



**Harrogate's International Women's Day 8 March 2025
launched by
101-year old WW 2 veteran Sheila Pantin**

Sheila first came to our attention in 2023 when she launched the centenary of Harrogate's war memorial just weeks before she reached her own century. As well as cutting the ribbon, Sheila delivered an amazing talk on her first-hand experience ***'Road to the Concentration Camps'***.

That was to a full capacity audience and she did it again yesterday to 160 at her own church, Harrogate's St Peter's.

We at ***Women Winning*** feel it is our duty to bring Sheila to a wider audience. We are proud, privileged and humbled to be doing that.

Sheila had total recall as she told us about her long-life - an amazing life - and her only hesitation in nearly two hours of talking - without a single note - was whether she was demobbed in 1945 or 1946. It was 1946. She spent the last year or so from April 1945 - after she became one of the first British service women to enter a German concentration camp - helping those poor women and girls they found in Belsen.

She is an inspiration. The more we find out about her, the more in awe of her we become, she has impacted on so many people's lives. Yesterday, in St Peter's as Sheila's voice rang loud and clear, you could have heard a pin drop.

But as this is International Women's Day, we have been thinking primarily of how she has changed women's lives.

About the life changing impact she has made on women and girls in Belsen, she bought them back from being 'vermin' to being girls and women, who could sing and dance and dare to believe in a future

After demob, Sheila became just as much of an inspiration as a PE teacher as she was a soldier. She shouted through the doors of letterboxes and got girls back to school and back into education - how wonderful is that! Girls that would have been lying in bed, got up, got dressed and got back into the classroom

We are sure there will be many other examples we don't know about yet but we aim to find out.

As we listen to witnesses like Sheila, we too become witnesses.

Sheila, thank you - we are in total awe of you.



Sheila 'In Conversation' with Paula Stott, Chair of Harrogate Film Society and Nigel McClea, Chair of Harrogate Civic Society's History Group.

<https://www.harrogatefilmsociety.org/women-winning>