



## Trailblazing Women: Maggie Gordon-Walker



# TRAILBLAZERS: World War One's Inspirational Women

**Location:** Brighton and Hove

**Occupation:** Performer, comedian, writer and director/facilitator of a creative projects organisation

**Why are they a Trailblazer?**

Originally from Hertfordshire, Maggie has lived in Brighton since 2007. As a writer she has written for several publications such as the Guardian and was co-editor of Brighton Mums, an organisation of mothers and fathers to share ideas and support one another as well as encourage each other to have quality time with and without their children. Maggie set up and runs another organisation known as Mothers Uncovered, a creative support network for mothers. Through events such as regular meetings and creative workshops the group aims to explore creativity and well-being among mothers, giving space to share experiences of motherhood, including taboo issues such as post-natal illness, mental health issues and the vulnerability and isolation a new mother may feel but be reluctant to admit to. According to the National Childbirth Trust, half of mental health problems in new mothers go undetected so having somewhere to go to share issues can be a life-saver for women. In June 2018 'The Secret Life of Mothers', ed. Maggie Gordon-Walker and Charlotte Naughton was published by Silverdart Publishing. Co-written by participants of the Mothers Uncovered group and with a fore-word by Caroline Lucas MP, it presents personal accounts of the experience of motherhood from a wide range of voices. In 2016 Mothers Uncovered won a Community Works Star Sector Award. In 2018 the group were among finalists for the Groundwork Community Awards.

**What impact have they made on their community?**

Although motherhood is seen as a joyous occasion, for many women it can be an isolating and confusing experience, and many women feel vulnerable. Maggie Gordon-Walker's Mothers Uncovered group offers women space to explore their feelings through fun and creative activities, improving well-being. Maggie also co-founded and runs 'Livestock', a charity that runs creative workshops

and events involving writing, photography and performing within the community. One of these events is a series of food-based workshops called 'SoulFood'. The workshops aim to get participants cooking, learning about food from different cultures and sharing their food skills and memories.

**What connections are there between Maggie and the Trailblazers of World War One?**

As a performer and writer, Maggie Gordon-Walker is using her creative skills to benefit her community, in particular to improve the wellbeing of mothers. Another example of a woman putting her artistic skills to the use of a cause she believes in is Elizabeth Robins (1862 – 1952). An American actress, reputed with bringing Ibsen to the British stage, and a novelist, Elizabeth settled in Henfield, West Sussex. She believed in votes for women and used her creative talents to write pamphlets, articles, tour the country speaking at meetings and write Britain's first pro-suffrage play which opened to great reviews in 1907. A supporter of women doctors, Elizabeth Robins also used her talents and influence in the theatre world to spread publicity and raise funds for the charitably run Lewes Road Dispensary for Women and Children and the New Sussex Hospital for Women. She allowed her property in Henfield to be used as a convalescence home for suffragettes who had endured force-feeding in prison.

**How do they inspire your class to be Trailblazers of the future?**

Maggie Gordon-Walker has found a need that wasn't being addressed – the vulnerability of some new mothers – and is using her skills to create a solution.



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