

1985-1995: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Ten years of
Everywoman have
seen ten years of
change in
women's lives.
Fiona Dearling
charts the highs
and lows

FIRSTS

1985

- The **Women's Press** launch a science fiction series written by women for women
- In March the first issue of **Everywoman** is launched

1986

- **Ford** in Dagenham employ the first women paint sprayers
- The first Asian woman councillor, **Valerie Vaz**, is elected for the London Borough of Ealing
- **Lambeth London Borough** becomes the first council to appoint a black woman as leader of a council
- **South Bank Polytechnic** (now South Bank University) appoints **Pauline Perry** as director making her the first woman director of a poly

- The first women's rugby international is held with Great Britain playing France

1987

- **Wendy Henry** becomes the first editor of a national Fleet Street paper, even if it is the **News of the World**. Her successor, a year later, is also a woman

- **Helen Chadwick** is the first woman short listed for the Turner Prize
- 15 women in Canterbury are the first to be given the title of

Reverend and allowed to wear clerical collars

- In December, **Marks and Spencer** and **National Westminster Bank** both appoint a woman onto their boards of directors for the first time. The woman, **Baroness Young**, has also been a first in other areas: leader of the House of Lords, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Lord Privy Seal and first woman deputy Foreign Secretary
- **Maggie** is voted the most admired woman in the world...

1988

- The first black woman mayor is appointed in Islington
- **Dartmoor** top-security men's prison becomes the first prison to appoint women as prison officers
- Due to the continual annual decline of viewing figures, **Thames Television** decides to drop the **Miss World** show. It has not been broadcast in Britain since
- **Kim George** is referee for an FA Cup Tie
- Reading AFC employ **Annie Bassett**, making her the first woman general manager of a league team

- A first for the House of Lords in February, when four lesbians absail from the visitors' gallery into the Chamber following the debate on **Clause 28**. As they descend, they shout protests against the clause, which bans the promotion of homosexuality. The women, who are all released without charge, say they want to have their say on **Clause 28** and are sick and tired of listening to what others have to say about it

- In May, **Lesbians and Clause 28** again make the news, but literally this time!

Two lesbians storm the BBC studio where the 6 o'clock news is being broadcast. In protest against the clause and its implications, one woman handcuffs herself to a remote control camera, whilst the other is briefly seen, handcuffed to Sue Lawley's desk. Meanwhile, **Nicholas Witchell** sits on one of the women and puts his hand over her mouth, continuing to deliver the day's events whilst Sue apologises for the disruption!

- The BBC makes the headlines again, this time with the sacking of Radio One DJ, **Janice Long**, allegedly because single mothers are something that they do not wish to encourage

1989

- The **AA** employs its first patrolwoman
- The **General Municipal Boilermakers' Union** becomes the first trade union to announce the introduction of quotas to promote the selection of women as parliamentary candidates. They also decide to increase the number of female MPs they sponsor and increase the sponsorship of women candidates.
- From 20 July, women are allowed to train to become pilots and navigators in the **RAF**. However, they are still barred from flying front-line aircraft

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1990

- The Royal Navy appoints its first female chaplain, the **Reverend Caroline Pullman**
- Another first for the Navy... On 5 February **Archie Hamilton**, Minister of State for Armed Forces, announces that **WRENS** will now be allowed to serve aboard warships, as



1986 **Diane Abbott** becomes Britain's first black woman MP



1988 April sees **Sian Edwards** become the first woman to conduct classical music at Covent Garden. She later goes on to become musical director of the **English National Opera** (1991)

occurs in other countries. (Intimate relationships will not be permitted and counselling will be offered to wives of Navy men!) The decision also makes the Royal Navy the first of the British armed forces to allow women into combat

- **Tracey Edwards**, skipper of the "Maiden", and her crew, become the first all-female team to participate in the nine-month Whitbread Round the World Cup

1991

- In April, **Patricia Scotland** becomes Britain's first black female QC

- 17 May: **Rebecca Stephens** makes it to the top as the first woman to climb Everest. "She stayed on while everyone else deteriorated," says Peter Earl, the expedition leader

- 18 May: **Helen Sharman** blasts off into space aboard the Russian spacecraft Soyuz TM 12. She becomes the first Briton in space amid rumours that she has been instructed prior to departure "not to touch anything she shouldn't"



1994 **Brookside** screens the first lesbian kiss on a British TV soap

- **Kerri Hulme** wins the Booker Prize

- South African and anti-apartheid campaigner, **Nadine Gordimer** is the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 25 years

1992

- **The Femidom** is launched
- **Stella Rimmington** becomes the first woman to be appointed head of MI5

- The first British lesbian art show is held in London

- 11 November: the **General**



1990 In November, **Mary Robinson** is elected President of Ireland, bringing hope to women, both gay and straight, with her policies

Synod marginally wins the vote to enable women to be ordained as priests in the Church of England. Although the General Synod had voted in 1987 for authorising legislation to be drawn up on female priests, the resistance towards the very idea had halted it for five years. Both men and women in the church had threatened conversion to Catholicism. As a result, in February 1990, the General Synod had voted to compensate priests who leave the church in protest of the ordination of women

- **Betty Boothroyd** becomes the first female speaker of the House of Commons

- In November, the hugely successful **Zero Tolerance** poster campaign is launched in Edinburgh with slogans such as: "He gave her flowers, chocolates and a multiple bruising." In March 1993 the campaign spreads to London

1993

- **Hufty** becomes presenter of **The Word**. Her contract is not renewed for the following series although her last words "Lesbian Power!" will not be forgotten by many

- **Mrs Bobbitt** makes some re-arrangements to her husband's genitalia. Her tactics are later altered by a woman in Newcastle who pours boiling candle wax over yours truly

1994

- **Div**, the first lesbian glossy magazine, is launched in March and is still going strong
- Two women in Manchester become the **first lesbian couple** to be made joint legal par-

ents of a child

- As the **Starship Enterprise** once more undertakes to "boldly go where no one has gone before" it does so under the control of a new captain, **Genevieve Bujold**, who becomes the starship's first woman captain

- **Ffiona Cambell** becomes the first woman to walk around the world. Not many people seem to be particularly impressed

- **Army women** who were sacked for becoming pregnant are awarded compensation at levels deemed far too high by many men

- In January, **Jane Brown** turns down tickets for her pupils to see Romeo and Juliet. She is ridiculed for saying that it was "too heterosexual" and is persecuted by the media for being a lesbian. Most parents, however, offer her their support

1995

- **Islington council** is accused of taking political correctness too far when it offers the services of female plumbers and other manually skilled women workers to elderly and single women in the borough. Its crime seems to be encouraging women into "men's jobs" and offering a safety precaution to women who choose to use it

- **The Princess of Wales** becomes the first Royal this century to take the press to court. She is furious about photographs taken of her in a gym, working-out, showing "her legs apart and an attitude of surrender; a voveurs dream"

POLITICS

1986

- **Mrs Thatcher** is criticised for not putting women into positions of power, following a survey in April carried out by **Harriet Harman**, Labour MP for Peckham. The results showed that only 15% of ministerial appointments to advisory bodies had gone to women



1984 **Martina Navratilova** retires from Wimbledon singles tennis with nine Wimbledon singles titles under her belt



1993 Lesbian chic hits the mainstream press. **k.d. lang** and **Cindy Crawford** appear on the cover of **Vanity Fair** in pseudo-erotic, psuedo-lesbian pose

1987

● In January, Labour announces its plans for a **Ministry of Women**, with its own minister. This appointment would follow the examples of many other EC and non-EC countries. The Minister will be



1990 Bye bye Maggie!
Love her or loathe her, her eleven-year reign is over as Britain's first woman prime minister Thatcher said: "I owe nothing to women's lib" and women owe nothing to her either...

responsible for the fairer representation of women, the co-ordination of child care policies and women's safety.

● 27 May: MP **Jo Richardson** urges women to stay in bed for the day so that the impact of their absence is fully realised. The suggestion is part of a European election campaign to highlight the disparity between available

provisions for British women against their European counterparts. In the UK, six weeks maternity leave is available, compared with 32 weeks in West Germany and 21 weeks in Italy

1988

● **Benazir Bhutto** becomes prime minister of Pakistan for two years

1990

● Lithuania, Haiti and Nicaragua all elect **women** premieres, whilst Norway elects **Gro Harlem Brundtland** for a third time

1991

● In **Bangladesh** the first democratic elections are held

resulting in the country's first woman Prime Minister, **Belgium Khaleda Zia**. In May **Edith Cresson** becomes France's first female Prime Minister

1992

● **Margaret Beckett** becomes deputy leader of the Labour Party

● Two women make the **Cabinet**. (There's no stopping us now!)

● **Poland** elects a woman as Prime Minister and **Corazon Aquino** ends her four years as president of the Philippines

1993

● At the end of June, Labour announces its support of **all-women short lists** to ensure the fairer representation of women MPs. The quotas are set at 50% of women candidates to fill target seats and 50% to fill seats becoming vacant upon an MPs retirement. It is stated that "without targets or quotas, at the current rate of change it is estimated that it would take around two hundred years to achieve equal representation for women." An outcry follows. Some think that women will not be selected according to their competence but rather because of their gender and that men will be prevented from standing. **Clare Short** MP begins a campaign to retain the short-lists

● **Tansa Ciller** is elected prime minister of Turkey

1994

● Following a vote in 1994, Labour votes to retain **all women short-lists!**

● **Margaret Beckett** stands in as **Leader of the Opposition** following the death of John Smith. However, come voting time, Margaret is not "the man for the job" and is unable even to resume her former position as deputy. Instead she is made Shadow Health Minister

battle to deny under-16s access to contraception without parental consent. The mother of ten is defeated on 18 October by the Law Lords

● Tory MP **Ann Widdecombe** criticises a judge's decision to allow a 15-year-old to have an abortion against her mother's wishes

● **Enoch Powell** introduces a bill which would make treatment for couples requiring fertilisation programmes illegal

● **Spain legalises abortion** for rape victims, risk and foetal abnormality

1986

● **Clare Short** MP introduces her private member's bill in the House of Commons to ban **page three pin-ups**. She gets massive support from women everywhere and total ridicule in the House of Commons

● In **Greece**, abortion becomes free and legal

1987

● **David Alton** MP introduces a private member's bill to reduce the **abortion** time limit to eighteen weeks

1988

● **Clare Short** attempts to reintroduce the **Page Three Bill**

● After huge campaigns from pro-life and pro-choice campaigners, the **Alton Bill** fails

1989

● **Kiranjit Ahluwalia** is sentenced to life imprisonment for murder for killing her husband. She has suffered ten years of humiliation, physical and sexual assault but the issue of domestic violence is ignored

1990

● In July, **Judge Hopkin** sentences a 16-year-old, who is seven and half months pregnant, to two years imprisonment for robbery

● **Belgium's King** abdicates for a day rather than sign a bill legalising abortion. The Bill is passed in his absence!

● The **Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill** is



DOMESTIC

1985

● **Victoria Gillick** loses her



1993 Madonna falls from her pedestal as "post-feminist" icon when she goes a touch too far with her bare-all Sex book

passed by the House of Lords. This reduces the abortion time limit to 24 weeks from 28 weeks. In certain cases there will be no limit

● **Embryology testing** is permitted within the first 14 days of fertilisation

1991

● 23 October: a 250-year order is defeated when it is ruled that marriage will no longer give a husband the legal right to have sex with his partner, and that men can now be found guilty of raping their wives. The legislation of **rape within marriage** goes through in 1994 as part of the - otherwise horrendous - **Criminal Justice Act**. Marital rape is already illegal in other EC countries such as France, Sweden, Denmark and Norway

● 29 July: hunger striker **Sara Thornton** loses her appeal against her conviction for the murder of her violent husband, again illustrating how systematic abuse fails to be taken into account alongside the actions of battered wives

● **The abortion pill**, already being used in France, is given a licence in Britain

1992

● In **February**, a 14-year-old Irish girl who became pregnant after being raped is banned from having an abortion in London. This follows a 1985 Amendment to the Irish

Constitution which prohibited access to abortions and abortion information available from other EC countries. After massive outcry, the ban is lifted

● Following rigorous campaigning, **Kiranjit** is heard in the Court of Appeal, her conviction quashed and a retrial ordered. In September **Kiranjit Ahluwalia's** plea of manslaughter is accepted and she is released

1993

● 29 October: the Court of Appeal lifts the jail sentence of **Janet Gardner**, for the killing of her violent ex-partner in self-defence

● **Date Rape** raises its ugly head, and the right to anonymity of rape victims is thrown into question

● In **February**, a 15-year-old boy is ordered to pay £500 costs towards a holiday for his rape victim so that she can "get over" the ordeal

1994

● **Ann Widdecombe MP** converts to Catholicism following the Pope's speech in April 1993, warning **Bosnian rape victims** not to have an abortion as "the unborn are not responsible for the violence suffered and the images of God must be respected and loved". Instead he asked the women to "accept the enemy within and make the child flesh of their own flesh"

● An attempt is made by **Lord Ashley**, supporter of **Kiranjit Ahluwalia**, to reform the **law on provocation**, in an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill

WORK

1985

● The UK is the only member state to veto the **EC directive on parental leave**. The directive would give paid time off to mothers, fathers and others responsible for children

1986

● The European court rules that the UK has broken Euro-

pean law by barring married and cohabiting women from claiming the **invalid care allowance**

1987

● **The Maternity Grant**, all £25 of it, is abolished on 16 April under the 1986 Social Security Act

1988

● It is announced that husbands and wives will be **taxed** independently

● **The calculation of pensions**, based on the highest earnings of the best twenty years, is scrapped. It is now based on lifetime earnings, making women vulnerable to poverty in old age

● **Julie Hatwood** becomes the first woman to win a case of equal pay for equal value, following the 1984 **Equal Pay Act** amendment

1990

● **The European Women's Lobby** is established to promote equal rights and opportunities in European politics. It also encourages co-operation between women in Europe and in other countries

● **Pension benefits** are made equal for men and women in respect of service

1991

● **Opportunity 2000** is launched to promote and raise the profile of women in the work place. It is a business initiative that Mr Major tries to pass off as a Government project. Considering his opt-out of the Social Chapter - denying British workers better working conditions, childcare, and maternity and part-time rights - no-one believes him

● **The European Code of Practice** is introduced on Protecting the Dignity of Men and Women. This encourages employers to develop good practice in the workplace, including the prevention of harassment.

PAM THERWOOD/FORMAT TAKEN FROM POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE PUBLISHED BY SCARLET PRESS £7.99



1994 The BBC is criticised for extending its policy of wedding vouchers and paid honeymoon leave to lesbian and gay couples. It decides to solve the problem by withdrawing benefits for everyone...



1991 Thelma and Louise hit the big screen with a script written by first-time writer Callie Khouri



1993 *Spare Rib*, the feminist magazine begun at the height of the Women's Liberation Movement, ceases publishing after 21 years. Farewell also to magazines *Working Woman*, *Harpies* and *Quines and Outwrite*, and to Sheba Feminist Publishing

1992

● The EC **Pregnancy Directive** is introduced, entitling all women to 14 weeks maternity leave, irrespective of the hours they work or length of service. The Directive also gives protection against dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy (which has a few serious consequences for the armed services later on...)

1993

● The Government decides to **equalise the retirement age** for men and women at 65 years. Now, not only does the way in which pensions are worked out discriminate against women, the discrimination also lasts for five years longer...

1994

● In March, **part-time work-**

ers are given the same redundancy and unfair dismissal rights as full-time workers in a House of Lords ruling. The move is a huge victory for women who make up 90% of part-timers

● The UK is forced, under European law, to **improve maternity pay**. Women now only have to work for a minimum of six months for the same employer to qualify for higher rate statutory maternity pay (SMP). Women now get 90% of their earnings for the first six weeks and the lower rate SMP (£52.50) for the following 12. Despite these changes, Britain is still one of the worse countries in the EC for providing workers with employment benefits

● **Michael Portillo** opposes **paternity leave** provision in the European Parliament. He also announces cuts to be made to adult education, affecting women who wish to train for improved access to the labour market

FAREWELLS

1986

● **Simone de Beauvoir**, French feminist and author of the *Second Sex*, dies in Paris at the age of 78

1992

Angela Carter, writer of magic realism, dies aged 51

1993

● **Jill Tweedie**, *Guardian* columnist, author of *Letters from a Faint-hearted Feminist*, *Bliss*, and others, dies aged 57

1994

● Women's "Minister" **Jo Richardson** dies aged 70. She was a staunch supporter of both women's rights and lesbian and gay rights. She was also the woman behind *Labour's Sex Equality Bill* which made unlawful any discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital or family status, or sexuality

WAR ON WANT

sends greetings on International Women's Day

We are marking International Women's Day 1995 with the publication of a new pamphlet

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