing hot dinners.

Di: You couldn't even crack an egg because it was frozen. Getting water was quite a palaver using heavy water containers. You had to collect it from a standpipe outside the main gate.

Toni: When the convoy went out the police stood shoulder to shoulder. The tyres of these vehicles were huge. If you'd lay down in front of them you'd be dead because the driver couldn't see you. The fence was never safe and women got into the base, stole jeeps and drove them around. It was done to show it wasn't secure. It was a joke. If you could get in who else could?

What did you do there and what was the reaction of families and friends?

Di: In the first year I had to sign on at home in Keighley (Yorkshire) every fortnight. I got caught out, so I went on the Enterprise Allowance scheme as an artist. A lot of publicity was not very positive and my Dad called me a parasite, but the rest of the family were supportive.

Toni: I found myself a bit like a caretaker round the camp - digging shit pits and clearing before the bailiffs.

What about your relationships with other women you met?

Toni: Each gate was very different. I found blue gate very miserable. It was the first one the bailiffs stopped at. They weren't very welcoming there. The vegans didn't like herding of animals, but they didn't treat people very nicely. When my daughter and her friends from university stayed there the women ignored them.

Di: Green gate too was a bit like that too.

Was the 'protest' the glue that held you all together or did you find other common things?

Toni: Everyone was there to support the cause. The women became very dependent on each other because of the sense of threat from the bailiffs, the horror beyond the fence and the threats from vigilante locals in the night.

For me it was like a university because of the discussions on women's issues and talking with people from all over the world. One day a lady came up to me and said, 'I come from Hong Kong. We admire you so much for what you're doing here'.

Di: There were many vulnerable women. One had three children, aged two and a half, ten and fifteen. She behaved a bit hazardously and threw big stumps in front of the base vehicles going off on their outings. She fed the kids on chips and Sudafed and their teeth were black, so we looked after them which is partly why orange gate got known as the 'family gate'.

Toni: A lot of care went on for women with psychiatric problems. Many vulnerable women went there knowing they might get the support they needed. There was a whole range of women; lesbians and feminists.

Di: Women came there who were happily married with children. There was one counsellor who stayed a couple nights and then left her family. There was definitely something about the impact of women together. Quite a few visited and then came back to stay - abandoning everything. That kind of feminist women's movement hadn't happened before.

Toni: It was so sad that there was a constant effort to report to the media what was going on, but you only ever heard it on the very early first BBC news and then it was D noticed (D for don't publish). The only paper who would publish it was the Communist Daily Star so the protest got a bad and biased reputation.

At what point did you leave?

Di: I left in 1986, after two years. I remember seeing one woman in particular and she was a right grump and very bitchy. I thought she's been here too long

Greenham Common



The illustrations for this article are by Margaret Gregory, a poet and painter born in 1927.

After an early career in the theatre, she worked as a copy writer for the J Walter Thompson ad agency. Here she met some of the most notable writers and poets of the day and joined Philip Hobsbaum's poetry group (later known as Teddy's Fridays). In the mid 1970s she became interested in painting. She moved to Bristol in 1980 and met many of the Greenham Common women. She was arrested several times and had a reputation for being very articulate and making the judges laugh.

She was an active board member of the Royal West Of England Academy where she exhibited regularly. Margaret died in 2011.

and I didn't want to get like that. So I left.

Did you maintain any of the friendships or relationships you'd built there?

Toni: Well Di and I keep in touch and also I'm in touch with one or two others.

Di: I go to the reunions and two or three years ago there was a memorial celebration for a lady who'd died. There's a reunion I'll go to this year.

Would you be prepared to do it again?

Both: yes

What current issue do you think might prompt a similar response? Would women do something like it today?

Toni: There should still be similar responses because of what's happening to our earth, but perhaps it's too big. They used to say 'Take Greenham home.'

Greenham Common



Peggy Seeger recorded a famous folk song 'Carry Greenham home'. It was to encourage people to make things happen in their own neighbourhoods.

Di: Today it should be easier because of communication. Then word got about via chain letters and through CND with telephone trees.

What did you feel you took away most from the experience?

Toni: Greenham had an impact because women didn't have a voice before and here they were supporting each other. Women's roles have changed since then and maybe Greenham did have an influence.

Di: There was lots of discussion about what men did to women and what to do about it. Many of the women were very feminist and hated men. There was a view that because we're Greenham women we hate men. I also saw a lot of verbal, mental torture from the women treating other women badly; especially from those who'd been there too long.

Toni: Yes some women could be very cruel.

Di: I remember Yoko Ono visiting. Also one morning I got up and saw this woman hanging round our fire. I said 'hello', but she looked embarrassed. I offered to take a message for her as the person she wanted

to see wasn't there. She said she was Anne Scargill and I looked up and saw Arthur Scargill lurking round the back. There was a lot of connection between Greenham and the miners strike.

Di: I learnt about all the shit that men put on women and the experience has given me the gumption to 'just go and do it'. It proved to me that sometimes there is something you can do and that with a lot of people together it is possible and you can change things.

Di: I did see women being horrible to men and making sure men weren't welcome, but there were also many men who supported women there, though there was little publicity about that.

Toni: I think that Greenham influences my current actions so I am not afraid to have a more brassy Greenham approach.

Who is Catherine Bennett?



Performance artist Bryony Kimmings is best known for her critically acclaimed autobiographical shows *7 Day Drunk* and the award winning *Sex Idiot*. Alarmed at the prevalence of commodified role models available to her nine year old niece, Taylor, Bryony has created an alternative heroine as an antidote to the current sexualised pop offer. Catherine Bennett is a pop star who works in a museum, wears her hair uncompromisingly curly and loves riding a bike.

Bryony has promised Taylor she will make CB (as she's known to her fans) famous to prove to the world that a change is viable and needed. The show *Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model* received rave reviews at the Edinburgh Festival in August.

What is the biggest or most pervasive myth about women you'd like to debunk?

The one that I would most like to debunk, particularly for young women, is the beauty myth. The idea that we have to conform to a strict, extremely narrow and overtly dominating code of looks doesn't sit well with me.

I hate the stories I come across in my research about six year old children in the western world sitting in the bath telling their parents they are fat or that a boy in their school said they weren't 'sexy' enough. I cannot believe we have allowed the huge corporations of the world to shackle us to these impossible ideals. All humans are beautiful because of what they can achieve and how resilient the body can be.

I never address a child with a vacuous comment about their looks, but nearly every person that meets my niece does. It's habit; ingrained in us to judge by beauty. 'Oh you look pretty in that dress' or 'your hair is so lovely', essentially reads to a child as 'your value is purely aesthetic'.

When I meet kids I ask them to tell me their favourite book or ask them to tell me a joke. Little girls are so shocked by this, but they love it! I think we all have a responsibility to blast the beauty myth apart. There is nothing wrong with wanting to feel good about yourself, but it's the fact that it's someone else's dictation or version that I hate.

Which woman or women inspired 10 year old Bryony Kimmings?

My mother is such a hero of mine. She was on her own with three young kids. She never once seemed out of control, never once let anything stop her. I think I get my go-get-them feminist attitude from her, despite her never talking about the F word or ever really understanding she was one until much later. She was quite alone, up ladders in her overalls, changing plugs, scrimping and providing for us. Even when we ran out of electricity she would make it exciting, by cooking toast on the gas fire and saying it was campfire night! Total inspiration to me.

I watched so much television to escape at that age. I really loved Lilly Tomlin. She was always so sassy in her films. I wanted to be sassy and hold my own like

Bryony Kimmings

her. I was gangly and clumsy and very self-conscious and she made me feel ok. I also loved the stories of Joan of Arc told to us by a supply teacher called Miss Sutton. She was meant to teach us about 'space', but instead she taught us about Joan. I realise now she was a feminist and felt that she could make a difference. She did. I have never forgotten her.

If CB is a role model for young girls, who is your role model of choice for adult women?

Presently I love Hilary Clinton, Malala Yousafzai and Shami Chakrabarti.

All of these women share a common theme. They stand up and do things. They don't cry about it, don't take their time, they just do it. I think we can all learn from women who just get on with it. They have a fight and they fight it.

What inspired CB to be a palaeontologist?

Taylor selected five character traits from a list used by a study of nine year olds' aspirations over the past 50 years by Stamford University. The traits she chose for CB were kindness, community, safety, tradition and hard work. We went through lots of different options with her choice of job. Taylor wanted the job to be non-gendered and felt nurse was too loaded.

Palaeontologist means she is into history and tradition and had to study hard; Taylor felt that not enough women did that job and that could be inspiring. She said she builds up dinosaurs and digs all over the world. We googled it and the word palaeontologist came up. I was so excited. It's a great job.

We are working with a team of women called Trowelblazers at the moment to gather CB together with other female palaeontologists, geologists, and archaeologists so she can interview them about their jobs for her blog, on the Crystal Palace Dinosaur Island of all places!

What does it take for a woman to be a modern day legend?

I think history has done women over for such a long time, but that this is changing. Herstory is beginning to be recognised and I hope from this decade onwards women are becoming legends just as men are. To become a legend you have to change the course of history. You have to be an invaluable part of a real change of culture, sociological existence or policy. I think you are selfless and superhuman. I suspect I know women who will become legends. I hope much more than Kate Middleton. I really think we can make legends happen if we put our minds to it. That is what I am trying to do with CB.

If you could grant Taylor three wishes, what would they be?

We would have to ask her! But I think she would ask for something for her family or the world before herself, she is a very selfless child. She wants to be a midwife and is constantly worrying about the welfare of everyone else.

I think if the lyrics she helped me write for the song, The Future that we just released, are anything to go by she would choose to save the polar bears, to make everyone in the world equal and an endless supply of sweets.

She has been learning a lot about human rights and particularly gay rights this summer. I think her eyes are being opened to a level of injustice in the world but we always talk about these things with hope, so if I could wish for anything for her, it is that she always has hope... and a belief in her own power to change the world if she disagrees with what it is giving her.

Credible Likeable Superstar Role Model is at the Soho theatre (sohotheatre.com) 8-25 October, then touring. Read more at www.bryonykimmings.com and see CB's new release The Future at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1seoSzNT17o>

Her Agenda

Women on top

Despite decades of social progress, women are still under-represented in top positions in government and corporate leadership positions, and heated debates continue over women's role within religions. These issues and more, including tackling the problem of violence against women, feature during a series of stimulating and challenging public events.

Cambridge Festival of Ideas
23 October – 3 November
www.cam.ac.uk/festivalofideas

Telling the tale

Alison Erika Forde's first solo exhibition explores the darker side of fairy tales with wit and humour.

The Tallest of Tales is at Manchester Art Gallery until 10 November 2013
www.manchestergalleries.org

Life is a Kabaret

Formerly the Women's Theatre Group, the Sphinx Theatre Company has been creating ground-breaking productions with women at their heart for over 30 years. A rare opportunity to catch this exceptional company of actors and singers as they perform the songs and poems of Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler.

Soho Theatre 20 September
<http://aberlinkabaret.es2.eventbrite.co.uk/?rank=108>

Disappearing act

Where are the women in our newspapers and media? Academic and writer Germaine Greer talks about The Disappearing Woman at the Birmingham Literary Festival.

The STUDIO at the Library of Birmingham on 5 October

www.birminghamliteraturefestival.org/event/germaine-greer13/

Sweet freedom

A special exhibition which tells the story of R & W H Symington & Co, manufacturers of the loved or loathed undergarment which was the liberty bodice.

I Love My Liberty Bodice is at the Chepstow Museum until 6 October

www.chepstow.co.uk/Core/Chepstow-Town-Council/Pages/Chepstow_Museum_4.aspx

Witches brew

Work by Paula Rego and Kiki sit alongside Goya and William in this exhibition of images of witches and witchcraft.

Witches and Wicked Bodies is at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh until 3 November

<http://www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/exhibitions/witches-wicked-bodies>

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