**Women still face a struggle for true equality**

Out of the 21 women chosen by Jenni Murray for her inspirational book “A History of Britain in 21 women”, six are notable politicians – eight in fact, if you include Boadicea and Queen Elizabeth l in that category. The latter six (Emmeline Pankhurst, Constance Markievicz, Nancy Astor, Barbara Castle, Margaret Thatcher and Nicola Sturgeon) made their names in the last 200 years and blazed trails in the most exposed and perhaps thankless arena, to make changes in the body politic, to gain power and make a difference to people’s lives.

Only 50 years ago, the main options for women were teaching, nursing (not an academic profession) or being a secretary until you got married. Or you were a “blue-stocking” and destined for the dusty realms of academe. Now we see women in every profession, still not enough of them, and still expected to be home-makers as well. Until adequate childcare is put in place, women will still face a struggle for true equality.

Thanks to the trailblazers celebrated in Jenni’s book, more than half Camden’s Councillors are women, from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties. We have put ourselves forward to represent and do our best for Camden residents. I don’t think many of us aspire to be part of Jenni’s list in future, but we were inspired by those who stood out in so many fields through their talents, through sheer hard work, with a lot of luck and great support from other women and far-sighted men. I had little idea exactly what I was letting myself in for, when I stood as a LibDem candidate last May. It is not straightforward getting elected (certainly not, if you’re standing for an opposition party) and it is absolutely not straightforward navigating the corridors of such a complex organisation as Camden Council. Yet good support networks are there, and the Council itself is led by a woman Councillor and has a woman Chief Executive – great examples to follow.

On International Women’s Day, we see and celebrate role models in so many fields, Malala championing education for girls and women, Greta Thunberg campaigning on the climate emergency, Michele Obama affirming and encouraging women to be who you want to be.

Perhaps we don’t need to be as fierce as Boadicea now, and there are still battles to fight, but we’re on the way.

*Cllr Judy Dixey was elected in May 2022 as a Liberal Democrat councillor for Belsize Ward*