



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER DERBY

At Glasgow Women's Library we seek to collect, preserve and make accessible the records and artefacts of women's many varied achievements. So when we were asked if we could house the National Museum of Roller Derby, the UK's first permanent collection of material dedicated to the all-female full-contact sport, we jumped at the chance!

As part of our 21st birthday celebrations, we commissioned 21 women artists and 21 women writers to create a piece of work inspired by our diverse archive and library collections to form the exhibition, 21 Revolutions: Two Decades of Changing Minds at Glasgow Women's Library. Ellie Harrison, an artist and roller derby player, was inspired by the links between the grassroots organisation of roller derby and the ethos of the library, to create a permanent legacy to a sport which is gripping the nation.

Women's Flat Track Roller Derby reached the United Kingdom in 2006, with its history in 1930s America. Roller derby was re-claimed by women involved in America's punk culture, inspired by the sports' DIY attitude. Over the past six years, an incredible 90 plus leagues have sprung up across the country including several in Scotland. Ellie worked with skaters from Glasgow Roller Derby and Auld Reekie Roller Girls, to found the museum and curate an exhibition with the aim of forging links between the library and these inspiring women. These skating curators recognised there was a vital need to capture the history of this rapidly evolving sport. Some of the curators will be well-known to the archive community. They include Cara Viola; Sharon McMeekin, Senior Project Officer with the Digital Preservation Coalition and Kirstie Meehan, Archivist at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

The team of curators spread the word amongst the derby community and donations generously started to arrive from leagues eager to have their sport commemorated and to share in the sense of collective ownership which embodies roller derby. Ellie describes the Museum as "by the skaters, for the skaters", echoing the spirit of the sport itself. The archive includes bout programmes, leaflets, patches and badges, helmets, helmet covers, stickers and merchandise, including a pair of pants! We were also really pleased to receive a nurse's uniform from the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, where a number of skaters from London Rockin' Rollers and London Rollergirls participated in the NHS on skates routine.

As the archive grew, the Library decided to make its roller derby debut and attend Chaos on the Clyde, an international roller derby tournament which took place at Kelvin Hall on 25 and 26 August 2012. Library staff cheered on competitors, soaked up the atmosphere, received donations and recorded oral histories with the participants. Material was collected from teams in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, London and Stuttgart.

Our most recent activity has been the Museum's first exhibition, The Revolution on Roller Skates, at Glasgow Women's Library. This gave the team the chance to showcase items from the collection to the roller derby community, Library visitors and the wider public. The exhibits chart the rise of roller derby in the United Kingdom, the structure of a league, explains how a bout works and how skaters get their derby names (a very important decision for most skaters!). For the first time, skaters have been able to see their material in its permanent home and given the attention it deserves.

If you would like to find out more about the National Museum of Roller Derby, view the collection or are interested in making a donation please contact the GWL Archivists, Laura Stevens or Lindsey Short: info@womenslibrary.org.uk