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Baroness Joan Bakewell DBE: an inspirational career

For Women's History Month Alison tells us about Joan Bakewell, her career and achievements, and why her-story is an inspiration to Alison.

I always found the programme Heart of the Matter a bit unreachable when younger but then Joan Bakewell began chairing it. I think for me it was the first time I had seen a woman take on this type of serious TV, as part of the late-night scheduling usually given over to football commentary or a male dominated chat show. I didn't know much about Joan, she was posher than me, I thought, but also seemed approachable...someone I could have a conversation with and not feel inferior to.

I read a bit about her: Baroness Joan Bakewell DBE began her career in the 1960s as a journalist and documentary maker, later becoming a Labour Party peer. She made documentaries which included subjects like race relations, female genital mutilation and the death penalty, she wrote on issues like society and politics. In 2008 she was appointed a voice for older people by the UK government. The closer I get to that age range the more pertinent that is!

Like me, she is a humanist; something I hadn't realised. She is co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Humanist Group (APPHG). Humanism is an ethical belief system built around human rights and principles of equality.

The APPHG brings together members of the House of Commons and Lords, from across all mainstream political parties, to work together on a range of areas of ethical issues, often raising issues which are not priorities for their parties. The APPHG was instrumental in pushing for equal marriage rights, is an opponent of

conversion therapy and fights against the erosion of human rights or equality legislation.

In 2017 Joan was named Humanist of the Year in recognition of her achievements in broadcasting and services to humanism. I feel sure with her as my inspiration, my year is just around the corner.