

Sussex Blazing Saddles Presentation
Jubilee Library, Brighton 14th September 2024.
(Transcript)

Hello, thank you for coming. I'm going to talk about Sussex Blazing Saddles, a heritage project exploring the impact of the bicycle on women from the late 1890s to 1928. I'm going to jump around quite a lot but hopefully it will make sense in terms of themes.

Also, it's not a complete talk. We've got bits of newspaper article headlines & snippets & we haven't been able to do the whole article as we've run out of time & money; & also there'll be some slightly awkward transitions which hopefully I'll make up with my dashing personality!

My name is Karen Poley. I'm an artistic director, creative producer, creative director of **KP Projects CIC**. I make outdoor arts performances, installations and community engagement projects around sustainability and the local environments and healthy living. I have several projects:

[Image: The Bicycle Ballet company]

The Bicycle Ballet Co is a series of performances about cycling; issues and ideas around cycling. I'm very interested in behaviour change so, rather than bashing people around the head with ideas, I try to use the arts to change the way people think about things. So cycling is a really good one for interrupting issues like, you know, bikes going through red lights, all cyclists wear lycra and so on.

[Image: Strictly Cycling] This is another of our shows, a kind of clowning show and has been touring for a long time and there's a night time version [with lights]as well.

[Images: First Mass shows]

This is The Mass Show and this toured during the Cultural Olympiad and this is in Skegness with a bunch of ballet dance kids which was fantastic. And this [1st show Image] was the original show we did - I don't know if anyone saw it on Brighton seafront in 2006 - oh you saw it, fantastic! We had a crazy morning where we had this ridiculous storm and then an incredible sunset in the afternoon.

[Images: reCyculture]

Out of that came this project which is reCyculture where at the time (2012/13 for the Cultural Olympiad) we found that a lot of bikes were being chucked away and had no value at all.

[Images reCyculture Kent] So this is a project we did in Kent putting the bicycle on a pedestal and this is on the border of the A3 (*mistake*: actually A2) road which, many years ago, people used to race on it and when they straightened it out, they left a curve which became a cycling park, from the people who used to do the racing on the road.

And you might have seen this installation **[Image]** in London Rd. Brighton at some point in 2013. The "Shine On" event.

[Image: The Living Coast Undersea Experience]

There's another project I work on. This is The Living Coast Undersea Experience - a virtual reality experience which is like diving in the Marine Conservation Zone. I don't know whether any of you knew there was an MCZ here? It runs from Brighton Marina to Beachy Head and when I tell you, it's going to be obvious - there's a chalk reef where the cliffs have worn away over many, many years and the old footings of the cliffs are now a reef.

[Images] TLCUE is an 'experience' and there are three different versions where you put on the headset, walk around underwater, pick up rocks and explore. There's a version we've taken to festivals and we've been working on educational programmes. This project will be touring next year around the Ouse Valley, Lewes-Balcombe to the seafront, Peacehaven-Newhaven-Seafood.

[Image] Back to Blazing Saddles...

We've done various different Blazing Saddles projects. It was really about the freedom of independence for women and this is the show that we made after the Olympics when I was thinking about "what am I going to do next?". We made this show called Blazing Saddles and this is a participatory version [Image] and I'm just going to explain a little bit about how it appeared, why it happened and how it is still relevant...

[Image] I don't know if anyone has seen this ...this is the wonderfully-named National Propensity to Cycle Project tool. This is from 2013 and it was the first thing I saw when I was researching what to do next. [Graph image] At the top you can see that this is men in the blue cycling and the red represents women cycling. Obviously, that's quite a difference and so it's about 1 woman cycling to 3 men in the UK but if you compare that to the Netherlands at some point, women are much more likely to ride. The most recent information shows it's still about the same now - 1 woman to 3 men cycling; far more men ride than women ride.

[Image] This is the thing I found originally - old statistics on why more women don't ride bicycles [Image]. Obviously, the weather and so on. Most people will tell you it's about safety but a lot is about appearance and "what do I look like?" or "I've got helmet hair" or "I don't like lycra". When I Googled it back in 2013 every single image was of a woman in bikini draped over a bicycle -2013!

[Image] This is a search from a couple of weeks ago and you can see there are still a couple of bikinis knocking around but now it's all about lycra. Lycra's great, you know, if you want to go for a long ride, but I think anecdotally people I chat to just want to go to the beach or come to the library and they don't necessarily want to have loads of kit. All of this fed into the ideas.

[Image: Brighton 1890s women cyclists] The next part was when I discovered the history of it. I've primarily used lots of images here that we found recently during our research and these are a couple of lovely ladies from Brighton, photographed by Mr Fry. This is what cycling looked like in the 1890s -women really embraced that feeling of independence, suddenly they could travel beyond the end of their road without fear or having to take your escorts with you or something.

As you can see, they're wearing really long skirts - pretty dangerous - but look at those waistlines! I mean, how is she breathing, let alone cycling, I don't know.

[Image] This is kind of how it was - basically a corset, then under-shirt then under-trousers, over-trousers, your over-blouse, jacket and skirt on top and a massive hat as well, so basically a lot of clothes and they weighed a lot. Some of these outfits would weigh 27lb and the whale bone corsets alone could weigh up to 7lb. There's probably quite a lot that can be said about corsets that I'm not going to go into but lots of working class women had serious problems with corsets that were not fitted properly. So cycling could be dangerous in many ways.

[Image] Side-saddle. There's a whole theme throughout the research work we did which is how horse riding seeped into the early cycling stuff like obviously riding side-saddle which would've followed on for polite society ladies.

[Image] This isn't a polite society lady, this is Annie Oakley who you might know from "Annie Get Your Gun". She was the famous trick horse rider and shooter; she used to fire guns riding on the back of a horse with no hands with incredible accuracy and she learned very swiftly to marshal the bicycle and she used to pull her skirt up to do tricks and perform.

I think there's a note about trick cyclists which we haven't specifically looked at but they were a bit like circus performers today, you know, you'd see them wearing very risqué outfits which you wouldn't have seen anywhere else, certainly in the 1890s. She used to pull her skirts up and ride without holding the handlebars and shoot things very accurately.

[Image: Elizabeth Millar & Bloomer] And you might know this name... In 1851 this lady, Elizabeth Smith-Miller, adopted this Turkish outfit and her friend Amelia Bloomer immediately took it up too. They were from New England, US and in the 1850s they started - or rather, continued - what became known as The Rational Dress Movement. You probably know her name (Bloomer) although she's not wearing here what became known as "bloomers". These friends wore these outfits for about 5 or 6 years to absolute ridicule, you know, people laughing at them in the streets, lots of satirical newspaper stuff. She's more famous because she was the first female journalist in America and she actually edited a newspaper which was called The Lilly which started as a temperance newspaper campaigning against alcohol and gradually became a suffrage newspaper. She's synonymous with what became known as the Bloomers even though she wasn't really wearing them. These women were basically saying it's all about health and the restrictions of the dress in the 1850s and this campaign, this bubbling under story about women's clothing happened for a long time.

[Image: Tessie Reynolds]

She grew up in Brighton and when she was 16 years old, she broke the Brighton-London and back record; the first woman to break a cycling record. It was timed & officiated, but she wasn't given the record because she was a woman. There was a lot of interest, but she became a national sensation because of this outfit she's wearing. These were basically her knickerbockers, which was essentially then your underwear. So, she'd created these shorts - men wore these for playing cricket and other sporting activities. But look at this bike as well - she's on a men's bike

with no brakes, no suspension, no gears and she still broke the record with that. Slightly looser waistline I'm pleased to say.

She caused an absolute sensation, everything from her "sensible costume" to her "lamentable incidents" and "unnecessary masculinity". She was "leading the storm of revolt against the petticoat" and obviously "this is the future". A lot of this was in the cycling press but women were reading the cycling press and here's one you can see, the Home Chats magazine, so women and cycling publications.

[The costume] was quite a major change for women. Tessie said in a letter to a cycling magazine that she'd made it herself and hundreds of women were writing to her asking for the pattern. It became known as the "rationals", So you'd get on your bike and you'd wear your "rationals".

[Image: women harangued by men on cart] This is what would happen and this image shows some guys on a cart, haranguing women cycling, wearing Rationals, and that was very much what happened. A lot of backlash, a lot of abuse on the streets, women had bricks thrown at them and they were abused publicly and so on.

And then there was this medicalisation: what would happen to you if you were a woman riding a bicycle. This **[image]** is a classic, this is "bicycle face" where the effort of balancing on your bicycle and the wind at your face would make you start to essentially look like a man, or worse, become a "spinster smoking a pipe". And then there's the "bicycle hump" - we all know that but I only realised yesterday that the "hooked feet" is obviously a big risk for cyclists. This **[Image]** Pretty Little Scorcher is actually a record from America and shows the inference that you're going to lose your virginity (or whatever it is that they were obsessed by) by cycling as a woman.

[Image: Cambridge protest] It kind of culminated in this sort of thing: this is 1897 at Cambridge university, a demonstration against women graduating. Women were allowed into Cambridge university to study previously but they were not allowed to graduate and this is a protest against that. It's mixed, you can see lots of women and men. This **[effigy hanging from a window]** is now the epitome of the woman - the new woman, the future woman, the woman on a bicycle wearing rational dress. They lost the vote and this effigy was dropped and ripped to pieces.

[Image: man at home without woman] But this is what it's really all about - leaving the men at home to look after the children, to get the dinner and do their own sewing and mending and stuff so - that's the fear really isn't it.

So, some woman didn't want to face this kind of stuff, they wanted the freedom, the independence of cycling, but didn't want to have any problems on the streets so they invented a series of outfits. These were discovered in research done by Kat Jungnickel.

This **[Image]** was a patent from 1895 (from the British Library) and this is the Alice Bygrave skirt, so these were convertible cyclewear outfits with panels as you can see at the front. Still got that waistline but as you can see, it pulls up and you've got bloomers underneath so you can get on your bicycle and ride safely, get off then smooth it all down and become very respectable again.

[Image: performer's costumes] And these are the basis of our costumes. We've actually got panels everywhere and, as you can see, it pulls up at the side there.

[image] Here's another one. This one has got buttons so you can see it pulls up at the waistline.

[Image] And here's our performer who's probably showing a little bit more leg than they would've done in the 1890s.

[image] and this is a 'cape skirt'. So you can see it's a cape that transforms into a skirt later on in the show. And here's our [Image] performer wearing the cape in the middle there; & there

[Image] she is with the skirt.

So these costumes weren't generally widely available [in the 1890s] apart from the Alice Bygrave skirt which was taken up, as you can see from this advert [Image], and publicised by Jaeger. That indicates what I'm going to talk about next, the things that led to the acceptance of women cycling. And the Jaeger skirt kind of suggests a level of wealth and cycling was really promoted and embraced by aristocracy and royals initially.

[Image] This is Annie [Brassie](#) and we discovered her through our research in Bexhill. She was married to Thomas [Brassie](#) who inherited £5m from his father (about £29bn today). The two of them sailed around the world and at one point Thomas became the local MP for Hastings and ambassador to Australia and Annie introduced the bicycle to Australians in Melbourne.

This [Next image] is her daughter-in-law, Idina, a distinguished lady cyclist and she's another Bexhill person, another of the early cyclists.

[image] this is another lady from Brighton. This lady [Mrs Hutton-Moss] is interesting because she mastered cycling & became an artistic cyclist and she was leading "fancy rides" for the Princess of Wales and she did demonstrations for Princesses Victoria and Maud, Prince Karl of Denmark, the Duke and Duchess of York... There's a story about the Princess of Wales when she was still quite young trying to cycle into Great Windsor Park and being stopped by an elderly lodge-keeper who grabbed her handlebars and she fell off and injured herself.

[Image] These are more "great ladies of Bexhill." The lady in the middle is Muriel, daughter of Annie. She was very pre-eminent in the drive to get women, & everyone, cycling in Bexhill. She married into the Sackville family and became the Countess of Bexhill and her son was the one who built the one that built the De La Warr Pavilion. She led in creating this [Image], the Bicycle Boulevard along the eastern side of Bexhill beach, opened in 1896. It was an area women could go and exercise their hobby of cycling. Apparently when her bicycle arrived in Bexhill train station it caused a huge stir, and it had the family crest embossed in gold on the frame. The boulevard quickly became used by cars.

[Image] Going the other way, this is a purpose-built bicycle chalet at the other end of the boulevard. The houses are of the Sackville family. What's really interesting about the building is that we found the plans in the Keep and it had the first public toilet for women in Bexhill which

is a game-changer when women had all this stuff on, another reason why women couldn't go too far.

[image] This is interesting - the Prince of Wales was the patron of Eastbourne Cycling Club and on a visit in 1899 (in the illustrated London News). The club had created this incredible arch made of bicycles. There is another one in another image, although no information. I did find an article in 1891 where the men's club had decided they wouldn't let women in, but by 1899 they had. In the second image you can see a woman with a bike posing in the structure.

[Image] Talking about influencers this is a new kind of influencer, Mary Dibley who moved to Hove at some point. This postcard is typical of the time. She was a silent movie actress and made 24 films and here she is promoting this gorgeous-looking bike.

[Image] And then these are other influencers and even though there was a backlash, there was still a lot of money to be made from selling things to women for cycling.

[Image] This advert for Harts in Eastbourne, looks like is a bifurcated costume, though the drawing isn't clear.

[Image] I love this one, this is Hastings second hand shops so you could swap your old cycling clothes and get something new. "No out of date or soiled dresses" which is a bit of a relief.

Obviously hats - you need a hat on a bicycle as we all know. There's more to say here about hat pins - people wore huge hats and some of the pins would be a foot long or so. There was an article I read about how women's hat pins were used to fix anything on a bike. So, obviously hats: very important.

[image] This is a great one. This is "Mrs CHB" of Hurstpierpoint Grange, Hassocks, who invented this incredible umbrella that goes on your bicycle. This is a time when the fashion was for women to have pale skin.

[Images] Lots and lots of adverts for bicycles; lots & lots of bike shops. This is on Blatchington Rd Hove, Cycle Your Way to Health & Happiness. There were tons of bike shops in Brighton alone.

[Image] This is one from Newhaven Museum and this is French's bike shop which was in the High Street in Newhaven. Interestingly the image says it became a garage and moved to Seaford and that's what happened in Bexhill - the whole cycling craze quickly seeped into cars and all the aristocrats moved on from bicycles.

[Image] Cycling clubs. Obviously women didn't want to face down these dangers of the roads so some tried to join cycling clubs which were all run by men (as I mentioned earlier, the Eastbourne club didn't initially want women joining). Gradually they *were* admitted.

This **[Image]** is the PSA cycling club, Bexhill. This came from the Wesleyan church group: The PSA (Pleasant Sunday Afternoons) cycle club, and you can see there's quite a lot of women in here. And there are more Bexhill groups and this talks about who's cycling and who had money to do it, and it contrasts quite sharply with Newhaven where we found no images at all apart from the French's bicycle shop. And this has always carried on, there's always been cycling clubs in Bexhill.

This **[image]** is Worthing Excelsior Club from 1906 and this club is still going and they have really excellent archives. This image shows a "Strawberry Tea". They've all gone on a massive outing to nearby Washington and had a strawberry tea there. And again, women at the front, and a lot of them. Interesting to see some of the skirt going a bit shorter but you can still see people wearing bloomers but they mainly caught on with the racers I would suggest.

[Image: Tessie Reynolds] This is very interesting -so this is 26th May 1894 and this is Tessie Reynolds again who set up the only, as far as we've found, ladies cycling club in Sussex. She invited people to her living room - bear in mind she's only 17 at this point - and they very swiftly set up the Brighton and District Ladies Cycling Club; organised themselves with a chair and treasurer and agreed on a 2 shilling & sixpence annual subscription fee, and agreed that their first meeting would go to Worthing the following week. Maybe there's not much happening in the newspapers but there's quite a lot of information about their ride. They did the ride in June when they went to Worthing, which they "all enjoyed" but thought it was a bit short. In 1885 there's an article about them going to Hassocks to a hotel, I'm guessing to stay overnight. Some of them did a side trip to Burgess Hill and there was an evening of dance. There's quite a few other articles about their dances.

[Image] "Amalgamated Meeting of Cyclists" This is from the Eastbourne Chronicle 9th May 1896,

"A glorious afternoon favoured the large bodies of the ladies and gentlemen of the wheel who journeyed from North East and West to be present at the reunion of cyclists which took place at Newhaven today, the first meeting of the kind ever made in Newhaven, the headquarters of the club, the historic Bridge Hotel. The machinists were met by local wheelmen and conducted to Mr Robert Towner's lawn to store the bikes (He was the brewer who had a house next door). The advent into town of so many wheelers made a great stir amongst the townspeople who turned out in large crowds to accord a welcome, special notice being taken of the ladies, the variety of whose costumes gave occasion for a certain amount of curiosity and comment. There were 13 members of the Brighton District Ladies Cycling Club. Also present, the Eastbourne Rovers Club, a large party from Lewes, the Brighton Cyclists Club, The Brighton Wanderers Club, and individuals from Seaford with 18 knights of the iron horses. Also, Southwick, Worthing, Firlie and many others. Over a hundred guests partook of a meat tea looked after by the Newhaven Club after the tea a procession parade to the pier and a pleasing programme of tuneful music. A rider from Seaford ran into a fissure and fell" and essentially wrecked his bike and hurt his knee.

So quite a lot of detail. And again, thanks to the British Library Board and the British Newspaper Archive. There follows a few headlines detailing various events but which I haven't read as we don't have a subscription to the Archive. Hopefully we'll be able to see them at some point

[Image] So this is a very interesting one, so this is actually Tessie Reynolds again and it's a month before she does her record-breaking run to London and back and on the 8th August 1853 at the first recorded women's track race at Great Yarmouth, at the recreation ground. She was riding for the Brighton Wanderers cycle club (of which her dad was secretary). She won the first ever ladies 1 mile handicap, and she won it very comfortably too, and apparently won a china tea set (second prize was a fruit stand).

[Image] Here's another one I found which again I haven't read (the text is difficult) it but it's talking about the scarcity of race events in Brighton and then it talks about the "exception of a very startling ladies' race". [Date]

[Image] Cycle fete at Worthing - it's really hard to read it but there's fancy dress costumes, there's a "gentleman's variety race", a "two-mile handicap", also "feather plucking" and "hoop trundling" but it does say that Miss E. Manwaring won something in a tie.

[Image] This is a regatta and sports event in Newhaven. This is the sort of thing we found from Newhaven; no photos but some articles. Again, really hard to read, the typeface is all over the place. But, there's a couple of things in here: a lady's bike race, a once-around-the-course. So Miss Turner, Mrs (illegible) & Mrs Buckingham won. And then, there's a slow bike race, which was open, so both ladies and gentlemen, and there's also a mention of Miss D French winning, who could be from the French's bicycle shop from Newhaven.

[Image] But there's another one, again very hard to read but again, Ladies bicycle race and Miss Turner and Miss French winning again & scooping all the prizes in Newhaven.

[Image] This is a great one, this is a women's cycling race and we found it on the Shoreham-by-sea website and it's by Grace Farley. Very frightening gunshot in the background.

[Image] And this is another from the Excelsior Club in Worthing from 1921, post-war and not a single long dress in sight. And this is all their names, this is Ladies ten-mile race championship on 18 September, and that's just a fantastic image with their names on as well.

[Image] and then here's a Nurse's slow bike race. No idea where it is but it came from the West Sussex Records Office but again that links into the gymkhanas. So there were loads of these types of events so lots and lots of dressing up - you wouldn't believe how many images there are like this.

[Image] So here's one from Preston Park. This is the decorated cycle parade winners so on the left this is Mrs Arthur Laws (first prize), completely invisible, and in the middle that's Miss Anne Albinson (second prize) with her daughter and a rather grumpy looking Mrs Woodfield, 3rd prize.

[Image] So this was in the Cycling World Illustrated 17th June 1896. And here's the children's special prizes, Miss Grace {inaudible} and Miss Queenie Davis, again in Preston Park.

[Image] Here's a very special one, so this is the Preston Carnival and the Queen of Hearts fancy dress.

And another one in Preston Park this is the musical bike ride in Preston Park and again this is a mixed group which is quite interesting.

[Images] And then lots of parades, lots of cycle parades, lantern processions at Newhaven. And Miss Farmer, who's the Captain of Brighton & District Ladies Cycling Club, appears in lots of places - she's the one getting around & getting the word out.

[Image] And so I put this in because I found this is like a sort of gossip column, 'Twixt You and Me' and I put it in because it talks about a woman from Worthing, Miss Maud Taylor who became a trick cyclist and she started by winning one of these slow race events at one of these athletic sports events. And it mentions that she joined Mr Westwood in Bristol and they created a children's cycle ballet so I had to put that in because I came from Worthing so that made me smile.

[Image] So this is kind of turn of the century, obviously very iconic this is another of these images there's loads of these postcards with kind of two of the same images on it. Lots of confidence, women really cycling and things changing a lot.

[Image] So then we have a series of maps, you know, people really exploring the countryside, people finally got to go out and really explore.

[image] So this is a great one especially for cyclists and tourists with the "danger hills" in so this is a great one. And this is Brighton and you can kind of imagine those danger hills in here are very extreme.

[Image] And then you get loads of images of this kind - people just using the bike for leisure and going out for the day, so they're not necessarily in cycle clubs, and again this is lots of confidence around cycling.

[Image] This is Sidley which I think is North of Bexhill and I think this is Laughton - Not sure.

[Image] And then so just a quick mention of Grace Christmas, so this is the other sort of thing that happened. In the First World War women went into the workplace and this is the Newhaven Post Women, and there was one in particular, Grace Christmas, (and that's here there in the middle) and she joined the Telegraph Service at the age of 12, which was the leaving school age at the time. And she delivered post on a bicycle around Newhaven and particularly to the fort.

[Image] And this isn't her but is indicative of what she would've looked like, this really heavy-duty coat and hat and the size of this bike is absolutely enormous! But yeah, all around there's a diary at the fort archive that talks about her delivering in all weathers. She lived on the road and

you can see where her house would've been on the east side of the station, [which you can see from the platform] and it's now the corner of a warehouse. Interestingly if you just carry on down that road, to the beach, you get to Tide Mills nature reserve where the cycling and sporting regattas used to be held.

[Image] And then a little mention of the suffragists. I don't know if you know about the Great Pilgrimage in 1913. These were the suffragists and they did a pilgrimage, they walked from all across the country to London Hyde Park and they called it the "Great Chat". You can see here that the march arrived in Brighton and so people from as far as Littlehampton and I think Eastbourne met just North of Brighton and went from there. And this **[Image]** is them at Clayton. This is the Brighton contingent led by Flora Merrifield and others on bicycles. She grew up in a family that were very pro-suffrage and in 1906 she was the first secretary of the Brighton and Hove Women's Franchise Society which was a local version of the London society and it had 500 members in 1910. She was also involved in setting up the Lewes suffragette society. And she led this ride from Brighton and I love that they're all on bicycles, it's just wonderful.

[Image] So really it was quite an epic, so they met everyone in Patcham and went to Clayton, Hassocks, Burgess Hill (which is where the Eastbourne people joined). In Cuckfield they met women from Haywards Heath, Cuckfield and others from central areas - this is them in the rain in Cuckfield, classic summer, June. And they went to Crawley, Redhill, Croydon, Box Hill and Hyde Park. There are some really great stories - I very much urge you to have a look at it because there are some great stories, one of which is a verbatim of the first few days of the march. They called it The Great Chat, so they were going around talking to people about what they were doing and why it was important they should have a vote and it got a lot of people onside but also caused a few problems, there was a small riot in Croydon.

I'm just going to finish by telling you what we've been doing.

We've had a two-year project and we've spent quite a lot of time and we've worked with loads of volunteers on archival research.

[Image] This is The Keep. This is Ian who actually runs the Bexhill Wheelers, who came over to visit The Keep, and this **(Image)** is West Sussex Records Office. One of our volunteers found this amazing audio, oral history of a woman from North of Worthing and she worked as a maid in a hotel and people would cycle down and they'd stop on the way, and she described going out cycling to visit her family on the weekends which is lovely.

[Image] We are the Bicycle Ballet, obviously, and we've run a series of taster workshops just getting people to think about getting on their bicycles in a completely different way, which has been quite a lot of fun.

[Images] We did a couple of performances last year in Worthing and Bexhill on the seafront - a static show. And then we've kind of tried to Re-imagine and Re-make and we held a series of workshops. So we started in Bexhill and Worthing and this is sessions where we were remaking bloomers actually. I met this woman at the Worthing Climate Emergency Hub and she was

telling me she made skirts from shirts with 4-year-olds. So. she made a pattern for us to turn old shirts into bloomers. If all goes according to plan there'll be a washing line of them and they're really quite impressive. So, there was a big dressing-up box and that's toured Bexhill and Worthing but we can't do it here because there's no one to look after it.

[Image] So we've been reimagining cycle clips and remaking our own bloomers - remaking leggings, cutting them off and putting frills on them. Which has been loads of fun.

[Image] So Worthing Museum and Bexhill Museum have these big costume archives so as a result of this project Bexhill has put an 1890s cycle costume on display for the first time in a long time. And then Worthing Museum led an archive session, where the curator Gerry Connolly had taken out some of the costumes from the collection which were showing the kind of restrictions women were living with. Amazing really high-quality stuff. And I mean, I love some of these details really. Particularly these architectural things. I mean these are concertina structures that either went out to the side or went out at the back and required special chairs required to sit down. Obviously, corsets: really beautiful weapons.

[Image] And then this is a REALLY interesting one so this is actually a kind of convertible riding outfit so this is obviously for a young person, very small. Jodhpurs with a skirt which buttons up at the waistband - really fascinating.

[Image: exhibition] So all of this - a lot of it is going into our touring exhibition and if you can work out, there's currently one banner missing because it collapsed at Newhaven last week. But this is going downstairs in the foyer on Monday if all goes according to plan.

[Image?] And this is Hove seafront... can't read the date I think it's the 20's isn't it .. Tessie Reynolds...

[Image: flier?] So next weekend we're doing more shows ... We were going to have the shows as a ride to link in with the heritage of women going on group rides, but the logistics of it and with the rain last weekend in Newhaven, we've made it static shows. They'll be really great and I urge you to come along as this show is all based on some of the history and we use those convertible cyclewear items.

If you want to be in the show, you can come as well. It's a two day series of workshops and it's loads of fun, very sociable and not too difficult, very much like Greek chorus. It's a gentle two days 10am til 4/5pm-ish but there'll be lots of breaks.

(Image) There's the website - there's a few fliers over there.

So has anyone got any questions?

Q: Details about the shows in Brighton

A: The shows will be in St Peter's Square, by St Peter's Church. The second show will coincide with Kidical Mass, which is a huge ride for children. Please do come.

Q: Are you going to be doing any more Bicycle Ballet?

A: I'm not sure to be honest. There's a couple of ideas. The one that's been brewing, is from a bicycle we were given for the reCyculture Kent, by this gentleman who – I think he was 87 – and he brought a bicycle that his grandfather had given him when he was 14. He'd changed it, he'd painted it, re-painted it, changed the handlebars, changed everything on it over time, & that really stuck with me.... This idea that a bicycle isn't just for Christmas, it can last for a really long time. So that's bubbling around in my head. But its quite tricky, there's not really a long of money around at the moment. So, watch this space!