

# Her Edit

HER ISSUE, HER VOICE



Issue Nineteen  
September/October 2016

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Three - our third anniversary issue

[editor@heredit.com](mailto:editor@heredit.com) [www.heredit.com](http://www.heredit.com)  
@her\_edit

editor: Jayne Phenton  
Ann Clark  
Allison Lindsay  
Sarah Williams

our contributors

Deborah Arnott  
Clare Christian  
Evelyn Glennie  
Alrene Hughes

thank you

Sian Berry

Eliza Chiswell, Joanne O'Driscoll  
and Sue Unsworth-Tomlinson  
Vicky Featherstone

Karen McDonald

Front cover picture  
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# Her Edit



## Welcome to Her Edit

**T**hey say bad things come in threes, but this, our nineteenth issue marking the third anniversary of Her Edit, disproves the adage. Not only are we privileged to have the incomparable Dame Evelyn Glennie on our cover, but an eclectic mix of contributors we've brought together under the theme of 'three'.

The past three years have been a fascinating journey for all of us, not least because of the amazing women we've encountered who have generously given their time and their words to make each unique issue. The fact that so many women, each hugely successful in a myriad of ways, have been so supportive, confirms my belief that there is a market for a publication in which women can share their thoughts, ambitions and achievements on their own terms. I am constantly amazed and humbled by everyone's help and enthusiasm and we are all immensely grateful to everyone who has contributed or taken the time to share each issue.

Finally, as well as celebrating our third birthday we are looking ahead and delighted to welcome a fourth member of the team. Sarah Williams works in the charity sector in policy and campaigns and brings a new political perspective to our features. I'm sure you'll enjoy reading her insightful interview with Sian Berry on page 27.

So thank you to everyone who's shared the last three years with us and we look forward to many more. Please share your thoughts either on the comments page on the [website](#) on twitter or Facebook.

One more thing - this is still me, but I have stopped colouring my hair and embraced my natural grey. Getting older isn't so bad! Happy anniversary!

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## IMAGES

Clockwise from above: Evelyn Glennie, Alrene Hughes, Deborah Arnott, Sian Berry, Clare Christian, Eliza Chiswell, Joanne O'Driscoll and Sue Unsworth-Tomlinson



# Her Edit



# touch the sound

Dame Evelyn Glennie is the Grammy-winning classical percussionist with an unparalleled body of work. Amongst many others she has collaborated with Bjork, Bobby McFerrin and the King's Singers. Her performances include the opening ceremony of the Olympics in 2012. She is also profoundly deaf. For Evelyn, sound is palpable and rhythm is the basis of everything. She says, 'Without vibration, there is nothing'. The 2004 documentary, *Touch the Sound*, directed by Thomas Riedelsheimer, features a collaboration with the instrumentalist and improviser Fred Frith.



## 'Will the touch of a hand feeling a heartbeat become a lost memory?'

The properties of a triangle are multiple, you can strike several surfaces 'midlines or medians' and in doing so you can create a huge variety of different sounds from one small instrument. You can suspend the triangle, or hold it before striking one or more of its part/s, and each time you will experience a new sound.

I am fortunate to have amongst my private instrument collection a few [Crystal Prism](#) triangles which are not only delicate and beautiful to look at, but in the sunlight they captivate me with a dazzling display of colour and delicate sounds. They remind me of a conundrum between sound, silence and listening.

The prism medians are all connecting and depending on how you look at them, they represent different facets of the same whole whilst remaining individual in their uniqueness. Where one angle gives way to another, the eye immediately finds the next one connected by a crystal bar without a central mass. All angles joined thus creating a space within a space, connected but somehow disconnected.

When considering the complexities of the prism, it reminds me about the same vexation I get when I consider how we connect with each other both socially and as individuals. I am baffled by the way society treats sound, silence and listening at all levels. To me these are primal elements and yet we seem to have lost our way.

When I commute I notice how plugged into 'social gadgets' we are, I see people connecting to a virtual world rather than chatting to the person next to them. Social networking appears to have removed our ability to connect with each other face to face unless we are forced through circumstance to engage with other people. Obviously we are capable of talking to each other, but it seems to be the 'choice' of many to use other mechanisms to connect.

When I commute I feel as if I am in a virtual world. I can see people talking, but I am not connected to them and they are often not connected to anyone on the train - rather they are focussing on a screen and 'chatting' through an electronic medium. On the surface they appear to be connected, meaning they are talking to each other yet no words are spoken - we feel connected whilst disconnected at the same time.

We have virtual friendships and we talk through virtual vacuous connections such as Facetime. We Snapchat on the move, hangout in Google, tweet our innermost utterings and Skype instead of meeting and chatting face to face. I see parents with children, who spend the whole journey in a self-contained stance looking down at an electronic screen instead of interacting within the surrounding space with their companions. Choosing to be in isolation, texting and reading from their phones and laptops, instead of sharing the journey with the person sitting next to them.

## Her Edit

Through working with many charities I can see how for many people it is difficult to connect face to face. Although we are all technically the same (human beings), many choose to live in a physical vacuum, void of human contact sharing only virtual fantasies and tagging virtual friends never really checking to see if the subject matter is of interest.

Being alone is not something I am afraid of, but being disconnected is. I believe before we connect with others, we need to explore the essence of listening and to try and have a much better understanding of how to connect with ourselves and others.

Our lives have evolved so dramatically we seem to need guidance on how to 'be' in our own space. Taking time for oneself has become split between fashionable and selfish. It seems fashionable to attend a spa or class and to learn how to meditate, relax and rest. However, it almost feels selfish at the same time because of the pace of life itself. Hastily promising to catch up, plugged into a sub-social conscience dictating what, when and where we should be behaving, seeing or doing this or that.

I wonder if we are under pressure to avoid engaging with ourselves. Can we relearn how to enjoy being still and to experience the feeling of being engulfed in silence or to touch sounds from within our own bodies?

I ask myself how society hopes to connect in

a tangible way if we are constantly choosing virtual mechanisms. Will the touch of a hand feeling a heartbeat become a lost memory?

Will the only constant be the tapping sound of a text being created – no words just ringtones, message indications and all at no cost!

Will our generation be self-isolating? By this I mean boxed and packed into virtual relationships, floating around the Ethernet talking and possibly not listening.

I, for one, will continue to actively seek sounds from all angles and surfaces. My sound world is like my triangle prism; it has many facets which I can tap into. I can feel sounds and enjoy listening to silence and although I use virtual social networks, I refuse to be hostage to them. I can connect physically and mentally with myself and others and in doing so I definitely feel happy about not being disconnected.

Read more by Evelyn [here](#) and about the charity [Action on hearing loss.org.uk](#)

# Her Edit

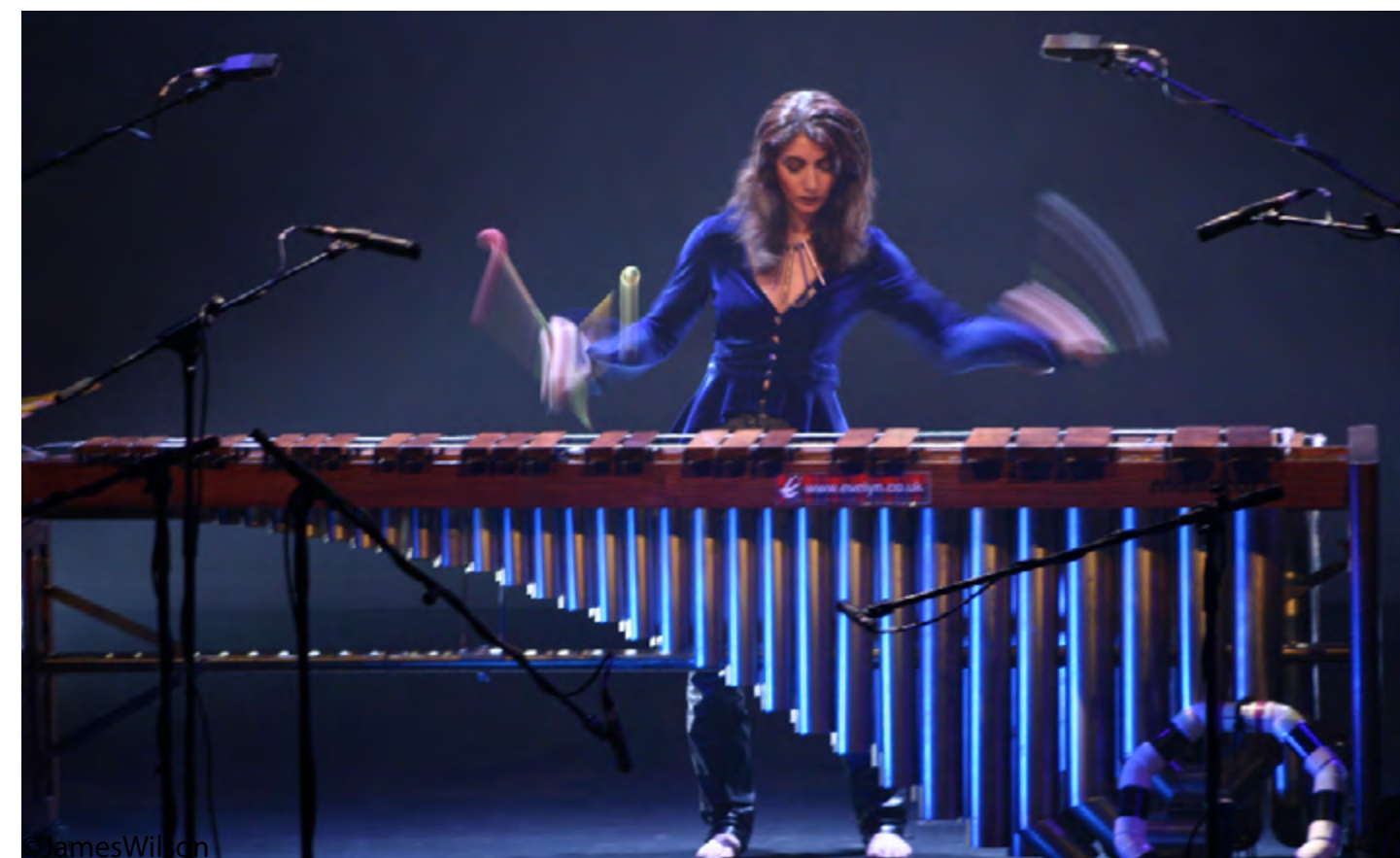


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## IMAGES

Clockwise from above: Evelyn Glennie, the Crystal Prism triangle, courtesy Maria Fernandes; Evelyn on marimba in Harrogate



©JamesWilson



# Her Edit

## the third act

April this year marked Vicky Featherstone's third year as Artistic Director at the Royal Court Theatre. Her credits include Dennis Kelly's *The Ritual Slaughter of George Mastromas* and Zinnie Harris's *How To Hold Your Breath*. Television credits include pathologist drama *Silent Witness*.

She was founding Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland up to 2013. In 2015 Vicky and Lee Hall (screenwriter for *Billy Elliot*) both had the idea to stage a play on the 1998 novel *The Sopranos* by Alan Warner.

The award-winning play *Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour* premiered in August 2015 and is currently produced by The National Theatre, playing at the Dorfman Theatre.

**'It's a no-brainer. There must be gender parity everywhere. I can't even bear that it is still a question.'**

*What was the first thing you saw at the theatre and how did your love of theatre start?*

We used to live in India and I sat at the back of the hall while my dad rehearsed his work's revue. I was obsessed with the script - the name of the character and then a line. The first piece of theatre I remember seeing apart from panto was the musical 'Annie'

*Which women in theatre have inspired you or has anyone been a role model or mentor?*

Many women have inspired me - Caryl Churchill, Sarah Daniels, Franca Rame as well as directors like Annie Castledine and Deborah Warner. I was Assistant Director to Jude Kelly at West Yorkshire Playhouse and I think I learnt most from her. Currently I'm inspired most by Kate Tempest and Lucy Davies who I work with.

*When Emma Rice was appointed artistic director at the Globe she declared her ambition to achieve gender parity in productions. Is this the way forward and/or is this an indication of change?*

It's a no-brainer. There must be gender parity everywhere. I can't even bear that it is still a question.

*You've written about the lack of strong female protagonist roles. Can you explain what you*

*concerns are and what you feel is still needed to get gender parity?*

For hundreds of years, the female roles have been the support - the wife, girlfriend, lover. I live in a world where women must now be at the centre and that must be reflected in our narratives. To show the world what we want.

*You've made a conscious effort to bring female playwrights to The Royal Court what do you think they bring to theatre?*

To be fair, there have always been female playwrights at the Court - I haven't done that. I just shout about it and may have programmed a few more than before. Theatre is barren without them.

*How do critics view female plays differently?*

I don't actually know. I think that society in general feels more comfortable with a complex, central, male narrative as we are drawn to the familiar. A complex, unlikable, ambiguous female character still seems difficult to come to terms with.

Follow the Royal Court on twitter [@royalcourt](#) or for more details visit [the website](#)

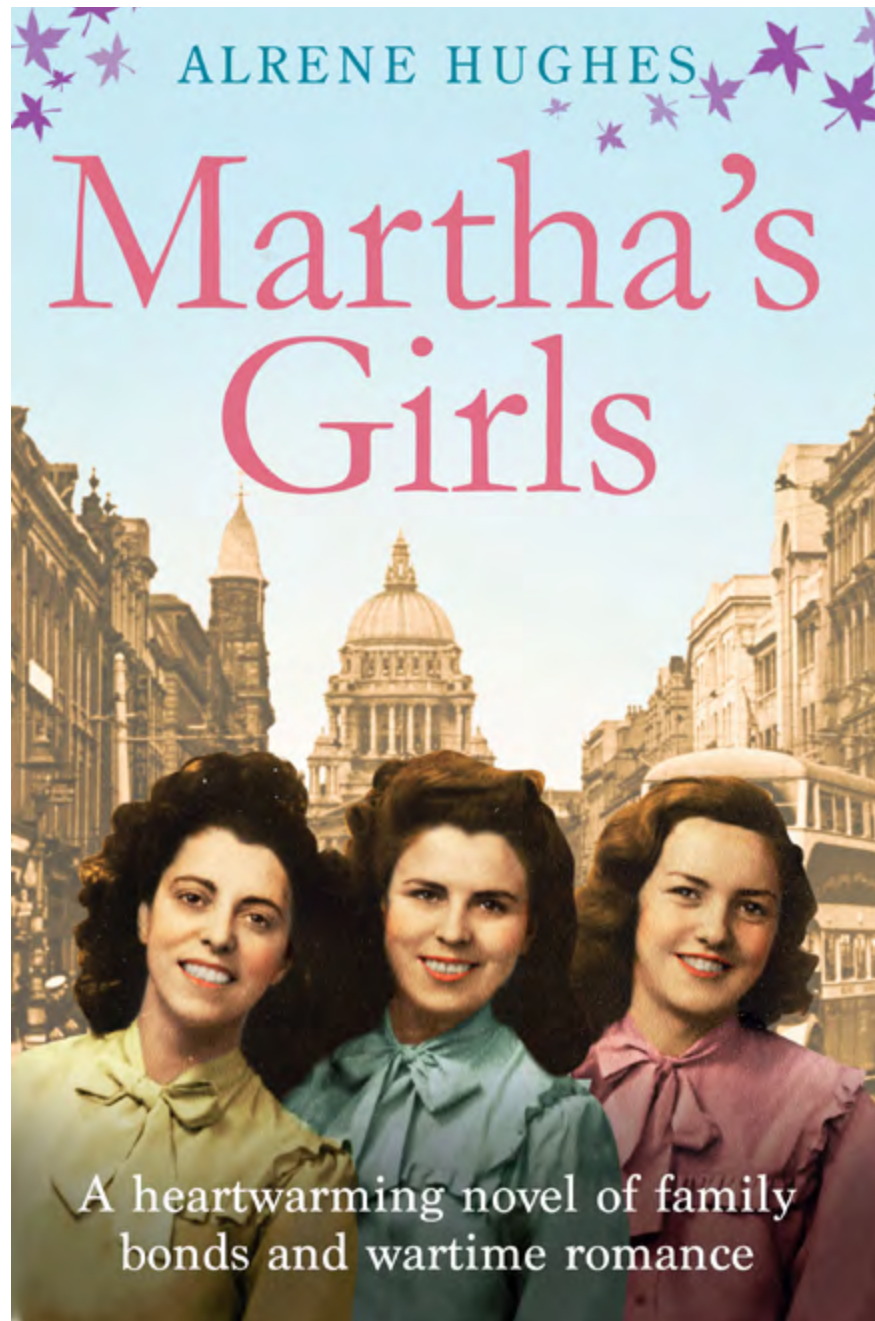


©Dan Wooler

IMAGE

Lucy Davies (left), Royal Court Executive Producer and Vicky Featherstone Royal Court Artistic Director at the Olivier Awards





IMAGES  
Bookcovers courtesy of Alrene Hughes

Originally from Belfast, Alrene Hughes moved to Manchester to work for BT, then the BBC before she found her 'forever' job as an English teacher. So no one was more surprised than her when, approaching retirement, she wandered into a new career as a writer of family sagas.

# GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES

Of course, it's a cliché to say that everyone has a book inside them and, more often than not, that's where it stays. I was fifty when I found my book, a WW2 story that turned out to be three novels – the 'Martha's Girls' trilogy.

I'd been writing on and off for quite a few years, poetry or short stories, in between bringing up my children and working as an Assistant Headteacher in a high school. I knew it was time to write something more substantial, but first I needed a story that excited me.

As it turned out, the makings of the novel had been with me all my life, but the catalyst was a family scrap book full of concert programmes, newspaper cuttings and photographs about The Golden Sisters - my mother and aunts – who, during the war, sang



in army camps, theatres and dance halls. Think, The Andrews Sisters and 'Don't Sit under the Apple Tree', three glamorous girls in three-part harmony. My themes would be war, romance, family bonds and the courage of women on the Homefront.

I knew that the book could not be a biography; a scrap book and snatches of conversation about the war, overheard when I was growing up, would make for thin reading. Instead, the main characters would be my grandmother, mother, aunts and I would recreate their personalities and the family dynamics. The storylines, however, would be pure imagination.

My initial plan was to write just one book, but very early on I realised that to cover the war, from its declaration to VE Day, I was looking at a trilogy.

The first book 'Martha's Girls' took ten years to write because I only wrote in the six weeks'

summer holidays. It would have been easy to give up, but I felt I'd made a commitment to the girls. I wanted to put them centre stage again, to leave something behind ... I remember very early on making a postcard to sit on my desk, it sits here still. It says:

Reasons to write a novel:  
Do it for the girls.  
Sign copies in Waterstones.

From the sentimental to the materialistic – anything to keep me writing!

By the time I was coming up to my sixtieth birthday the first novel was finished. Should I send it to agents, publishers ...? No, in the age of the indie writer, I decided to find a respected self-publishing company to handle the book, a birthday present to myself. My husband suggested maybe twenty copies for family and friends. I ordered five hundred paperbacks, the kindle version was formatted, both were listed on Amazon and I set about promoting it ... and it sold.

What I hadn't realised was that so many middle-aged women, baby boomers like me, enjoy WW2 family sagas. One reason for this is that their post-war childhood was very similar to wartime - minus the bombs of course. In writing the books I drew on my memories of domestic life in my grandmother's house, along with an understanding of her values and sense of community.

But nostalgia isn't the whole story. Readers expect an accurate depiction of the history of that time and to be drawn into life as it was for their grandparents and parents: the hardships, uncertainties and tragedy of war. And, in the case of my mother and aunts, the freedom young women gained while contributing to the war effort, not to mention the promise of romance.

Six months after 'Martha's Girls' came out, a mainstream publisher took on the book, gave it a new cover and it continued to make its way in the world. I retired from teaching and 'The Golden Sisters' 'A Song in my Heart' followed in the space of two years.

When I reflect on the experience of writing the trilogy, three things stand out. Firstly, that every day I wrote, it was like being there with Martha and the girls watching and listening as the stories unfolded and, I have to say, I'm missing them already. Then there's the satisfaction of achieving that long-held dream written on a postcard all those years ago.

Finally, writing the trilogy was such an amazing experience that I've already started the next one: also set in the WW2, but in a different city and with a new family. For me, good things definitely do come in threes.

Follow Alrene on twitter @alrenehughes or Facebook @alrenehugheswrite or visit her website [www.alrenehughes.com](http://www.alrenehughes.com)

# A story of three – working in the private, public and the third sector

Deborah Arnott is Chief Executive of the campaign group Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Here she tells us about her long and successful career working in the car industry, journalism and now running one of the most effective campaign organisations in the UK, and how the proverbial glass ceiling exists across all sectors.



# Her Edit

I left university to start work not long after the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts had come into force in the late 1970s. Not that you would have known it.

On my first day as an industrial relations officer for Triumph Cars, part of British Leyland, I went with my boss to a meeting with striking canteen workers. As we were leaving one of the women said to me, 'it's nice Bob brings his wife to work'.

Understandable really, I was the first woman in that post. My daily experience walking down the production line was being wolf whistled from one end to the other. Again hardly surprising, as apart from me it was a female-free zone.

Trying to change this I rather naively recruited women to work on the new TR7 production line, to the horror of both the union and the management. They did a deal behind closed doors and to save face, and prevent a strike, the women I'd employed were put to work fixing damaged cars in the car park.

I'd gone to work in business with a vision of becoming the first chief executive of a major British company. Two years in I was still optimistic and thought all I needed to put me on the road

to success was the credibility provided by an MBA. It was not to be, I got my degree, but the testosterone fuelled environment convinced me I was never going to fit in. Not on the shop floor, nor in the board room either.

So I moved into journalism. My experience at Triumph Cars had politicised me and I became the union's Equalities Officer at the ITV company I worked for as a researcher in current affairs and documentaries. Senior management was male, but sympathetic, and the Head of Department asked me to write a report about how career opportunities for women could be improved.

While half all researchers were women, this fell to fewer than a quarter of Producers and Directors, the next rung up the ladder, and there were almost no female editors or heads of department. I came up with an obvious solution to the problem, promote more women. Which they did, and as a result shortly afterwards I became a Producer Director.

I left TV after 15 years to move into the public sector. I was recruited by the FSA, the new financial regulator, to set up its consumer education function. There had been a massive pensions mis-selling scandal in the 1990s



## IMAGES

Above: Deborah's security pass at Leyland Cars  
Below: Deborah being interviewed on a demonstration at the British American Tobacco Annual General Meeting

Courtesy Deborah Arnott

following de-regulation of the financial system and the FSA was set up, in part, to try to prevent this happening again. The idea was that effective consumer protection can be underpinned by ensuring that people understand what they're being sold.

I was already disillusioned when I left, around five years before the global financial crisis struck. My work at the FSA convinced me that the complexity of the modern financial system meant that education could never be effective without an effective regulatory system that protects both consumers and the financial system.

While at the FSA I had been involved in helping set up a charity to support financial education in schools, and I became attracted by the idea of working in the third sector.

So I looked around for a job as chief executive. I'd never been a chief executive before, but I had worked in management in business and the public sector, with responsibility for bigger

budgets than most small charities. And I had the communications and policy skills needed for a small advocacy charity. Or so I thought, and I was able to convince the trustees of ASH that they needed me, even though I knew little or nothing about smoking and tobacco.

I was recruited in 2003 with an objective of getting legislation to stop people smoking indoors in workplaces. We succeeded and the legislation was in place only four years later, making a dramatic difference to the health and wellbeing of workers.

Since then, working in collaboration with our major funders, Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation, and the public health sector, we've had many other successes, including, most recently, legislation to get rid of the glitzy promotional packaging of cigarettes.

**'I was able to convince the trustees of ASH that they needed me, even though I knew little or nothing about smoking and tobacco.'**

But smoking remains the major cause of preventable premature death, killing more than alcohol, obesity, illegal drugs and traffic accidents, all put together. And nearly one in five adults still smoke, half of whom will die from their addiction. In the UK each year that's nearly 100,000 deaths, globally nearly 6 million. So there is still work to be done.

When Sarah Williams, who is currently our Director of Policy and Campaigns, asked me to write this piece she said I was the first female chief executive she'd worked with in thirteen years in the third sector. And that despite having mainly female line managers and female directors. That gave me pause for thought.

It's been many years since I've felt my gender inhibited me in my working life, but the reality is that it is still a factor, even in the third sector. While around two thirds of the workforce are women,

less than a third of the UK's top fundraising charities have female chief executives.

Even in the third sector there is a pay gap, estimated to have more than doubled in recent years, from seven per cent in 2013 to 16.7 per cent in 2015.

The gender inequality I faced when I first started work was in some ways easier to spot, if not to deal with, it was so blatant. I'm one of the lucky ones, in my own small way I've broken through the "glass ceiling". But that doesn't mean it doesn't still exist. In my experience as a chief executive and as a line manager in all three sectors I've worked in, it's not competence that women lack, but confidence can be a problem.

I believe that those of us who have broken through have a responsibility to those following on, not only to be a role model, but also to give them the support and encouragement they deserve.

# Her Edit



IMAGES  
Leading the demonstration outside the AGM of British  
American Tobacco  
Courtesy of Deborah Arnott

TEXT  
Deborah Arnott

# Her Edit



Sian Berry stood as the Green Party's candidate in this year's London Mayoral elections. For the first time, the Green Party came third across all of the counts: the vote for the Mayor, for constituency Assembly members and for list Assembly members, decisively assigning the Liberal Democrats to fourth place.

As well as coming third place overall, Sian received 21 per cent of the second preference votes – the highest of all the candidates. Consequently the Green Party has raised its profile in the media and with the public.

Sarah Williams is the new member of the Her Edit team. She spoke to Sian about the challenges of becoming one of the main political parties in the capital and her ambitions for Londoners.

IMAGES  
Courtesy of Sian Berry

TEXT  
Sarah Williams

*SW: Firstly, congratulations on securing such an impressive vote. What will that mandate now allow you to do?*

SB: So many people gave us their votes, that it shows we're here now as elected Assembly Members to represent all types of Londoners on all of the issues that affect them; affordable housing, the difficulties of renting and managing on the Living Wage. We can't just be put in a box of 'green issues'.

Also, nationally we now have a far higher profile. One of the things that Natalie Bennett has done is give us a louder voice to talk about things like the NHS and housing. Dave Hill, the Guardian journalist, has been following the Greens and London politics for a long time. He said recently we are doing quite well, but 'have to get beyond the core issue of housing'.

Obviously we're about the environment, but we're about getting all the everyday things done in an environmental way.

*SW: One of the things that I find really interesting in the two decades or so that I've been watching politics closely, is that 20 years ago the Green Party were seen purely as an environmental party. Now, I think you're*

*perceived far more as a party about social justice and social equality.*

SB: We have always been about social justice too and people who have seen us in action, for example in Lambeth, bear witness to this. We won a seat on the council there, partly on road safety, but also on housing and standing up to cuts. These are the key issues we fight on in the borough.

I went on the march against library cuts in Lambeth in my capacity as a mayoral candidate and pointed out Scott, the local Green councillor, to a crowd of 2,000 local residents. They all cheered like crazy because he's known there for working on these issues.

We are doing green things too like trying to get solar panels on a church in my local ward where I'm a councillor, but we are becoming increasingly better known for our anti austerity policies and fighting for social justice.

*SW: The Green Party has an aim of 50% gender balance for seat; why not specific quotas?*

**'We are about social justice and people who have seen us in action, for example in Lambeth, bear witness to this.'**

SB: It depends on the system you're being elected under. For the General Election all local Green Parties have the final decisions on candidates, while the national party has an aim and spends a lot of time doing development work to make sure there is a balance of candidates. In a proportional system, like the list system, there are quotas. We have quotas for ethnic minorities.

*SE: How easily do you balance the ambition nationally with the devolved local system?*

SB: When I first became interested in the party, 15 years ago, I volunteered and was asked to edit General Election candidate profiles for the website. It was very noticeable that there were so many men, particularly older men with beards.

That's changed a lot in recent years and it's reflected in the fact that we have Caroline Lucas as our first elected MP, Caroline Russell and myself in the London Assembly and Natalie Bennett as the Green Party leader. Jenny Jones got promoted under the quota system and has been amazing.

All of this has led to us having a very positive attitude towards female leadership. If you go round the country there are so many female public sector workers who are standing for us, people who are teachers or nurses. We don't need to use our gender balance rules so much now, because the Greens have more or less solved that for women.

*SW: What do you think about the Women's Equality Party and their potential to affect the political landscape?*

SB: It's an interesting one. I don't think it's really a political project. I understand why they're doing it, but it is odd saying they're a 'non partisan party'.

I think, even more than the Green Party when it started, they are there mainly to raise the issues and not to get elected. They did a very good job in this election and they did a very good job of raising the issues.

One of my first questions at Mayor's Question Time was an idea that had come from them. It was asking about having the Living Rent, which factors in the pay gap. I really appreciate some of the issues they brought up.



*SW: A quarter of MPs are Oxbridge educated. Why do think that is?*

SB: Caroline Lucas has written about how much the Houses of Parliament is like an Oxbridge college or a boarding school. You know how amazing Westminster Hall is when you walk through it? Most college chapels are as good as that.

When you walk into the dining hall of an Oxford college it's as grand as that. So it favours people who feel at home in those places, people who aren't overawed. I love Mhairi Black who walks round the place scowling saying how ridiculous it is. She's not phased by it at all.

There are differences with the Scottish Parliament or City Hall. When you set up a new institution in the modern day you do it differently. Modern buildings just have good architecture. They're open and the public can come in and watch the debates. They've all got more family friendly

policies too. Sittings tend to finish early so you can have flexibility and time with your family. Parliament could be like that. Parliament doesn't have to sit until 10pm.

*SW: What do you think has been the biggest impact of the Green Party in terms of policies and wider cultural shift?*

SB: In London there are lots of examples. When Ken Livingstone was first elected, he was an independent and had to work with different parties. When he left after eight years, he was full of compliments about the Green Party.

The green grid to track green spaces, a higher congestion charge for the most polluting cars and the Living Wage are all examples of Green Party policies.

**'Our London election campaign was framed around the power of good ideas.'**

We now use the Living Wage as an example of a policy which worked well to demonstrate the need for a Living Rent.

On the wider scale, I think we prove that there is a good side to proportional representation. It isn't just about letting in right wingers. It's about letting in a wide range of views, many of which are really constructive.

I'm the only Green councillor on my council and I push ideas and try to make things happen faster. Sometimes the others listen, realise that I've got a really good idea and try and implement it.

Our London election campaign was framed around the power of good ideas. Some of them need to be developed, but there is a range of ideas to be explored and debated. Having a wider range of voices is good for politics.

*SW: You have a magic policy wand and three wishes for your time in London. What would they be?*

SB: I would reduce its traffic. Help people get out of their cars. This is what's missing from other people's policies. We could have an amazing city that would work without needing lots of cars clogging the streets which brings so many benefits not just reducing pollution. That's a vision no one's trying to implement and I don't know why.

I would like lots of solar panels to rain down on London's roofs. And I would like all the private public spaces back. A magic law that says, 'This space is no longer controlled by private security firms'. We'll own all the land and open up all the public spaces to democratic uses again.

# Her Edit

Clare Christian, OBE, has just concluded serving for the Isle of Man parliament, Tynwald, for over three decades. She became a Member of the House of Keys in 1980 and the Minister for Health and Social Security in 1996. She was elected as President in 2011. She was awarded the OBE in the 2016 Honours List in recognition of her services to the Isle of Man.

**O**n the theme of three I have just come to the end of my time as a member of Tynwald, the Isle of Man Parliament, a tri-cameral (three chamber) parliamentary assembly which is unique in the world today, other parliaments being bicameral, such as in Westminster, or unicameral.

Situated in the Irish Sea, the island is a self-governing Dependency of the British Crown with its own ancient parliamentary system introduced by the Vikings in the 10th century and continuing to this day. It is not a part of the United Kingdom and it makes its own laws and raises its own revenues. The name Tynwald is derived from the Norse 'Thing Vollr' meaning 'Assembly Field' where the Vikings met at midsummer to pronounce the laws and settle disputes, a practice which still prevails.

Two of the Chambers, the popularly elected House of Keys and the indirectly elected Legislative Council, consider amend and repeal legislation, whilst in the third, Tynwald Chamber, these two groups of members sit together to consider policy and fiscal issues and importantly debate any matter which a Member may table. Apart from this structural variation from other parliaments a major difference from most other places is the lack of much appetite for party politics. We do have political parties but they are

not strongly represented, with most Members being independent and decisions being made by consensus.

I first ventured into this political scene in 1980; I was in my early 30's when I contested a by-election. The small scale of the constituencies (or sheddings as they were called) meant that personal contact was and still is very important today. Every home expected a visit and without a party structure you are responsible for the production of your own manifesto and organisation of your election campaign.

Back in the eighties I was the youngest woman ever to stand for election; I experienced some

# THE POWER OF THREE

**'I am the third person and first woman to be elected by my colleagues to this role.'**

resistance from older women who felt my place was at home as my son was only 2 years old, and from younger men who did not want to be represented by a woman. However, I was elected and took my seat in the House of Keys, only the sixth female to do so in its 1000 plus years of history.

It is something of an irony that Tynwald has not experienced much input from women, since it was the first National Parliament to give them a vote in 1881. It is true this was a limited franchise, but it was a start.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Emmeline Pankhurst was such a campaigner for votes

for women. Her mother Sophia Goulden (née Craine) was born in the Isle of Man and after bringing up her family in Manchester, where she was an ardent fighter for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery, she retired with her husband to the island and of course was able to vote here. Her daughter meanwhile had to continue the battle in the UK for many years more.

In spite of this early enfranchisement we have only had 13 women in Tynwald to this day. Though few in number they have proportionately achieved more positions of responsibility as Board chairpersons and Ministers than this small number would suggest. I have never personally experienced any serious 'gender' prejudice in my 30 years of Manx politics.





IMAGES

Left to right: Clare Christian in her Presidential robes, the Parliament building and The Isle of Man parliament's Viking sword  
All images copyright Paul Doherty

It hasn't all been plain sailing by any means. After two successful elections I lost my seat in the House of Keys, but returned to Tynwald some years later when the Members of the House of Keys elected me to the Legislative Council and there I stayed until 2011.

My major governmental task during this period was as Minister for Health and Social Security, the biggest department both in terms of employees and expenditure. This was at a time when we were building our new hospital, the most complex and expensive capital scheme the island has ever undertaken.

I look back with great satisfaction on the successful completion of the project and the

safe, efficient transfer of patients by a very dedicated team of people.

Being a Member of Tynwald has afforded me an occupation with many facets, whether it is dealing with legislation, working in different government departments, undertaking the scrutiny role on parliamentary committees or meeting my peers from other parts of the world. If variety is the spice of life, then life in Tynwald has been well seasoned!

Latterly I have been President of Tynwald presiding over the sittings of Tynwald Court and the Legislative Council to ensure the fair and balanced conduct of debates, so important in a body of predominantly independent members.

For centuries the Lieutenant Governor carried out this duty until in 1990 Tynwald determined to elect one of its own to undertake this responsibility. I am the third person and first woman to be elected by my colleagues to this role.

Most parliaments have a symbol of their authority, very often a mace. Ours is a Viking sword on which there are depictions of the three legs of Man, the symbol on our Flag and Coat of Arms.

As I conclude three decades in Tynwald as the third President of this tri-cameral parliament, I ponder on the motto which often appears beneath those legs. It reads 'Quocunque Jeceris

Stabit' which broadly translates as 'Whichever way you throw me, I stand'.

The three legs can be said to represent our parliamentary stability and I am proud to have been the longest serving woman in this ancient parliament which after 1000 years, still continues.

# three peaks challenge



This August, three women of a certain age, Eliza Chiswell, Joanne O'Driscoll and Sue Unsworth-Tomlinson, decided to take on the Three Peaks Challenge - climbing the highest mountain peaks in Scotland, England and Wales, over the course of three days. They took some time out from recovering from their great challenge to talk to us about what inspired them.

## *Tell us a bit about yourselves?*

We're all working mums – Eliza has four children, Sue and Jo three each. We live in the same street; our kids went to the same primary school. We've shared a lot over the years, and this challenge seemed like a great way to do something for our community, and also find the space and time to complete something for ourselves.

It was important we were setting our own goals. As women we often put our own desires and needs behind everyone else. This was something for us and luckily our families supported us.

## *Why the Three Peaks? What inspired you?*

Jo announced she wanted to climb a mountain, then, after a couple of bottles of prosecco, we decided we should do three mountains! We'd heard of the Three Peaks and agreed that was the challenge for us. In the morning, we realised what we had committed to. We were lucky that our families got behind us; their support made all the difference.

It was also about us. Sue recently turned 50 and for her this was a real psychological barrier. It felt like a turning point, but made her realise that age really is just a number. Having always been fairly active, she didn't want that to stop. We were also really inspired by Sister Madonna Buder, the 86 year old nun who does Ironman competitions and triathlons.

## *What was your training regime like?*

It's really about putting your mind to it and focusing on getting fit. Knowing the challenge ahead gave us the motivation to go to the gym. We decided to do the challenge in January, but it wasn't until February that we got serious about training. We knew we needed a good level of fitness.

A big turning point was joining a Meet-up group on a weekend trip to Exmoor. That was a real wake-up call that we needed to get serious about our fitness levels and learning the impact the ascent and descent has on your muscles. It was also a great opportunity get tips from other walkers about the equipment we needed and how to prepare.

We also downloaded a 16-week training plan. Obviously life got in the way a bit, but we found ways to make the training work with our lifestyles; for example Sue would drop her son off at rugby and then go for a run for an hour. Everything is a compromise, but you have to adapt and make it work for you.

## *How did you choose your charity? And what does it mean to you?*

Our charity is the Thames Gateway YMCA. It's at the bottom of our road, and we've all used it. It runs summer schemes for kids, we use the gym and love that all the money we raise goes to helping disadvantaged young people in the area – Barking, Dagenham, Havering and Kent – rather than just into a shareholders' pocket.

This money really changes people's lives. A great example is a young man, Noel, who was homeless, but now works at the YMCA and is doing a national challenge to be a young international leader for them. Part of the money we raise is going to support him in this, which we're really thrilled about.

## *What were the high and low points of your training?*

Mainly it was just hard fitting it in at times. Joanne had lots of problems with training, which meant she only completed one peak in the end. That took real guts though. She caught a virus five weeks before the challenge. She had vertigo, was housebound for two weeks, unable to stand or eat, and lost all her fitness. When she was building up her strength, her daughter broke her collar bone so Jo's training really suffered. We're so proud she managed Ben Nevis. It took 11.5 hours, but her determination was inspirational, even though there were points when we thought we are not going to get off this mountain.

For Sue, the high point was discovering cycling. She now cycles a 30 mile round trip to work and back every day and loves it!

## *What kept you going?*

Knowing the amount of support that families, friends and the YMCA have given us, not wanting to let them down, and it's our goal and challenge – we don't like to fail!

The other thing is realising that as long as you are fit enough, it's not actually that hard. The paths are well laid out so you don't have to be able to navigate. We were also inspired by our children, and Eliza's mum. She's 73 this month and walked up Snowdon with us, as did Eliza's kids, aged eight, 10 and 12. They were like mountain goats, running all over the mountainside, fascinated by the streams, and swimming in the lake.

Also the unexpected things brought real highlights. When we did Scarfell we ended up taking one of the 'hard routes', via a waterfall and then scrambling up the mountainside for an hour or so. It was a beautiful day though and quite stunning, and that scramble really was a highlight of the whole trip.

## *How did it feel to finish?*

To be honest, we felt a bit lost and thought 'now what shall we do?' We were inspired though by the level of fitness we'd achieved in six months. It was an intense experience being together, but we'd definitely do it again. Now we are looking for the next challenge. We are thinking of a cycling trip!

Eliza, Jo and Sue are still raising money for Thames Gateway YMCA. If you'd like to help please visit their [Facebook page](#) or their [Just Giving Page](#). They would be very grateful for any contribution you can make.

# Her Edit



## IMAGES

Left to right: Eliza, Joanne and Sue training in Box Hill,  
fundraising at the supermarket, with Noel  
All courtesy Eliza, Joanne and Sue

## TEXT

Allison Lindsay

# Her Edit

HER ISSUE, HER VOICE

Issue Twenty  
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