

2012 has been an exciting year for roller derby and the creation of a Roller Derby Museum right here in the UK helps solidify that. We took some time to speak to the museum's founder Ellie Harrison aka **CHĒAP SKATE** from Glasgow Roller Derby.

Interview - Moxie McMurder
Photography - Jean Donaldson

Skate name & number: CHĒAP SKATE 79
Team: Glasgow Roller Derby League - just got into their Ban Omens home team.



How long have you been skating for?

I started on the Glasgow Roller Recruits programme on 10 January this year and finally passed all my minimum requirements on 24 June. My first scrimmage was on 1 July 2012! I'm just at the tip of the iceberg...

Tell us a little about where this idea came from

Before I started training, I'm ashamed to say, I didn't know that much about roller derby – what the sport involved or how it had come to be. I had seen a few pictures of bouts in London on Facebook and had been lucky enough to meet the Newcastle Roller Girls whilst working on a project there at the end of 2011.

What I had grasped from these small glimpses into the roller derby world was that it was a sport with attitude. It was obviously empowering for the women involved and seemed to me to be the only sport, predominantly played by women, that was really fucking cool. Unlike netball, it actually seemed to be the envy of men.

And so I did some research online, found the Glasgow Roller Recruits and decided to sign up. All these preconceptions, of course, turn out to be true. But after a few months of training, I began to learn even more inspiring stuff about the sport – specifically its 'by the skaters, for the skaters' ethos and the grassroots organisational structure, which has been so essential in enabling it to spread to all corners of the UK in just six short years.

I think it was the sheer speed at which this had happened that made realise its historic importance and the necessity of creating some infrastructure for making sure that the hard work of all the women involved was properly documented.

Tell us a bit about Glasgow Women's Library and how they're involved in the museum...

I've been working as an artist for my 'day job' for the last ten years. At the beginning of the year I was one of the 20 female artists from Scotland invited to take part in the 20th Anniversary project at Glasgow Women's Library, and to create something new in response to their existing collection. It was the first time I had set foot in the library, but I quickly came to realise the important role organisations like this play in ensuring that women's lives, histories and achievements are properly documented, celebrated and shared with others.

Particularly inspiring was the stuff I read about the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement. I discovered that it was a similar grassroots organisational structure, which had enabled groups to spring up all over the UK and resulted in huge political gains including equal pay for equal work and free access to contraception.

What was bad about the Library though, was its lack of a younger audience – a new generation to be inspired by what had gone before. It was then that I had the idea of trying to bring together these two disparate communities of women in a way that would hopefully have lasting benefits for both. For our favourite sport of Roller Derby, the Library could offer a safe place in an accredited museum environment, where materials documenting its history could be archived and made publicly accessible. For the Library, the new National Museum of Roller Derby collection would offer the promise of a new, strong and revolutionary young audience of both women and men visiting and using its facilities.

With roller derby exploding here in the UK are you looking to keep this purely UK or can derby teams from around the world get involved?

In the long term, we're very excited about the NMRD's collection expanding to encompass leagues all over the globe. The sky is the limit and we will welcome donations from anyone interested in contributing. But in the short-term our main goal is to concentrate on collecting materials which will thoroughly document the history of the sport's development in the UK over the last six years, and the role women have played in this.

What can people donate?

We are looking for examples of all sorts of ephemera and memorabilia relating to the sport. Any bout programmes, posters, flyers, merchandise, stickers etc. that are in good condition. We will have a limited capacity for storing equipment, but are keen to have a few key examples. The museum

already holds the full back catalogue of Lead Jammer and Inside Line magazines, which we would like to expand to include archives of other fanzines and magazines which are being produced. We are keen to make connections with leagues all over the country to make sure their materials are included in the archive.

What are your hopes for the museum?

My hope is that the UK's Roller Derby community will embrace the museum and come to see it as our shared national collection, which documents the history that we have all been so busy making. This idea is completely in tune with Glasgow Women's Library's ethos of collective ownership in that everything already contained in the Library has been donated over its 20 year history. We hope that as the sport grows and grows, so too will the National Museum of Roller Derby's collection, so that it becomes a much visited valuable asset for both the library and the UK's roller derby community as a whole.



This September we will be launching The Revolution on Roller Skates – our first public exhibition at the Library of materials donated to the museum's collection. Curated by members of Glasgow Roller Derby and Auld Reekie Roller Girls – Cara Viola, Maulin' Rouge and Bint Imperial – the exhibition aims to offer an insight into the fast-and-furious first years of the sport, as an introduction to people who are new to the sport and as a real treat for us skaters. We hope this will be the first of many exhibitions and events at the Library and at other venues around the country over the next few years.

So please come and join us!

The Revolution on Roller Skates

Opening Event: Saturday 22 September 2012,
14:00 – 16:00

Exhibition Dates: 22 September – 13 October
2012

Opening Times: Monday – Friday, 10:00 – 16:30
(or by appointment)

National Museum of Roller Derby
Glasgow Women's Library 15 Berkeley Street,
Glasgow, G3 7BW

For more information please visit:

www.nmrd.org.uk

www.facebook.com/rollerderbymuseum