



Photo courtesy Sally Thomas

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY ACTIVISM IN PORTSMOUTH SINCE 1960

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF A NAVAL TOWN

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FOREWORD

This booklet is a snapshot of the Heritage Funded project, **Women's Community Activism in Portsmouth since 1960 – the Hidden History of a Naval Town**. The project was set up to record the lives of women from the Portsmouth area who actively campaigned and set up practical initiatives in the local community on a wave of Women's Liberation politics. The project examined how women in Portsmouth and the surrounding areas have been involved in local and national activism since the 1960s, inspired by the fight for equality for all women from all walks of life.

We began the audio and video recording of women in Portsmouth in early November 2018 and, over the span of the year, interviewed over fifty women. In recording these oral histories, the project established a new local archive of twentieth century, 'second wave' women's activists who campaigned at grass roots level since the 1960s. Examples of younger women who have continued this work are also included in this collection. For every woman recorded there are many others whose stories have yet to be told.

Each of these oral history recordings are archived in the Portsmouth History Centre in the Portsmouth Norrish Library (Central Library) and the Wessex Film and Sound Archive - with selected recordings also potentially being deposited at the Imperial War Museum and the National Museum of the Royal Navy - available to members of the local community and national and international researchers. We encourage you to interact with this archive, as each interview contains a nuanced history of women's lives in Portsmouth and you will hear within them a humanity that this booklet can only partially reflect. A summary sheet is included with each interview detailing key words or offering a longer summation, to give the listener a guide to the stories of these women.

As those in this collection have told us, and as the Women's Liberation movement taught 'the personal is political' and politics has both a 'big P' and a 'small p'. The 'small p' politics of women who lobbied for their children in school when they were unjustly treated, because of the colour of their skin, for example, or the private battles of women who challenged gender-stereotyping and gender identity, stand in this archive beside the 'big P' politics of women who became local Councillors and fought for decent housing, living and working conditions. Stories of clear 'activism' sit alongside more personal work in families, the community and workplaces.

This project was conceived and co-lead by Dr Sue Bruley, a Reader in Modern History at the University of Portsmouth with Dr Laurel Forster. Sue taught both Oral History and Women's History at the University of Portsmouth over many years and established the first gender pathway for history students. It was her concern at the lack of visibility of women and the predominance of men's stories in a largely naval military town that led her to apply for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to record women activists in Portsmouth. Dr Bruley has shared her own oral history based on her life and work as part of the Women's Liberation Movement in London and as one of the feminist academic pioneers at the University of Portsmouth. Dr Laurel Forster's work as Course Leader in Media and Communications and her research background in women's writing, women's culture, feminism and media representations of women provides a contemporary and twentieth-century focus. Laurel co-led the project through to its completion.

Dr Anna Cole and Sue Turner worked hard to bring this project to life and to ensure that these stories are not lost. We hope that this project acts as an inspiration to others to record their own oral histories.

This booklet is also available as a free downloadable PDF on our Project website: womenscommunityactivism.projects.portsmouthuni.ac.uk which includes embedded audio and video, allowing you to hear and see some of the quotes included in this booklet.

The Project was hosted by the University of Portsmouth and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Second Wave Women's Activism and the fight for Women's Liberation

The *First Wave* of Women's Activism in the UK is generally agreed to be the successful fight for votes for women, which resulted in the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918.

The *Second Wave* of Women's Activism in the UK began with the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) and came to the UK in the late 1960s, continuing through the 1970s and 1980s. It grew from a sense of dissatisfaction among women about their lives and an increasing sense of empowerment and desire to bring about gender change.

The first British Women's Liberation Movement (BWLM) national conference, held at Ruskin College in Oxford between 27th February 1970 and 1st March 1970 at which a set of four demands were produced.

THE FOUR DEMANDS

1. Equal pay for equal work
2. Equal education and equal opportunities
3. Free 24-hour nurseries
4. Free contraception and abortion on demand

The Three Additional Demands

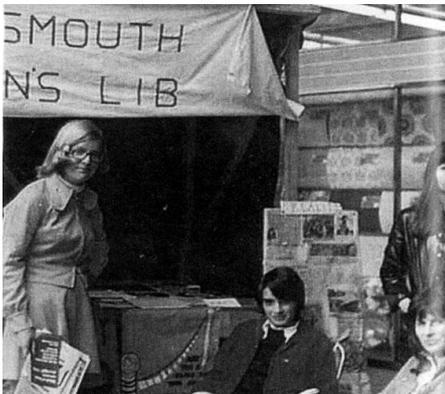
At the National Women's Liberation Conference in Manchester in 1975, three extra demands were added - making a total of seven demands

THE THREE DEMANDS

1. Financial and legal independence
2. A right to self-determined sexuality and an end to discrimination against Lesbians
3. An end to violence against women



The movement was non-hierarchical and structured around a network of small local groups. The heart of the movement was consciousness raising, which was based on a small group process. These groups enabled women to discuss their lives in a non-threatening and supportive atmosphere. Working on the basis that 'the personal is political' the group collectively tried to work out how they could bring about change.



Portsmouth Women's Liberation stand in the Tricorn. (The woman on the left is CELIA CLARK).
Photo courtesy of Portsmouth Evening News



First ever meeting of the Women's Liberation Group at Portsmouth Polytechnic.
Photo courtesy of Portsmouth Evening News

There were important changes in the structure of women's employment and the boom in the manufacture of consumer goods was made possible often by women who were employed in light assembly work in the new factories. Women often worked part time to fit their jobs around their domestic commitments.

The Portsmouth region experienced this boom in factory production with many new factories opening.



Johnson & Johnson, Smiths Crisps and Ultra (later Ferguson) factories in the Gosport/Portsmouth area

By 1971 women comprised over 50% of the work UK force, but their work was mostly low paid, low status and offered very few opportunities for progression and women became increasingly discontent with this form of employment, particularly the fact that women were paid on average about half a man's wage.

The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain called for equality in pay and in the workplace as one of its four demands and was responsible for bringing several Acts of Parliament on workplace equality.

The domestic and sexual violence suffered by women and their children was a major concern of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain. In Portsmouth, women set up a refuge and established rape crisis facilities. The first refuge moved to various different premises, eventually leading to the current STOP DOMESTIC ABUSE organisation, which conducts outreach and refuge-services in Portsmouth today.

The Royal Navy was, and continues to be, a main employer of both armed forces personnel and support staff in Portsmouth. The Cold War led to the formation of the *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (CND), which contained many women members and when the British government agreed to host nuclear weapons for the USA, reaction to these missiles on British soil was fierce. The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp of 1981- 2000 grew from this.



Truck inside the Greenham Common secure compound sprayed with graffiti by protestors
Photo courtesy of Rosy Bremer



Memorial Garden dedicated to Helen Thomas at the site of the former Greenham Common USAF Base Yellow Gate

The armed forces have now moved from mass- casualty nuclear devastation as a prime military outcome to remote-controlled precision-targeted weapons and from forbidding women to serve at sea to employing women in all aspects of military life.

Lobbying for human-scale architecture, good housing and well-equipped playgrounds can make a considerable difference to how the built environment is used and maintained by the people living in it. Small changes, such as increasing the number of trees or green spaces can make people feel safer and happier in their neighbourhoods. Women in Portsmouth have been at the forefront of these campaigns



Standing room only meeting to discuss housing in Portsea in the 1960s



The stark environment in Somerstown before new facilities were introduced

While some of the women we interviewed were influenced by external factors that led to their activism, others were motivated by internal forces interacting with a culture that, initially, rejected them.

From body image in the twentieth century to gender identity in the twenty-first century, sexual and physical stereotypes have been forced onto individuals occupying non-conformist places on an increasingly complex spectrum in an attempt to standardise the human experience into a binary format.



Rainbow and Transgender flags flow in Guildhall Square in Pride Month (June 2019)



SAFE SPACE stickers in local cafés have been distributed by Portsmouth City Council

Portsmouth has always had a culturally-diverse population with communities originating from around the world. Women of Portsmouth have long been at the forefront of community projects and services, motivated by their own experiences and backgrounds.

In June 2019, Portsmouth formally launched as a  **City of Sanctuary** declaring itself a place of welcome and safety for anyone fleeing violence and persecution from around the world.

Although women have been active in the fight against the pollution of our planet from the very early stages of protests in the 1960s the warnings on ozone depletion in the upper atmosphere, overuse of plastic packaging and urban air pollution were not significantly mainstream until the early twenty-first century - when the physical effects of Global Warming and the widespread oceanic contamination by plastics and other non-bio-degradable items become impossible to ignore.



Various current environmental activist campaigns in Portsmouth.

Concerns for the planetary legacy facing those born in the early twenty-first century and their descendants have led to a new wave of international women's activism, concentrating on the improvement of the general global environment by encouraging change at a local level in transport, waste recycling and plastic re-use as well as challenging overdevelopment of green spaces.

All our interviewees have made significant contributions to improve life for their whole community at local, national and international level. Here are short excerpts from their biographies and interviews.



BENITA OAKLEY lived in Southsea and was a member of a local women's liberation group in the 1970s, engaged in consciousness raising, activism and spreading the word of women's liberation. Following on from the women's liberation stand, the group decided to hold a 'housework event' on Southsea Common to raise awareness about women's unpaid domestic labour.

"The thing on the Common was a piece of fun with the friends that I'd already got together. We wanted to bring in more people and we didn't have any mechanism for proclaiming ourselves or who we were, and one of the things - we did have this mad idea and we decided we'd all go down on the Common with our mops, with our buckets, with our brushes with our heads done in scarves, with a child along if we could, and we would clean the Common, we would wash the blades, clean the seats, and go up to people and try and brush them down, who still weren't too sure about it.

It was great fun but there were only a few of us and obviously there were only certain people on the Common at the time we went. And then when we got their attention we'd endeavour to let them know about the fact that the *Consciousness Raising Group* did exist, that they were welcome, they were more than welcome, that it would be lovely to hear from them and one or two people did respond by actually coming to the group – not masses of people but some, yes it worked and we had a lovely time."



ESTELLE P also questioned perceived norms for women in the 1970s. Married young, she saw the emerging local women's groups as a place to talk about and clarify her position in society as a woman

"...one of the things I particularly remember is that we drafted a bill of women's rights... – but we were a collective and we worked on it together.

So, we said things like, 'I have the right to be heard, I have the right to say no, I have the right to express my views, I have the right to determine my own actions.'

And it was as simple as that. Because what you might not know is that women were really under the rule of their husbands at that time.

I can remember when I was going off to something, I think it was work...

and I remember meeting one of my neighbours in the street and she said to me, 'What, are you going off to work?' she said. 'Who's going to do the ironing, and who's going to do the washing up?'

And I said, 'Well, I will.'

And she said, 'What does your husband think of that, you going out?'

You know, there was really a lot of social pressure to stay in the home and do what women were traditionally supposed to do.

... And we tried to raise the issue of the need for equality. We learned to question perceived wisdom, and we asked questions about who wrote history. But mostly we supported each other and encouraged education and increased awareness."



VERENA LOVATT-WRIGHT (in pink, front right) taught the adult education course *Mainly for Women* from 1992 at the New Road Education Centre in Fratton, Portsmouth. It was aimed at mothers who had only a basic education and wanted to return to education. It offered a life-changing journey which eventually led to a professional career. These working-class women may or may not have identified with the women's movement, but it is clear from Verena's testimony that the course involved consciousness raising and, in many respects, acted as a women's liberation group:

"New Road, Adult Education Centre, that was the base for the course. It was every Monday and we had a crèche, run by a man, a young man, interestingly, who was really lovely with the children, Graham... They came because the course was free, because they were on benefits. The course was available to them because of the childcare, on the premises. So therefore I am suggesting that's mainly working-class."



MADELEINE HAYDON (right) was born in 1990 - making her one of the project's youngest interviewees. She attended a mixed secondary school until GCSE level and also learned to play several musical instruments. Maddie is unusual because she works in a traditionally male-dominated occupation profession as a car mechanic in White's Garage, Southsea.

Although Maddie herself did not experience discrimination at home, college or night-school, she did note that no other women from the training courses actually followed through the course profession to a mechanic's job. Now, rather than see herself as a feminist, Maddie sees herself as part of a team. She is 'one of the lads' with an amount of 'banter'.

Maddie's experiences of discrimination, however, have come in later contact with the real world. She found it more difficult to gain a necessary apprenticeship as many garages were 'old school' about having a female apprentice and even now some customers express surprise at the prospect of a fully-qualified female mechanic about to work on their car and ask questions they wouldn't ask a male mechanic, such as:

'Are you working on my car? Are you qualified?'

Other customers reveal their gendered expectations of a repair garage as, when Maddie has asked 'Can I help you?', the customer has responded in this way:

"They start talking to you and then they see the apprentice who, no offence but he doesn't know a lot at the time, and then they blank you and start talking to him...!"



KATHRYN RIMMINGTON was born in 1950 in Landport, a working-class area of Portsmouth. Kathryn passed the Eleven Plus exam and went to the grammar school. She has had a long and interesting career taking her in various directions, including the Civil Service, the Ministry of Defence and in adult teaching including at the University of Portsmouth. During her working life Kathryn was an active member of *CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament]* and the *Socialist Workers' Party* as well as being a Trades Unionist.

Kathryn was keenly aware of social changes within her own family and within the local areas. As a teenager in Portsmouth in the 1960s, and a frequenter of the *Birdcage Club*, she was very conscious of the additional freedoms she enjoyed, even in comparison to her sister who was only four years older.

“Being a teenager in the 1960s was an awful lot of freedom, a lot more money spent on us, marketing targeted us, the Mods being a fashion, music being targeted at us with Pirate radio stations which were wonderful because the BBC was very fuddy duddy.”

Kathryn also worked in a Nightclub and remembers the sexism of the 1970s:

“Some of the men who came in the club, and the male staff, just felt you were game for anything. And it was very sleazy and typified the 1970s. Drugs were very prevalent.”

Kathryn was also very politically aware and was involved in non-violent direct action when she was involved in a CND Protest on HMS Victory, the historical tourist attraction, in the Portsmouth Dockyard

“A group of us went on HMS Victory as one of our protest campaigns, we had planned it for a very long time...”

The idea was we would go on the HMS Victory as tourists, and as we walked round, we would get on to the top deck and two people had a banner rolled up and they would throw it over the side, and at the same time, others of us would give out leaflets about the campaign for nuclear disarmament. And then two of us would climb up the rigging.

So, we were on the Victory going round and I was getting more and more nervous as some of the decks were dark ... but as Shaun started to climb, two huge burley Marines were up there like rats up a drainpipe and he didn't get very far...

But we made the point and it was on the front of the free newspaper that week.”

More recently, Kathryn has become involved in *WASPI [Women Against State Pension Inequalities]*



PAT SMITH was born in Portsmouth in 1959. She worked for the Civil Service, and then for *Colt International*, a family-run manufacturer in Havant. Pat continued her studies and education beyond school by taking opportunities for day-release and training offered to her in the workplace. She undertook some pioneering courses in Human Resources, then called *Manpower Studies*, and was an unusually well-qualified woman at work, dealing with both trade unions and directors in a male-dominated work environment.



Colt International Havant as it is today

However, Pat gave up work to become a full-time mother because, despite the introduction of equal opportunities, this was not really the case for all women:

“Even through, yes, there were about equal opportunities, and we are talking about twenty-seven years ago, there wasn’t the opportunity to go back part-time. That wasn’t on offer, it wasn’t something that existed and childcare facilities where I was, I couldn’t really look to do that. It was different times.”

Reflecting back on the 1980s, Pat said

“Women in the 1980s had to fight a lot harder for their recognition. I think that the glass ceiling absolutely existed in the 1980s and there were not the career paths, were not the opportunities for women... In the whole of the Havant area in which I was working, which was manufacturing at the time, I can’t think of one female director.”

Years later Pat became involved with the *Business in the Community* scheme, encouraging corporations to act and invest with social responsibility in mind. Pat was really pleased to see how things had moved on for women in the workplace, with employment law, childcare, flexible working patterns and further opportunities, allowing women to become entrepreneurs and to take career opportunities.

“Technology has played a big part, allowing women to work from home and still being able to feel part of an organisation, not necessarily having to attend every day at the place of work, but can attend to get the important social interaction. Things have moved on tremendously from when I started working. Going back to 1977 when there were no computers and there was this mad idea that I studied at business studies that one day some of us might be working from home. No-one believed it!”



MURIEL ALLEN was born in London in 1931 and after working in both the *Women's Land Army* and then the Civil Service, she found herself drawn to the Prison Service but waited until the abolition of the Death Penalty in 1965 before moving into this career path. Muriel worked for six years at Holloway women's prison in London - being promoted to Assistant Prison Governor - and at her promotion board it was expected that Muriel would become a Governor of a women's prison, but she decided to test the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and requested to be appointed Governor of a men's prison.

Very conscious that she was pushing gender boundaries she achieved her goal in 1984 and became Governor of HM Kingston prison in Milton, Portsmouth – a prison holding lifers. She was the first woman to be appointed prison governor of a men's prison in the UK.



The former HM Prison Kingston, Portsmouth as it is today

"I well recall the first day. There were very interesting reactions I thought. The prisoners all wanted to know how they should address me – Miss, Madam, - to which I replied

'No, I don't want to be the only Madam in an all-male establishment'

- and that went down very well, but my messages were twofold.

One: that's a very proper question, but this woman Prison Governor has a sense of humour. And that was quite an important message on the first day – Yes, I am approachable, yes, I have a sense of humour.

Next question was

'Should we call you Governess?'

I said

'That's even worse. It's too much like *Jane Eyre*. I don't want to be anybody's Governess, thank you. What about *Miss Allen* or the same title I hold as my predecessor, which is *Gov'nor*, and that will do nicely thank you.'

At first the prison staff were over protective, escorting her everywhere every time she left her office. Muriel had to demonstrate that she was not afraid to walk around the prison as a woman. She told them that as the previous Prison Governor had walked round the prison on their own, then she would too.

Muriel's professionalism, humanity and innovative approach were soon appreciated by all.



PENNY FOSKETT was born in 1952 and moved to Portsmouth in 1958. She was a teacher for forty years and was the *National Union of Teachers* representative at St Vincent's school, Gosport.

Penny joined the *Socialist Workers Party* at the early age of nineteen and has been involved in socialist politics ever since. She has been an active campaigner in all sorts of ways concerning education, and teachers' working conditions and pensions, but has also campaigned against Poll Tax, war and climate change.



Penny was involved in all kinds of campaigns and strikes:

“Oh, no. I mean, whenever there was a national dispute, I was very much involved with it, because obviously, I was the rep in the school and there were national strikes over pay in the 1980s. And we won somewhat of a pay rise then.

We had one-day strikes over pensions in 2011, which I was very much involved with. One of them was a whole public sector dispute, so we had UNISON [the Public Sector workers union] and GMB [General, Municipal, Boilermakers] were out as well. And I remember we had enough people in Gosport, and we gathered on the Gosport side. So, I had to go from Portsmouth to meet them in Gosport. And we came over on the ferry with our banner, the Fareham and Gosport NUT [National Union of Teachers] banner on the ferry, and then we marched up from the ferry to the Guildhall, behind our banner.”

Penny also worked hard within her teaching curriculum to encourage girls' careers in the 1970s and 1980s to create equal opportunities amongst girls and boys in school

“And I was involved with various groups in the 1980s. Involved in encouraging equal opportunities in schools and encouraging teachers particularly, and resources to be far more equal. Because boys in terms of, sort of, pictures in books and that. Making sure that the whole curriculum was accessible for girls and for boys. Which wasn't the case up till then. It might not be written down that the girls couldn't do woodwork, but it was certainly expected, you know. So, we did have training days in Gosport to try to encourage all the schools to do that.”

Knowing that Gosport was less multicultural and more insular than Portsmouth, Penny found innovative ways of ensuring the curriculum contained important aspects of personal and social education too:

“We had what was called a mode three CSC, which was an exam that we wrote ourselves, and all four secondary schools in Gosport did this course, and it was compulsory for all 14 to 16-year-olds. And we did sex education, health education, a lot of careers education and political education, but we called it, sociology, economics and politics.”



And the next time ... we moved into this office with a male member of staff ... And we were called in, both of us, to say that there were some concerns that we were two women sharing an office with a man.

That man was blind.

Have you ever heard anything so ridiculous? So what we did was, we made a big board, put it outside our door, *The Birdcage.*"

SYLVIA HORTON was born in Fratton, Portsmouth in 1939 where her father was a milkman. She left grammar school aged 16, married at 18 and had her first child at nineteen. This was not unusual in the 1960s, but Sylvia decided to attend college in Portsmouth to study for A Levels, followed by an external London degree.

After graduating, Sylvia became the first woman lecturer in the Department of Business Studies at Portsmouth Polytechnic. She stayed at what became the University of Portsmouth for over 50 years, eventually becoming a Principal Lecturer.

Sylvia was an outstanding teacher and considered herself a liberal feminist, but she did not want to join feminist groups, as she did not feel that she was discriminated against at work. However, there were some ways in which Sylvia was treated differently from her male colleagues.

"My department head called me in, and he said,

'I've had a complaint, but I think I ought to mention it to you. There is somebody who disapproves of you wearing trousers' - I had a trouser suit on, you see – 'A member of staff.'

It was a man obviously, and I said, 'you're joking' I said, 'everybody else wears trousers'.

So he said, 'Well, I just thought I'd let you know.'

So I said, 'Okay.'

So the next day I went in a bright yellow trouser suit. They never said anything again...



The young Sylvia Horton



SUE BRULEY was born in 1951 in London to working class parents. The family moved to Surrey in 1954 as part of the post-war relocation policy.

At seventeen she left secondary school to study A Levels at a further education college and from there she went on to study at the London School of Economics in 1970. At this time, it was very unusual for working class girls to attend university.

Eventually Sue gained a PhD and went on to a career in teaching, researching and writing history. She became a lecturer in History at Portsmouth Polytechnic in 1988, with a focus on social and cultural history. Sue introduced several gender-based history courses, including *Gender, Sexuality and War in Britain 1922-1982*. She also introduced courses in community oral history.

In the 1990s Sue sat on joint management–union panels created to produce a series of short booklets to educate staff and students in line with new policies on promoting equality. Booklets were produced on racial diversity, sexual harassment and equality across the university.

“Throughout my career, from the late 1970s my main interests have been women’s history, gender history and oral history in twentieth century Britain. I have had a particular interest in working class women and women’s movements. Teaching at the University of Portsmouth made me aware that women’s movements in the city have been neglected due to the emphasis on naval history.

When I started looking into this I realised, whilst we have numerous publications relating to women’s movements in many large cities, there were no publications relating to research on women’s movements in naval communities.

This became the focus for the research project on *Women’s Community Activism in Portsmouth since 1960 - The Hidden History of a Naval Town*. Due to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund we have been able to carry out this important research and give women activists in Portsmouth the recognition they deserve.”



Sue Bruley at the second training session for the Women’s Community Activism Project

LIZ WARMSLEY joined the Women's Royal Naval Service, the WRNS, in 1978 as a rating aged 17. She went into the meteorology section as "a weather girl".



Liz (left) in her meteorological role.
Note the black tights, black leather handbag and blue diamond insignia that were part of the WRNS uniform at that time.

In the early 1990s the Ministry of Defence decided to integrate the three women's services. The WRNS were dissolved, and women became sailors alongside the men on ships. Liz became the only woman on a ship alongside 180 men.



Liz Warmsley at sea. Her uniform epaulette insignia style is now identical to her fellow officers.

At sea men and women had no established code of conduct. At first, in order to 'fit in' women on board felt they had to act like men.

There was also a lot of sexist behaviour which the women felt they just had to put up with.

"...suddenly we were all being tarred with a brush, 'Oh well, you're all tarts, and you're all going to go and bonk my husband whilst he's at sea.'

It's like, 'Well you obviously don't think much about your husband then, do you?'

So, it was quite tough, and I know people, I stopped wearing uniform in the street. As it was, we didn't wear uniform out much anyway, because at the time there was the IRA things going on, so generally you didn't often wear uniform in public. But I stopped wearing uniform in public, because people would spit at you, or make comments...

So, it was a really difficult time. Whether you volunteered for sea or not, suddenly you know, there was the Wrens in the mainstream newspapers, and particularly the local newspapers, and we were not being portrayed in a very good light at all."

Gradually things changed and Liz was promoted to Commander. She took on the role of Equality and Diversity officer and worked hard to tackle unconscious gender bias in the Navy. Liz looked at the uniforms and noticed inequalities in the presentation of men's and women's uniforms, so she upgraded women's blue stripes to gold ones.

Women in the Navy learnt that they had to stand up for themselves.

"I remember as a female commander, talking to another female commander, in one of the corridors at the headquarters, and we were actually talking about this inclusion project that I was doing. And it was serious stuff.

And a senior admiral walked past me and said, 'Are you having a good gossip girls?'

I actually called him back, because I'd put my notice in by then, and I actually called him back and said,

'Excuse me sir, I don't believe you'd have said that to two male commanders having a conversation in the corridor.'

And he was absolutely shocked because he hadn't thought about it. He didn't do it deliberately. So, a lot of this wasn't deliberate, it was unconscious, it was unthinking, it was not realising the impact that the words might have on people."



“I was sat watching the news, and neighbours were sat watching the news, and they knew what ship my husband was on, and one of my neighbour’s brother was on another ship, and the news came through that there had been an attack, and that English ships had been bombed.

And your heart sinks, and you think ‘It will be alright, it will be alright.’

But actually, through the night, ‘cause we sat together, because it wouldn’t matter whether it was my husband’s ship or somebody else’s ship, the women sat together in one of the flats.

And it wasn’t my flat on this occasion, and you just watch for the news, and you listen to the radio all the time. And, then something came through. I couldn’t tell you whether it was the World Service, I couldn’t tell you whether it was the BBC, I don’t know what it was, but two ships got mentioned, and it was the two, it was *HMS Coventry*, and I am sad to say, I don’t remember what the other one was, ‘cause I think that it wasn’t a military ship, I think it was one of the support ships that got hit [*SS Atlantic Conveyor*], which was my neighbour’s brother, and her sister in law was there with her, and George, and so basically we sat up all night.

And we knew that if we got a knock on the door in the middle of the night, it was not good news.

So, there was a relief that there were no knocks on the door in the night, and then this really bizarre thing happened. Because our flats, our front doors faced each other, with the stairwell going up through, and we heard someone knocking on my door, probably at about half past nine the next morning, and so of course our hearts sank, and when we opened the door, it was my mum.

And I said, ‘Mum!’

‘Cause you know, she lived in London.

I said, ‘Oh my God, you know?’

But my brother worked for Reuters at the time, which is the news agency, and he had got the news, or he had links to Reuters, he might have been working for, they might have been called Buzz News, or something like that at the time, but anyway, it was all linked in, and they had got the news that it was the *Coventry*. He phoned mum and she got herself down here as quick as possible.”

ANNETTE WHITE married her husband George when she was 19. They moved to naval living quarters in Eastney, Portsmouth whilst Annette was also studying to become a teacher. However, Annette did not fully anticipate the implications of her husband’s service – that he would serve on *HMS Coventry*, which would be deployed in the Falklands Conflict.

Annette felt part of a supportive naval community, but could only share her reservations about the Conflict – reservations that her husband shared – with her student friends. However, when *HMS Coventry* was sunk with loss of life, the whole community were involved - with the women providing vital support.



Old Portsmouth memorial to the Falklands Conflict



LUCY BORODKIN lived in Portsmouth during the 1980s and worked as a psychotherapist specialising in eating disorders.

Lucy was concerned with how women were still unhappy with their bodies, despite the advances in Feminist thinking.

Lucy was directly mentored by Susie Orbach, the author of *Fat is a Feminist Issue* and also helped the feminist theatre group Spare Tyre premiere *Baring the Weight*, their inaugural drama presentation.

“I got a lot of really good feedback from women over the years – and I still do

- that: ‘You mean this isn’t all my fault, you mean I’m not the only one?’

...And I think, my goodness, we have been in the second wave of feminism for so many years now and there are still so many women who believe that who they are, how they are, how they’re expected to behave is an impingement upon their size, and that any beef that they have with that is wrong.

...And so, I sort of continue in that way. It’s not that I do a ... you know, a mini lecture at all - but I do work hard to normalise... Since I work mostly with women, not all, I do try hard to normalise and contextualise what it means to be a woman.”



SAMANTHA GRAHAM grew up in Portsmouth with a father in the navy. While working full-time at Michael Scott’s Cake Factory in Midhurst she took an, at the time, radical decision to transition and come out as a woman, having been born into a male body. Over time, Samantha began to give one-to-one support in person and over the ‘phone and run workshops with a Portsmouth-based group for Transgender people called *Chrysalis*.

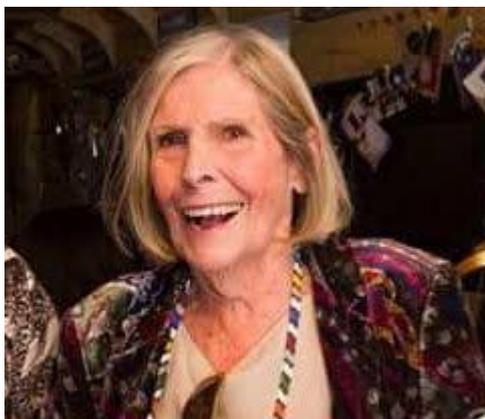
“I was born in the wrong body, so life was very confusing... I pretty much kept everyone at a distance which, I can say now, wasn’t the greatest idea...

I did something I don’t think many people would have done... I said right, it’s a different environment [Michael Scott’s Cake Factory] ...Two weeks later I came in as Samantha ...There were two people there, and we had one boss who was gay, and they ripped him to shreds and I thought - what are they going to do to me?

They came over and said ‘That was brave’”

Samantha is passionate about the work she does for *Chrysalis*:

“I started doing one-to-ones, mentoring as well, I started doing ‘spec runs’, going out locally somewhere they haven’t been before...for me a spec run was imperative it was that duty of care. I wanted to find somewhere they could talk and feel comfortable.”



PAULINE SCUTT was originally from Brighton. She married at 20 after becoming pregnant and could not work full time until her sons were old enough to go to school.

One of her jobs was outside Puriton, at the Royal Ordnance Factory Bridgwater – which had built the DAM BUSTERS bomb for Barnes Wallis – but her working career was cut short when her third child was born with multiple genetic disorders.

Looking after her disabled child started her interest in politics. A day centre was opened for those children deemed ‘not suitable’ for ordinary centres and her son had a place. A taxi used to take him there but before long her son – and a few others - were told they were ‘too difficult’ and would be excluded.

Pauline was enraged and went to see her local MP, but he said, “It’s not my job to intervene with the Education Authorities”.

She replied, **“If you can’t intervene, then who can?”**

Pauline wrote to all the national papers- and *THE SUN* picked up the story. She was then invited to appear on television and eventually Hampshire County Council agreed to reinstate her son.

As a result of this campaign, a small purpose-built school was erected at Sandy Point Hospital on Hayling Island and legislation to ensure *No Child Is Ineducable* was brought in.

Pauline managed to get back into employment and worked for a solicitor. Her husband then started his own business and she worked with him to build up a successful enterprise, so much so that she used to love dressing up and going to the races



CAROLE DAMPER has run the *E. C. Roberts Centre* in Portsmouth for the last 21 years. The Centre supports vulnerable people, families, and children - trying to give them the best possible chances to achieve their potential.

The city has a very high percentage of recurrent removals of children from their families. Part of the problem is that people stay put in Portsmouth and deprivation persists, with removal of children having an effect similar to bereavement and subsequent pregnancies leading to further removals.

Carole’s approach is to make improvements in small, achievable steps. She believes that community support is vital, as is the realisation that some families may not be able to live ideal lives.

“Public Health ... they say that maybe all children should cycle.

And I say, ‘Well that’s fantastic. Image that you’ve got three children and you live on the 21st floor of Leamington House and you’ve got three cycles – how many times are you going to carry those cycles up and down the stairs when the lift breaks? Or even if the lift isn’t broken?’

Do you know what I mean?

And where are you going to put them in a flat that has one effective living space?

... So sometimes, when people look at these things from the outside they go ‘Oh – well people should cycle more.’

Well, brilliant. That’s marvellous. I agree that people should cycle more. And how are they meant to do that then?”

... They are leafy, village solutions, rather than gritty, densely populated solutions.”



SUE HARPER was born in 1944 and grew up in a poor district of Nottingham. She came to Portsmouth in 1968 as a lecturer, eventually becoming Professor of Film History at the University of Portsmouth.

Sue has experienced sexual prejudice in health care, education and employment. She helped found the Portsmouth Women's Liberation Group.

During her teenage years she realised that pregnancy at an early age would not be a good thing.

"I saw a lot of girls round me come to terrible grief by getting pregnant.

... I realised that what was absolutely crucial was contraception, the most important thing. And I did something, I don't know that anybody else ever did, but I never talked about it, to anybody else at the time, obviously I have since.

You couldn't get contraception as an unmarried girl, certainly, oh no, not as a girl of 17. Impossible. Just not possible. And so, it was Russian Roulette. And I was never prepared to take the risk, and so, I had heard, I'd read this book by Marie Stopes ...Well, she was the woman who first brought contraception to the working class, and she wrote a very famous book in the 20s, called Married Love...

And she was talking about a woman's right to sexual pleasure, but also a woman's right to contraception. And she was the one that started off bringing contraception to the working class by providing them with diaphragms."



BEV SANDERS was born in Portsmouth but had an unhappy childhood, which caused her to leave home as soon as she could.

She worked for a time for C&A in Commercial Road, Portsmouth - in the factory over the top of the shop - but was made redundant and so started to work with local young people in the Landport area youth club and adventure playground.

This work interested her, so she went to Bristol to study for a qualification in youth work and then returned to Portsmouth to fully utilise her skills.

However, she suffered a stroke, and whilst recovering from this she saw someone living on the streets in the city centre and was moved to go back to her home and make up sandwiches and hot chocolate, which she then distributed to those sleeping rough.

From this initial act of altruism, she founded the organisation *Helping Hands*.

"This is what I always say, 'The only thing you need to fill to come and see us is your belly.'

... Some of them will come and eat and they won't engage with us, and some will engage with us and we'll try and persuade them to go to the winter beds - 'cos you know, who wants to sleep on the floor in a doorway - but some of them just won't go there, because they're not friends with this person, or that person's there or there's loads of drugs and they don't want to be around it or they've been let down by them before and they don't want to go there."



SARAH COOTE is a Quaker, whose beliefs have influenced her to protest against warfare and injustice in all forms. She has been an active protester at different anti-war and anti-violence campaigns across many decades, starting with visits to Greenham Common in the mid-1980s through to anti-war protests in the 21st century.

“There was always a megaphone, and it was almost invariably in the hands of a man. Almost invariably it would be offered - and no woman would ever stand, step forward and take the megaphone.

And looking back I think my goodness I actually did that - I would walk up the steps and take the megaphone and speak as a woman, just because there were no other women’s voices -there were women standing in the Guildhall Square, lots of them, but the people talking were obviously always men with these loud voices and their own perspective and although they were talking anti-war it was often quite aggressive sort of speak and yes – I’m amazed at myself sometimes.”



The Guildhall steps are still a popular venue for protestors



VIDA HENNING was a co-founder and co-ordinator of the active Havant *CND* group [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament]. She describes how she spoke about the nuclear standoff to the mostly male, and mostly Punk, Waterlooville *CND*.

“So, it tended to be mostly women, mostly women who came together to do anything, mostly women who went up to Greenham together, well men couldn’t come to that anyway. Women who sewed banners. What man is going to sew a banner? And it became a very women-centric group, Havant group. Whereas, interestingly, there were two other groups in this locality. One was on Hayling Island and one was at Waterlooville... mostly male, and mostly young male with dreadlocks and all the rest of that stuff.”

Vida spoke to these groups:

“...I just told them that you do not use a suicide weapon to defend yourself, and that is what nuclear weapons are. Because nobody is going to let you let yours off without retaliating. So obviously they would retaliate, and therefore you’re going to have nuclear bombs or whatever you might call them, rockets, on you, and they’ll finish you off. So, what was the point of you killing somebody else first? Because you’re going to be dead anyway.

... and this is our home, this planet. I think I was a forerunner of some of the Greens. This home is our planet, it belongs to us all. We all live on it, and we have no right to take other people’s lives away from them. ... and as I finished, they cheered and clapped me... so I did find it very difficult. But the fact they cheered and clapped me, I almost cried actually, I thought – oh gawd.”



ROSY BREMER travelled to the Peace Camp at Greenham Common for over ten years, her first visit being when she was eighteen. Her second visit to the camp coincided with a tragic accident and she explains how this affected her and what the camp achieved over the years.

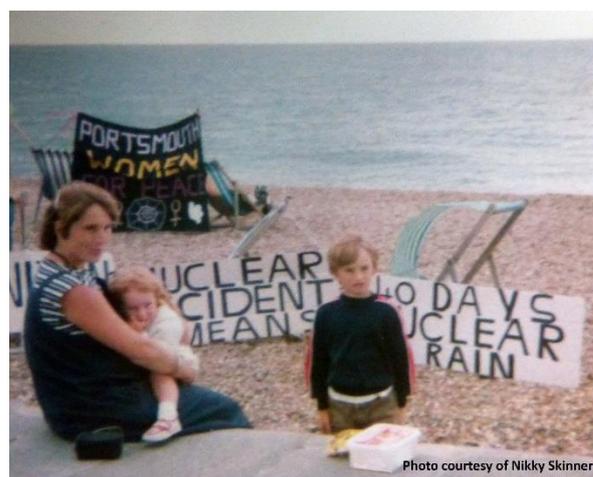
“It was quite a traumatic arrival because when we got there, there was an ambulance in the middle of the road running by the camp, and lots of police cars and a young woman from Wales, who had been living at the camp for a year, year and a half I think, she'd just been killed by a police horsebox. ...So it was quite traumatic and the police obviously, denied any responsibility at all and tried to keep Helen's family – that was Helen Thomas, the name of the woman who was killed – the police tried to keep the family away from the women who'd been living with their daughter, but Helen's family were really strong and they said, no, we want to meet these women, we know our daughter was very committed to the camp, so we want to meet them...So after that, there's no way that I couldn't just walk away from the camp, so I went back on several occasions...

So I was involved with Greenham from nineteen eighty-nine to nineteen ninety-seven, I think, during which period the missiles did completely leave the Common and that was partly as a result of the fact that we made that weapon system completely inoperable and also the women at the camp took the Secretary of State for Defence, who at the relevant time was Michael Heseltine, to the High Court, to say that the bylaws which allowed the USAF and RAF to use the Common, and to kind of occupy it, were unlawful. And the case was concluded, I think, in nineteen eighty-nine in the women's favour.”



NICKY SKINNER, who founded *South Coast Against Nuclear Navies* [SCANN] with her husband Jim Skinner, told us that it was the proximity of Portsmouth harbour and the transport of US nuclear missiles up to Greenham Common that led to her activism

“My motivation was my overriding safety and unease about the safety for my children. Greenham Common is within 100 miles of us, if anything were fired at Greenham, where the missiles were stored, then it wouldn't just be Greenham that got hit it - would spread out to Portsmouth ...That was why I was really wanting to get active, because what's the point of having children if you're bringing them into a world where it's not especially safe?”



Nicky and her children protesting on Southsea beach

Nicky was one of many Portsmouth women who took part in the *Embrace the Base* action of December 12th and 13th 1982, when 30,000 women joined hands around Greenham Common base.

Another encircling of the base took place in 1983 with 50,000 women attending. Sections of the perimeter fence were cut with bolt cutters in both actions and there were hundreds of arrests.



JANE STAFFIERI travelled from Gosport to join the non-violent protest at Greenham Common and was arrested for cutting the fence.

At a hearing at Newbury Crown Court Jane was found guilty of criminal damage but refused to pay a fine of £30. She made a powerful speech in the dock before being taken away for a week in Holloway prison leaving behind her three-year-old daughter.

“I wish to clarify my position regarding the charge brought against me. On moral grounds I abhor the maintenance of nuclear arms wherever they may be. The bomb over Hiroshima had the power of 12.5 thousand tons of TNT.

Now we have so many bigger bombs that we measure in megatons; one megaton has the power to inflict eighty Hiroshimas.

For any government to threaten such mass destruction is morally unacceptable to me but also illegal according to international law. British law also upholds the right of the citizen to prevent a greater imminent danger to human life. If I see children in a burning house, I will break down the door in order to reach them.

Here the sanctity of human life is above that of property and that is the state of mind which I held at Greenham on the day of my arrest.”



MARY HELM was originally from Yorkshire and moved to Portsmouth in 1978. She became involved in the emerging *Parent and Toddler* movement - setting up a group with a friend to make toys more accessible to children.

Mary had also volunteered with *Women’s Aid* in Hull, campaigned for nuclear disarmament at Greenham and helped set up the rape crisis line in Portsmouth. She remembers reading *Spare Rib* magazine - an active part of the emerging Women’s Liberation Movement – which was published from 1972 until 1993 and challenged the stereotyping and exploitation of women.

She taught English as a Second Language and later trained as an asylum seeker case worker for the Red Cross. She also played a leading role in including parents from the Bengali community in their child’s education.

“It was an important time in opening up the school to the parents and the parents to the school if you like because the Bengali community tended then to be then quite a separate community. Most of the parents were first generation and didn’t have a lot of English themselves.

I hope that for them it gave them an inroad into education and what it was about and understanding what particularly the importance of play in their child’s education...that importance of the child in education was something that was really important to us at the time.”



MARIE COSTA, a pioneer for mutual respect and community cohesion in Portsmouth, was born in Eastern Nigeria, a member of the Ebo people. She moved to England in 1956 to study nursing and qualified as a midwife. She studied at Portsmouth Polytechnic and became a secondary and Further Education teacher before running her own business.

Marie was the Chair of Portsmouth's first Multicultural Group and in 1996 set up the *African Women's Forum*.



“So, in keeping Multicultural Group together, it took a lot of work to keep us all moving towards the same thing. And, of course, because I worked in Portsmouth, I was able to go to meetings to meet all the city councillors and try to persuade them to support us, which was very lacking in those days.

And when I started the African Women's Forum, I realised I had - we needed to have a forum where we could meet and just talk about ourselves, our experiences, disappointments, the racism we might encounter, our children, a lot were in mixed marriages, and how we can help each other in support.

So that worked. But I did realise at the end of the year that, as a social group, it won't last if that's all we're going to do, we needed to do something positive. And I suggested we joined Black History Month and did something, brought some African cultural activities to Portsmouth, which is how we began to be involved in cultural activities. And I had to learn, a steep learning curve, to apply for funding. But at first, we didn't have any contributory fees because I felt that if you make people pay fees to join, there'll be people who can't afford to pay, and not to embarrass people, we shouldn't have fees. But what you could do is sell food, African food in festivals, fairs, and that money we could use for ourselves.”

The *African Women's Forum* brings pressing issues of the day to the Portsmouth community such as the campaign against Female circumcision:

“For me, if you don't educate people and show them why they should stop it, then what is the point of prosecuting them. ... They're not doing it because they want to kill their kids, they're doing it because it's a natural thing for them to...they've been done, their mothers have been done, grandparents, grandmothers have been done.

And for them, their community value that. And you're telling them not to do it, it's another assault on their community's culture. So, you've got to treat it as if it's part of something that happens and leaves a woman with long-term damage for the rest of her life. So that's what we do now.”



FATOUMATA KOMA was born in 1984 in what is now the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, West Africa.

She first moved to the Netherlands, and then Portsmouth, arriving in 2004. Coming from French-speaking Guinea, her first task was to learn English. Fatoumata studied accountancy at Highbury College and now works in manufacturing in Portsmouth. In 2016 she set up the *Minority Women's Group*, mostly for women from West African backgrounds.

"Immigrant is hard and then being female also immigrant, that is more difficult because the women are vulnerable, I can say because the woman life it's not easy and just secondly you can't...just your life can go down the drain.

...So as a woman if you don't stand on your feet, it's not going to be easy for you or you have to focus what you want. You have to be objective, that's I want on my life, that's what I want to do.

... Maybe you don't know, you just find your way to be successful, but you can't be. You can have obstacles sometimes who can stop you or maybe harm you, your life, so it's not easy as a woman immigrant. Also, I remember when I first come in Portsmouth there's not many black women, not many black people here, especially a woman."



SUE CASTILLON was born in 1949 and has lived the past 27 years of her life in Portsmouth working as a member of *UNITE* the Union, and before that as a full-time youth worker.

She leads a programme *Stand up for Racism*, based on the *Show Racism the Red Card* campaign, and has stood for local council as a Labour member, speaking out about the increase of xenophobia in the city:

"I went on to get involved with a group in Portsmouth called *Stand up for Racism* who advocate for educational programmes in particular for young people.

It took me a year but I managed to get the charity *Show Racism the Red Card* that attach to football clubs and do that anti-racist work card to come to Portsmouth Football Club for a day and in the morning they trained up myself and a few other tutors to deliver that programme in schools because *Show Racism the Red Card* as an organisation haven't got the capacity to deliver this work in Portsmouth schools.

Since then I've delivered this in two schools ...In those courses we talk about language and how to practically deal with something that exploded in the school..."



ROWSHONARA REZA was born in the Sylhet District of Bangladesh and moved to Portsmouth at the age of eight.

She has fostered children from a variety of faith backgrounds and she actively supports several community groups in Portsmouth - combining her faith with community cohesion as well as challenging stereotypes of 'Asian women'.

Although her family were originally invited to the UK, this important legacy has started to fade from history.

"When my own parents came in this country to sort of like make a living, like my dad when he came - he came after the Second World War - he was actually given a voucher, so countries, under developing countries, they had vouchers sent to them and my dad came to work in the dockyard, you know, in the shipping industry, because after the World War, the Second World War, there was a shortage of men workers and therefore they needed men to come here to live and re-build Britain how it is today...."

But you look at young people nowadays, they don't understand, and they'll say: 'Oh go back to your country, you know. What are you doing here?'



SHAMILA DHANA was born in Harare, Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) and comes from a close-knit family.

She has worked with the Portsmouth *ICRC* [International Committee of the Red Cross], specialising in supporting asylum seekers and new migrants to the city. She runs support groups for asylum-seeking women affected by gender-based domestic violence and also those who arrive in the city having undergone, or with the threat of undergoing, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

"So we work with these women to educate them, to protect the girl child."

And these women would be going through numerous issues, apart from the FGM or gender-based violence - and they would also be going through immigration issues, possibly asylum-seeking, living on very low incomes and I believe that empowerment of women, empowering them to know their rights, the function of their body and the power of their mind and their voice.

It really helps, and I just love educating women and raising the bar, raising the voice for issues that we face as women every day."



SHIPA AHMED KHAN was born in Bangladesh and moved as a young child to Portsmouth with her family - where she is now a Community Development Worker.

She was involved in the *Don't Hate, Donate* campaign, which began as a spontaneous outreach from Portsmouth to the people living in the Calais "Jungle" and then enlarged to encompass people in crisis globally. To date the charity has sent over 200 tonnes of supplies to people around the world, including Syria.



**Don't Hate
DONATE**

Shipa runs a women's support group, challenging traditional opinions on women.

"I have had comments in the past like: 'Oh, Shipa, girls really shouldn't be working, and women should be staying at home'

And those are the people that I sit down and say, 'Okay, right, so why do you think that?'

So I actually work, and I work in a very open environment and I'm having to mix very freely with men and women of all ages and genders and all nationalities and I don't see that as a problem, so why do you think that?

So it's people's mindset really, but once people see that actually, well, 'hang on a minute, she's doing it, but she's not compromising in any way or losing her faith or losing her culture ...'"

Shipa describes the different pressures on her mother and herself:

"And I think growing up was a bit difficult as well because culturally my Mum came to the UK quite a lot later on in the 80s. She actually arrived and it was my Dad was here way before that and my grandfather before that. So for her it was a bit of a culture shock, coming and moving to the UK.

And I remember her going to women's support groups and things like that to help with her integration and just help her making friends and learning social skills and things like that. But growing up, I felt that my Mum always had this stereotypical idea of how things are in Bangladesh and how girls are and how women are and how you should behave and how you should act...

But the first time I went to Bangladesh was when I was 12 years old. And I went there expecting all these things that Mum's always told me. Oh, and I went there, and I had a bit of a culture shock myself. And I think my Mum was shocked as well because I think we always think culture's static, but it's not.

So it's always evolving and changing, so when she went over there, all my cousins were wearing jeans and they'd cut their hair and I'm thinking, 'but Mum, you've always told me that, you know, this is how girls are'"



The **PORTSMOUTH CHINESE ASSOCIATION** has been in Portsmouth since the 1970s.

Mrs Lai:

"At first I struggled a lot. My kids were all in Hong Kong; we had to leave our home to make a living... We worked in the kitchen; my husband earned £20, me £10. Altogether there was just £30, we had to support the family, so little money..."

Ms Yu:

"For me the most difficult issue is medical care, there's no one who can interpret for me.... Sometimes there are Chinese nurses in hospital...we can't speak English, we'll ask those Chinese nurses for help.... Since we have language barriers, what's most worrying is seeing a doctor.

When I first arrived, I felt very depressed. I had no friends, and there were hardly any Chinese here. Now there are more and more Chinese. I started to feel much better seeing more Chinese, especially when my father opened a restaurant.

In 1980 our Chinese Association was set up. I was delighted that we had our own Chinese organization. Life was happy and lively. We now have a Chinese school, and the elderly lunch club is also running ... In 1998, 2004 and 2011 Chinese women from all over the country joined together for big celebrations in the Guildhall. We also organized a fund-raising event for the association: we gathered the old people to make *Zongzi* for sale. We helped the needy Chinese women in the community. We also have a Hope Project, with which we support more than ten village schools in the deprived areas in China... I am committed to this community."

Today the Chinese community is part of the vibrant multi-cultural life of the city and the interest in Chinese language and culture has grown tremendously.

JENNIE BRENT comes originally from London and trained for a time to be a nurse, which interested her in people who required intensive diverse social support.

She worked to support Portsmouth people with the problems of unemployment and of special needs, particularly through the *Beneficial Foundation*.

The Foundation provides training to disadvantaged post-16-year-old adults with special educational needs through route-to-work training.

"I think, for me, my whole life, really, has been about people - but doing good things, you know. I don't see any point in not trying to do something good.

Doesn't always work but it's not always easy, but that is my aim really.

...We need to be empowering people, and I don't think that happens enough. We need to give people the skills to be able to move on.

... I have people here who are never going to work, they are never going to be able to look after themselves, so we do need to support them. And everyone needs a home. I think that is so important. You've got to have that front door – you go in and you feel safe."

Jennie fought for a seat on Portsmouth City Council in 2018 under the Liberal Democrat banner and now runs her own life coaching business.



SALLY THOMAS (shown on the left with Eva Alloway) became a Portsmouth councillor in 1976 in addition to her day job as a teacher. She had been made aware of the Portsea housing issue when her husband Roger became a Labour Party councillor for Portsea in the early 1970s. A huge public meeting which was held on this issue and how an action group, mainly consisting of Portsea women, took on the council.

“So one of the first things we did was call...put out piece paper right round the whole area, which is probably two thousand properties maybe, I don't know, more. Yeah, about two thousand properties. And say right, come to a big meeting, we're going to discuss the repairs and everything, right?”

“So I learnt that was part of it really. It was learning so much from them. So I might have become a councillor, but an awful lot of it was about learning from the women around me. One of the women who was incredibly important to me was called Eva Alloway... She came from rough family, like me... But she'd been in the Labour Party before me and she actually taught me how to run elections, you know, gave me a lot of advice, incredible support.”

The Somerstown residents also became involved in the campaign as they had similar problems. A series of legal actions were started against the council for repairs. There were a number of victories. Sadly, these legal challenges were curtailed when the council made it clear that in the event of a Council victory, they would claim full legal costs (amounting to many thousands of pounds) which would be disastrous for the campaign. Other aspects of the campaign continued, and Sally was joined by another woman councillor and housing campaigner Johanna Sugre the council having previously been an all-male citadel. Together Joanna and Sally really shook things up. The campaign continued into the 1980s and a number of good quality new houses were built.



CLAIRE UDY is a Non Aligned Independent Councillor for the Charles Dickens Ward of the city. She is a committed trade unionist who is President of her branch of the *GMB* [General Municipal Boilermakers] Union. This union represents people in a wide variety of occupations, including those in council and school support roles.

Claire is passionate about giving a voice to those in the City who have been marginalised.

“My problem – which is where kind of feminism might be divided – is that, I'm OK with people being sex workers and do whatever they want. I think they should unionise – absolutely – if they are going to work in that environment and they should be working in the safest ways possible.

But I ... disagree with the practice of it. I disagree with the practice of men having capitalist dominance over women in that regard. I find it quite creepy and I found men in disagreement.

It's like people are saying, 'Oh but men are getting their urges out by going.'

And I'm so sorry but there is actual evidence to show that sexual violence and assaults increases in an area where there's a sex establishment, and we should be fighting that more than anything.

I don't care if a sex club opens up, I don't care about my kids being near it, I care about the fact that people will sexually assault people and we live in a city where we do have an unproportionately high amount of sexual violence happening.”



JAN DOD has been a driving force in Somerstown to improve both the built environment and facilities for children. She has recently planted fruit trees in the area immediately around the Somerstown Hub and soon after she first moved to the area, she helped secure a grant from *Play England* for a new adventure playground in Somerstown, using the full force of community lobbying.

“...and there was enough for one adventure playground - a new adventure playground – in Portsmouth. And you can image, there was already the one at Paulsgrove, there was already the one at Landport and one at Buckland and Portsea.

And we lobbied, and we were so lucky - this is why I say it's very much a team thing – cos once this momentum got going people got all enthusiastic and so many people must have helped us out.

And being in meetings where they've spoken up and said 'Yes, these youngsters have got nowhere to play, they really need...”

Somehow we got the grant – fantastic – and what they did, they demolished, at the back of Tipton House, an old underground car park, which had had a football pitch put on the top, in compensation to the football pitch that we lost in our street but it was, the surface was horrible and it was hot, you know, on your feet and it was not not like the one they had before. Anyway, and it was cracked so it was bolted up where the surface had cracked and um so that was all demolished and an adventure playground was put in there.

And it came; the grant came, with a couple of years' worth of staffing costs. And we had a change of government and the staffing costs were withdrawn.

And somebody alerted us to the fact that it had come up at this, one of the committee meetings - 'cos that's another thing; we've got people who go

to and sit through the committee meetings and listen in – that they would take all the fencing down, take all the quote 'dangerous play stuff' out and it would just be an open playground.

And the other playgrounds like Buckland got wind of this and so we all got together 'cos they said 'If this is happening to Somerstown and they haven't got started yet, this is going to happen – with the pressure of the 2008 thing had already happened and the austerity and what have you – this is going to knock on all the way round.'

So we marched.

And every playground – I don't think Paulsgrove managed to march because it's too far – but all the playgrounds are near enough to Commercial Road - we all marched to the fountain with our flags and there was a guy, he was one of the University people who was always there with his megaphone sort of out, you know, Socialist whatsit, you know, and I can remember his face 'cos he just stood there like this and there's these kids came along with this banner, all with their football chants, you know...

'What do we want?'

'We want our playground'

You know, this sort of thing. And they converged on the fountain.

So there was a little rethink and what then happened was quite spectacular actually. Housing took them over, 'cos Play had been part of the Leisure department and we had argued, 'Well we've built these, we generally, have built these tower blocks. We have taken away the play space, we need to give it back.'

And so obviously this had pricked consciences and what they did, I think they did a survey of their tenants to see how many of their tenants would use the playground and then proportionally how many other people who got, I don't know, their own properties or privately renting, would actually use the property. And because the City Council have got this sort of Tenants Association where they talk to their tenants, it was put forward that a very small raise in rent would actually cover the cost.

And it went through.”



CAROLYN EXLEY was born in Kenya with her father serving in the military. A syndrome that led eventually to the loss of her sight brought her family back to England and to Portsmouth where, as a young woman, she trained in Preliminary Residential Care - working with children with learning disabilities, as well as the elderly.

As her sight continued to deteriorate, she was considered unfit for further education and worked on a psycho-geriatric ward in a local hospital.

After her experiences as a volunteer at the *Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service (PARCS)*, Carolyn returned as a mature-age student to get a Degree in Psychology, a Masters in Transpersonal Arts in Practice and a Diploma in Counselling as well as further training in Counselling.

She is a mother and grandmother. As well as volunteering and later working as a supervisor at the *Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service* since its beginning, Carolyn set up Portsmouth's first transgender support group and now is on the Board of Trustees at *PARCS*:

PARCS
PORTSMOUTH
ABUSE + RAPE
COUNSELLING
SERVICE

"I got involved with *PARCS* 32 years ago.

...I wasn't actually 'sposed to come to *PARCS*, I came along with a neighbour who wanted to come along to the training evening... and that night I was totally converted....

And so I started on the crisis lines coming in on a Wednesday and Friday evening...

Just jumping back a bit, when I started at *PARCS* there were 8 of us volunteers, and 2 staff, and we'd all sit on beanbags and sometimes at the end of the night sing goddess chants and we were all kind of very radical and wore dungarees and Doc Martins, and that's the kind of stuff we did! Which was special at the time.

We went on some night vigils at the Guildhall Square with candles, and I personally marched under the militant banner for the miner's strike, and then I was one of the volunteers who stood outside [W.H.] Smiths and took all the pornography off the top shelf and dumped it at the manager's feet.

I think we did that several times over a day and got petitions signed outside, and that was in the papers.... I set up a project in Portsmouth for the Trans-gender community. I spent about three years doing that."



CAROL LUPTON was a key activist in persuading Portsmouth council to fund a refuge for women escaping domestic violence.

“I do remember the early struggle. It was a group of like-minded women who decided that...we needed this facility. It took us some considerable time to convince anybody with any position of power, and certainly with any resources to hand, that they should release some of those resources to help us find a place. Those times...it wasn't an easy discussion; the issue was not on the agenda...There was a view that they've obviously done something wrong these women... And there was a degree of...men have some kind of rights to treat women...if they were their wives...So it was that kind of context which is difficult to imagine now.”

Carol remembers that not only were men in power suspicious that such a place existed, they were also suspicious that women could really be trusted to take something like this forward.

“We didn't want men's help. So the church wasn't helpful, the city council wasn't particularly unhelpful, but it was, none of it, an easy context in which to get moving and we found we...this is always the case with activism, I suspect. You do need to make allegiances,... we worked really hard... trying to talk with... people and say, look, why this is needed and why we can work together and why we should be left to do it ourselves, but they could help, you know, not take it over”



ROSE STORKEY opened the door to the first woman and her child in the Portsmouth women's refuge and saw how some of the stories turned into positives.

“I was already part of this weekly group that was planning the refuge. We had finance and building through Portsmouth Housing Association... PHA as we called it, to find a suitable building, to work out finances, where they were going to come from...”

One of the things I do remember very vividly doing is painting with a few other women, but not many ...the building we've been allocated... And then the refuge wasn't quite finished, but I have a distinct memory that I answered the phone and a woman from Basingstoke and her teenage daughter needed somewhere to go, and we weren't finished in terms of the painting or anything else. But we must have decided as a group for some reason that it was good enough and it was best that this woman and the girl came in.

And I am proud to say I was the one who opened the door for her to go in...

To see some of the women who had come in... whether it was mentally battered or physically... injured or whatever, and when their children were, you know, like pinging off the walls really with...with not knowing where they were. Just seeing some of those women get a tenancy and then come back to be part of the planning group.”

The Portsmouth women's refuge had 76 women and 140 children using their service that first year.



JANE REED was the first full-time child care worker in the new Portsmouth women's refuge. She joined the Portsmouth group of Women's Aid in 1972 and later, inspired by her time with the women at the refuge, trained as a Social Worker at Portsmouth Polytechnic. She remembers hours of volunteer meetings of all-women groups, in the early years of establishing the women's refuge:

"The support group was made up of women in the community who were looking to set up an all-woman refuge in the community. To do that they needed a property, they needed funding, they needed all of that, so there had to be other agencies involved..."

...The first refuge wasn't in a very good state, but we opened up and we took women and children in and got organised. We ran it and sometimes it was ok and sometimes it was better than others.

.... We insisted it was going to be an all women group, that was when the other agencies were involved and that was quite a struggle, but we managed it...

One of the things that struck me from very early on, was about the emotional stuff, not the physical stuff - most of the women said, 'Yeah well you get hit'.

It was the emotional stuff, the mind games that all of them spoke to said that was what did it in the end that they couldn't cope with, that was taking over their lives....

Examples of the things they did were they would change the kitchen clocks in the house, and then say 'You're late you've made the children late'

And you start thinking what's going on here... And the women used to talk about when they got their money through, because most of them were on benefits, some of them couldn't believe what it was like to go out and make a decision about how it was spent because many of them had never had any money, and never been able to go and spend it on what they needed...so it was the mind-games always that they used to talk about."



KIM HOSIER was born in Emsworth in 1960. After contracting a life-threatening illness as a young girl and being exposed to sexism at home and at school, she trained as a social worker and later a psychotherapist.

She began volunteering with PARCS and remembers that she risked her pension, a company car, and a career path in the statutory sector to take a job with PARCS while it was still a fledgling activist organisation, because she had to do something 'her heart was in'. Today she is the Chief Executive at PARCS:

"...when I was born my dad was a postman and my mum worked in a factory, and my mum was quite an influence.

She said to me, 'Don't become factory fodder.'

And I don't think she was putting herself down in that, but she aspired for something more for me, and she said it particularly to me.

And she used to call my dad, *Governor*, Guv for short, and I used to think, why is he called the Governor? And it used to feel like the world revolved around my dad. You know, when he came in my mum would scurry around tidying up, and things like that, even though she'd worked all day, and I used to think, why?

So, it feels like all of these threads have come together in the work and now my outrage is mostly around funding that I just get so angry about, and... the voluntary and community ...I think some of the most inspiring work, some of the most inspired people come from this sector, the community sector, and we were a grassroots organisation, and I don't want PARCS to lose its radical heart, but it's hard to keep that sometimes in the current climate..."



ANN JABLONSKI was born in 1944. As a teenager she gave up her Christian faith but now has a close relationship to the Anglican church through the Cathedral in Portsmouth, joining the congregation, volunteering as a bereavement counsellor, and supporting the church with an annual fundraiser.

She had initial reservations in joining the church, suffered sexism in her working life, and women's role in the church:

"The role of women [in the church] has been absolutely essential. You've got the women of the congregation and the women of the clergy. That cathedral wouldn't run without the women volunteers, that cathedral wouldn't run.

Women were involved from quite early on with distributing the communion to the sick so that was quite unusual because it's normally a clergy role and the ...at that time the highest a woman could get in the congregation was as a Deacon.

I always remember when we had our first woman Deacon. When they announced her appointment from the pulpit there was a 'ooohhhhhh' you could hear the in-take of breath 'but she won't be joining us because she's pregnant' argh - there was another intake of breath...There was an exit from the congregation when she joined us, they could not accept it and toddled off to the Holy Spirit where they are still making trouble."



SUE WARD was born in 1943, in Derbyshire and remembers the Methodist Church as being quite different to the Anglican church in its early acceptance of women as preachers:

The Methodist church was a 'huge part' of her early life and growing up that was where her identity lay. She moved to the Caribbean with her first husband where she taught in a school. She is now Church Warden and a lay pastoral assistant, at the Anglican cathedral in Portsmouth:

"Interestingly I was at the beginning of the priesting of women before it happened when I was in Tottenham [London], we didn't have a Ministry of Women group – MoW was it called? But we had a woman who was really keen, and I went to Canterbury to celebrate the MoW and remember seeing women in dog collars for the first time and thinking it was utterly alien and strange - but amazing..."

Women's role in the church has always been enormous it's just that there is a concept that they were always being told to make the coffee, the tea, but actually no because there was always women's groups. There were always brilliant women speakers in the Methodist church who were often better than men there were lay preachers in the Methodist church who were women, it was the Anglican church that didn't admit women. I would say that women's role in the Church has always really mattered and it's a stereotypical role to say men wanted them to stay and make the tea."

KITTY PRICE was born 1974 in Grantham Lincolnshire. Her father was a former Bishop of Portsmouth and was totally supported by her mother - with her parents always acting as a team.

After an academic pathway that took her to Masters level she went for ordination, but for various reasons did not continue through to Priesthood.

“I’m very critical of the Church of England but from within it not without...”

When I was a late teenager, that was when women were ordained, so the change I wanted to see in the world, of the church, was happening...

My grandfather who was ordained late in life, having had a career as an architect, he was very against the ordination of women... and my grandmother had become a Roman Catholic, so was also against the ordination of women, but for different reasons.

And seeing the two of them love each other very very deeply but being so opposed on this debate was quite a good lesson really, because it showed that you can and you must love people, despite different views, but they had such fundamentally different views about the way the church was going...

A lot of the negativity would come from women about women’s ministry and I just cannot understand that. I just cannot understand it. The only argument that makes sense – I don’t agree with it – is that traditionally it’s been men, therefore we shouldn’t have women.

But I do wonder whether, certainly vicar’s wives, who are very against the ordination of women, whether there was an element of frustration, that they had their own vocation that had been put away very tightly in a personal box as they supported their husbands.

... gender should not be an issue, should not prevent you from entering ministry in the Church. That if you were not necessarily as effective in your ministry it should be nothing to do with your gender.”



AMANDA MARTIN is the National President of the National Education Union (NEU). Her entire family originates from Paulsgrove and she originally trained as a teacher. Her grandfather was involved in the train driver’s union and this early exposure influenced her to be politically active.

When the #Metoo movement broke she was working in secondary schools on feminist agendas, and the girls that she was working with suggested *It’s Just Everywhere* as a project that reflected their own experiences of sexual harassment in school.

“And it’s an amazing, hard-hitting project that we did. When it talks about things that mainly girls go through in the school – and female teachers – but because we are a union that wants some positive and acts on things, we looked at

‘How are we going to do this?’

So we produced a project that’s looking at school councils drawing up codes of conduct around sexual harassment in school. Because if it’s good enough for celebrities, for me it’s good enough for kids in Portsmouth...

And it’s talking about - you go home, and you tell your parents at home and they go

‘Oh it’s all right – don’t worry about it.’

But actually, you should worry about it, because if we don’t stop it in school and have those conversations with the people that are doing it – who don’t realise how much it impacts and hurts the people that are their friends – then we’re not going to change society.”



MAUREEN ROTHSTEIN studied art in London in the 1950s and fell in love with pottery. She trained at *Camberwell Art College* and set up the *Shepherd's Well Pottery* in Hampstead. It was quite unusual for women to set up as potters at this time. As a ceramicist, Maureen's socialism and leftist views has always led her to produce functional work.

Maureen converted to socialism in her teens.

"I think that's an age when people do start thinking about what they believe in. And I think it all rather went together, find that religion didn't seem to be necessary to one's life, and politics was a lot more interesting."

Maureen came to Portsmouth with her husband's work in the late 1960s after they had spent a few years living in Moscow. Maureen was already a member of *CND* and became an early and active member of the *South East Peace Council*, set up by a friend who had heard about the peace movement and the groups that were springing up around the country.:

"She was a Quaker, and I think she knew a lot of other Quakers, and I think it was through that that she heard about it."

And so she started the Peace Group in North Portsmouth. And people came from very wide to start with, I remember at the inaugural meeting, there were about 60 people came, from as far afield as Southampton and Petersfield, and Southsea, and Chichester, a very wide area, and a lot of clergymen were involved... And it still is just about continuing, in a very, very small way."

Maureen organised successful campaigns against the proposed Conservative Party cuts in Adult Education, and for quite a while the classes continued. Maureen's long-term involvement and advocacy for adult education was based in many years' experience of teaching all-comers, especially when classes could be offered for free:

"I had people of all ages. I even had students who were doing their A levels, who got special permission to come to pottery classes, and lots of young married women came during the day, their children were at nursery school."

... And of course, a lot of pensioners, a lot of retired people came. So, it was a very wide range of age groups, which made it very interesting, and a lovely thing, if you've been to adult education, you probably know, a very wide range of abilities...

I think it's probably true of all adult education, but certainly the ceramic classes, they were very sociable, partly because when you're working like that, you can chat to each other. I have one example that I always think of, I had a young woman who was in her forties, she'd got Down's Syndrome...

And there was somebody there who actually taught at what was The College of Art, which of course, doesn't exist as a College of Art anymore, and they got on really well together, and helped each other, you know? ...

And one time [the project] was to do with the sea and boats which seemed a fairly corny sort of suggestion, in Portsmouth, and she did a ship in a bottle...she thought it up herself, nobody told her, you know? And she did it beautifully, and it was like a half bottle, 'cause obviously it was pottery and not glass, so you had to be able to see it, and she did it beautifully."

Maureen was one of the main organisers of the protests against Adult Education classes, mostly attended by women, being closed down. Because the Government of the time

'didn't want to spend money on... subsidising people to enjoy themselves'



Some examples of Maureen's work



MANDY WEBB has always been a creative person, using art as an escape to create her own world in her childhood years. As she went through her schooling, she became increasingly aware of gender stereotyping and was disappointed that there were no female role models offered to her.

After Mandy received an HIV diagnosis, she became much more focussed on her art and the expression of her own story and that of other women. Mandy used her art and her humour to express the frustrations of suffering from a long-term illness, but also as a way of being open about her condition. Her work used the red ribbons of the AIDS campaigns to draw attention to the condition.

Like many feminist artists, Mandy wants to draw attention to women in history and women's place in society today. She frequently uses women's clothing to represent the issues concerned. She has recovered female composers, suffragettes and suffragists, women on strike and much more. Her work often includes naming women, to bring their 'herstories' to the fore in the hope that this will inspire others to research these women of our shared history.

Mandy's famous "*Bollocks to Austerity*" dress is something she has worn on demonstrations in London to make a political statement against the Conservative Party's policy of austerity. Mandy wanted to protest but decided:

"There's not enough room on a placard, there's so many things I want to write, and so I'm going to write a dress. And so I made this dress and it was really in austerity style. I didn't buy anything new, I used all my old things from the other pieces I made.

This dress is quite Frankenstein, a bit like this monster, where you see all the pieces sewn together and you see the pieces of Frankenstein with all the lines. And I then I just daubed it with all these different rants about saving our NHS, and 'Revolution is the only Solution' and even the badgers got a look in: 'Don't cull the badgers, cull the Tories'. This is what inspires me now."

Mandy has also completed work on D-Day and is currently working with Bangladeshi women of Portsmouth, recording their names and stories through painting and embroidery on Saris.



Mandy modelling her *Bollocks to Austerity* dress



SHELAGH SIMMONS was born in Portsmouth in 1954. She had a French father and was brought up to be conscious of social issues and public service. She attended Catholic and convent schools but didn't particularly enjoy school and left with few qualifications.

There were few career opportunities from education at a secondary modern school and Shelagh took clerical jobs.

She campaigned against the continual use of the death penalty in former UK colonies. She worked for the Probation Service and was also involved in providing support for refugees.

Shelagh remembered the blatant sexism of the workplace, such as at *Marconi Space and Defence Systems*, where the women would dread walking through some of the engineering offices because of the wolf whistles and other harassment.

"There would be comments shouted at you as you walked through the Drawing Office.

There would be calendars with naked women on them hanging up on the wall and it was just a very uncomfortable atmosphere to be in. It was just considered to be the norm."

Shelagh is now the Solent area group co-ordinator for the national *WASPI* [Women Against State Pension Inequality] campaign. *WASPI* argues against the unfair and poorly administered move towards equal pensionable age for men and women.

The organisation supports women who have suffered hardship because of this legislation.

"There are some women who have had to sell their homes to make ends meet because they haven't got any other income. Some are having to take physically demanding jobs when they are in poor health because they need to make ends meet. We feel there is a lot of injustice."

This lack of notice and information about the changes in pension structures meant that some women have had no time to make adequate preparation for this change to their state pension, leaving some women with only two years' notice for the changes imposed.

Shelagh argues that women have fulfilled their part of the working bargain with the state, and the government has a moral contract with those women.

"We would like a bridging pension and we would like compensation to be backdated for people who've already got to their State Pension age, because we feel they deserve it."

WASPI is a professional national campaign, but has its sting too, and is not afraid to lobby the government.

"...in a way this campaign has been quite empowering, because there are women who have never campaigned about anything in their lives or never been, never been politically aware even, who have been galvanised by this campaign.

So, although I wouldn't have wanted it to happen, when I see how empowering it's been for some women and the solidarity that there is among them, you know, I think that's quite touching actually."



CAROLYNE JACOBS never expected to have a career, but after she had had her children, she retrained in computing through the 1990s Government scheme to promote women re-entering work, and then went on to achieve an MA and a PhD.

In 2004, Carlyne realised she would not be receiving her state pension at the age of 60 as she expected. In order to address this shortfall, she carried on working for additional years.

Carlyne is an active member of WASPI as she understands it is not always possible for women to do a high-pressure job in their sixties:

“I’ve been very involved with it because not only am I aggrieved from my own perspective and how it has affected me, but I know that it has affected a lot of other women and sometimes it has affected them a lot more than it has affected me.

We have people in our group who have had to sell their houses, who are struggling, who are trying to find work when they are over sixty and just can’t do it. So I think it’s wrong and I think it is an injustice.

So what we have done as a group is try to raise awareness.”

AMANDA GARRIE was born in 1954 and came to the South Coast when her husband was posted to the area. Amanda realised that a career was difficult:

“Like a lot of women born in the early 1950s, there wasn’t an expectation of a full working life. The idea was that you got married, you had children and you might do a little bit of part-time work. But really the emphasis was still with people helping their children to grow up and being in the family home.

I married early as many people did, so I was only nineteen and I married someone who worked for the Ministry of Defence, they were a mobile grade. So there really wasn’t a possibility of me having a career or anything like that because I would need to move every two or three years.”

Despite this, Amanda went on to train, qualify and then work as a teacher and is now studying for a PhD.

Through family circumstances and health reasons, Amanda needed to retire early, but was only made aware very late on that she would not receive her State Pension in 2014 but would have to wait until 2020.

This has caused considerable hardship, and Amanda had to sell her home. She now actively supports WASPI.



CHRISTINE NEAL left her initial education path without a degree and started a family - with the demands of childcare meaning that she had to take part-time and evening work with her husband working during the day.

She decided to start evening classes and gradually gained further qualifications until she graduated with a degree and began to teach in her early forties.

When she reached fifty-eight she expected to have her teaching pension and her State pension pay out together at sixty to enable her to retire with her husband and move house, but she received notification that, although her teaching pension would pay out, her State Pension had been deferred until she was sixty-six, meaning that all her retirement plans had to be changed - as she did not feel that she could continue with her teaching career.

“I knew, deep down, that between the age of sixty and sixty-six I would not be performing my job as well as I could be because of the fact that I was older, I was far more tired, and I just wasn’t up to doing the job. And I didn’t feel that the children in my care would be receiving the best education that I could give them.”

Christine is now involved with the *WASPI* campaign.

SALLY ROBINSON moved to the Portsmouth area in the 1970s. She worked for the Civil Service for a number of years, returning to work after having her children and achieving promotion whilst also working at the branch office of the trade union. However, Sally felt she was part of the ‘sandwich’ generation where she needed to care for elderly relatives as well as children. Sally left her career to care for her disabled husband, elderly mother and her grandchildren.

Despite the fact she worked for the Department of Work and Pensions, Sally was one of the women not informed of the State Pension changes. She only learnt about this when a friend brought it to her attention in 2011.

This really surprised Sally.

“I was really good at reading guidance and materials as I thought it was my role to make sure that I implemented things properly.

And I felt that I was really well informed. Because I was a Trade Union member, and an active Trade Union member, I read the things that came out from those publications as well.”

Sally became involved with *WASPI* after noticing an advertisement in the local paper and has been campaigning and distributing information ever since. She remains surprised at how few women know anything about the changes to their pension.

Sally herself has done many things with *WASPI* that she wouldn’t have done otherwise, such as public speaking to a large number of people in the Guildhall and lobbying in the House of Commons.





CELIA CLARK is a passionate conservationist. She arrived in Portsmouth in 1970 and has become a leading force with the *Portsmouth Society*. She tried to save the Tricorn and is now concerned with the future of the sea defences at Southsea.

Her early projects in Portsmouth concerned the history of the local built environment, told by the people who lived there.

We started the WEA local history group – now that’s still going strong, I’m really really proud of that – what we did was, we learnt from Centre Point in Hackney that oral history was the thing and what we did was write street biographies...

We would get out the street directory for 1934 and we’d say,

‘Well there was a rag and bone man here, wasn’t there. Tell us about that.’

...we didn’t keep the tapes, we wrote down what was said – and they are still doing that.

The *Portsmouth Society* was formed in response to the reshaping of Portsmouth in the 1970s and the possible loss of heritage assets:

“In the Portsmouth Society we had several set piece fights which we won - and I am very, very proud of that. St Mary’s House, which is near the prison – that was due for the chop and there was a particularly unpleasant councillor, called John Marshall, who said

‘You’ll save that building over my dead body!’

.... I said, ‘I can, and I will.’

And I did - I saved the building!”



AMY DOYLE runs the *Female Entrepreneurs Network* in Portsmouth. More and more micro businesses are starting up as women look for new ways of earning a salary whilst still providing care for children and other dependents.

The *Female Entrepreneurs Network* allows women running all types of businesses to meet together and exchange ideas, contacts and information. Women can gain support from other like-minded entrepreneurs.

“It’s much more acceptable, much more usual for a woman to start a business now. I think women are still hitting a lot of prejudice when they do start up, something like one pence in every pound of investment goes to women – the other ninety-nine is going to men.

So women start up but then they don’t have access to the same advantages that men do once they’re going – and I think sometimes there are different motivations for starting up for women as well. Often it is around things like caring responsibilities and what fits with their lifestyle and all the other demands, rather than perhaps coming from a corporate route where they’ve done something in big business...

... I think women tend to start businesses a lot of the time where a lot of it is giving back or filling a gap.

They go ‘I’ve been through this and I bet you lots of other women are going through it.’

... so I think there are lots of opportunities for women, but I think then how they go about that is quite restrictive.”



CLARE SEEK came to Portsmouth in the late 1990s, having spent her early years in Africa where the sense of community there was a significant influence on her.

She is involved with the *Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Portsmouth* campaign - working to reduce the amount of plastic waste produced by households - after her experience of *Living Life With Less*.

Clare runs the *Green Drinks* group and has recently started a Repair Cafe in Portsmouth, originally a Dutch idea, where fixable items are repaired to prevent them from being thrown away into landfill.



The Repair Café operates once a month and is very popular

“I have been known as the *Plastic-free Woman of Portsmouth*. People in Southampton have called me the *Plastic Woman* for quite a while, so when I did this whole thing with *Living Life With Less*, a couple of years later I then analysed what was left in our bins. So we’d done like loads of stuff like composting food waste - all that kind of thing – and the only thing left in our bin was plastic.

And I was like ‘Well, this is ridiculous. I mean all of this has come out of fossils from years ago and all I’m doing is unwrapping something and putting it in.’

So then I did a blog for a year of trying to reduce plastic ... and then I started to talk to people about it and blog and talking to the kids in school and that kind of thing and then David Attenborough [Blue Planet II] happened a year and a half ago.

And that’s when I then thought ‘Actually we could – there’s actually a bit of appetite.’

Rather than me just being this woman that everyone goes: ‘Well that’s interesting.’

It’s like ‘Right let’s do something’

So we got in touch with *Surfers Against Sewage* about a year and a half ago, just when they were starting that element of the campaign and then my kids and I did deputations to council in the February of last year and got it agreed – ‘cos that’s the first kind of step is that you actually get the council to say ‘Yes we’re behind this, we’re going to try and become a single-use-plastics-free authority, and we’ll be part of a Steering Group’

So then I’ve led that for the last year and a half. So we do work in schools, community groups, get businesses on board to reduce - try and eliminate three forms of single-use plastic. We’re just putting together at the minute some kind of anti-littering campaign to kind of try and change people’s behaviour, especially on the Common and the Sea Front in the Summer and the Bank Holiday months – that kind of thing.

But that’s again pulling lots of different people together to do it – it’s not me doing it as such but I just try and bring together the artists and those kind of different things.”



DELPHINE LAVEYNE is originally from France and has joined the fight to reduce plastics use by successfully founding *Zero Waste Portsmouth*, an organisation that allows members of the local community to come together and share ideas and skills about waste reduction

This organisation has given rise to the *Portsmouth Package Free Larder*, due to open in 2020 in the Southsea/Fratton area.

Delphine is an engineer by training but has had a long-standing interest in organic food, which has led her to examine if it is possible to reduce or eliminate plastics from the food retail environment.

“Plastic-free shops and shops where you can buy in bulk quantities, or at least loose products, are opening a bit everywhere in England now. So – can’t remember the last one that opened recently – but there’s one in Birmingham, there’s a couple in Edinburgh, there’s one in Devon, which is really well known, and there’s shops opening regularly around the country and elsewhere.

So there’s a market and people have been showing a lot of interest since we started our Social Media campaign. So we’re sure – people are waiting for that... The idea of the shop is to have a big bag like in the old years when you were coming with your own bags or your own containers...For example, let’s say you want some rice and you just want like 100 grams... normally in supermarkets you don’t find ... under 250 grams, so you can pick exactly the amount you want without any plastic.

So we’ll be, we’re hoping to get a good range of what people usually shop in a supermarket, so that people will be able to stop there and not have – unless they really want to – don’t have to go elsewhere, for the rest of their shopping list. ”

KIMBERLY BARRETT became interested in green issues when the fight to save the land at St James' Hospital galvanised local opinion. She set up *Keep Milton Green* in 2014 as redevelopment plans for a number of green spaces emerged in Portsmouth.

“What started off just as a campaign group regarding St James’ Hospital is now spread to other areas as well. So we’ve looked at the application for Kingston Prison, because that’s just out of the area ... but also down near Fort Cumberland we’ve looked at that - where they’re looking to develop around that area. And from this, not only has it just turned into a Community Group informing people about applications and events going on, it’s also given me the opportunity to try and almost help out... city-wide.

A couple of years ago I got some funding allocated to me from the Partnership Foundation to do a, they wanted to do community events and make people aware of community things, so I put in an application to do a city-wide photography competition ... we worked with Southsea Greenhouse as well with that and we called that *Keep Pompey Green* and that was across the whole city. We got the MPs involved and the Lord Mayor and it was really successful. So it has completely expanded out and now I find that I’m working with other start-ups campaign groups around the city like Love Copnor and other places as well who want a bit of information how to almost push their way forward and be heard as well – so it’s snowballed and it’s lovely.”

Kimberly has had many comments praising her campaigning and the fact that her example is encouraging women who would not otherwise have come forward to protest. She is also especially keen on supporting local children to go out and walk around their own unexplored open spaces. Some children, even though they live on Portsea island, surrounded by water, have never seen the sea.



EMMA MURPHY is a trained journalist and has a personal interest in violence against women. She has recently focused on local, Green issues.

And I just started coming along to the meetings and I got involved and then Tamara suggested setting up a blog that would kind of focus on little ways we could do activism in our own kind of area.

A lot of that focuses on like how to have a greener lifestyle in Portsmouth. And so, after that we started to work on a blog together. It's really kind of been a great experience for us since then because its allowed us to kind of focus our activism and like kind of its allowed us to make our lives a little bit more greener as well.

Like, I don't ask for lifts as much as opposed to walking or getting public transport and I've found a lot of ways to kind of cut down my own kind of wastage, and stuff like that."

Emma's comments reflect the growing awareness in the younger generations of how their small actions at a local level can have large effects on the environment.



TAMARA GROEN is a member of the Green party and works hard to raise the profile of environmental issues in Portsmouth.

She has seen green issues transform from low-key to high-profile in the city.

"I think that green, and when I say green, not just the Green party but green as in environmental-minded people in Portsmouth, has always been here.

... but I think they have now become a lot more visible. I'm feeling a lot more confident to go and talk to people and I can see how so many groups are interconnected.

So we have people organising beach cleans, people organising plastic-free larders and shops. We've got zero-waste shops in Gosport.

I could list a whole load of people and organisations that are volunteer-led, that are green activism and green lifestyle in Pompey and I really, really love that. That makes Pompey feel like home to me."





IN MEMORIUM

SURGEON LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER COLLETTE CECELIA GREEN is fondly remembered by her daughter, Helen Potre. Helen was interviewed for the project by Olivia Davies, a pupil at Portsmouth High School.

Colette's life story illustrates life in the Navy in the middle of the twentieth century. Colette was born in 1933 and became a doctor.

"She wanted to do medicine, had always know that from whenever she could think about what she wanted to do ... so her senior school didn't offer the A levels she needed, so she popped off down to the boy's school and asked if she could do it there - and they let her. Well, they wouldn't have said no to her to be honest."

She served as the first female Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander in the Royal Navy. As a woman, she was not allowed on ships, although her daughter recalls her account of managing to smuggle herself onto a submarine. Colette also designed her own uniform as there was no provision for a female officer of her rank - and she could make dresses, amongst her many other skills.

"And she loved it. She got saluted, she outranked so many men - and there's a really lovely story of Mum, when she had to go to a Mess Dress and the men didn't have any protocol at all for a female officer. And Mum's feet always struggled, so her shoes were hurting, so she got in, took her shoes off, sat on the floor and just laughed her head off 'cos every single male officer did exactly the same, because they didn't know how to react to a female officer - so at that point she just thought 'OK.'"

There was also no precedent for the situation when Colette fell in love with a navy man of lower rank than her own. To solve the problem, she resigned and married him - she had always wanted a family. As her children grew older, Colette embarked on two new careers, first as a GP and then as the first full-time female Police Surgeon.

Helen describes Colette as inspirational and a "whirlwind", but she also stresses the fact that her mother did not identify with feminism.

"She just did everything she did because she could, and she wanted to, and nothing was going to stop her. So I think that's fed down to us as well - if you want to do something, just do it."

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