**Warrior Women**

**Chevaliere D’Eon**

**Anna Ward:** This series was made possible with the National Lottery Heritage Fund. With thanks to National Lottery players.

Just before we start, we’re letting you know that we are going to be using she/her pronouns to talk about the subject of today’s episode. Trans as a label did not exist during our subject’s lifetime, but like countless people throughout history, she has found the words to express her gender identity. Interpreting her story through a trans lens helps us place her within LGBT+ history and allows trans people today to relate to her experience. There’s plenty of evidence that she identified as a woman, and that’s how we’ll refer to her.

Welcome to Warrior Women. A Royal Armouries series, where we tell stories of women throughout history and explore what it really means to be a ‘warrior.’ We delve into the lives of some complex characters, bust some myths and find out what weapons these women would have wielded. I’m your host, Anna Ward from the exhibitions team at the Royal Armouries.

So far throughout this series, we have connected the stories of different warrior women to objects in the collection that are similar to weapons they could have handled and owned. But today’s story is directly linked to the collection - we actually have a sword engraved with the name of our warrior woman.

So, how exactly did a sword gifted by a French Knightess end up in Leeds? And what can it tell us about how she navigated different roles throughout her life, as a soldier, a diplomat, a fencer, and as a woman?

In today’s episode, we’re talking about La Chevaliere d’Eon.

Now something that will happen a bit during this episode is that we cannot be quite sure about the details of d’Eon’s life - not only did a lot of different rumours circulate about her, but she herself presented some parts of her life in ways that played with the truth and didn’t show the full picture. So we need to be careful about how we interpret what historians and even what d’Eon herself can tell us about her life. With that in mind, here’s how it all starts...

Ok, first things first. La Chevaliere d’Eon is not actually the name of today’s subject. It’s a title, but it’s the name we’re going to use throughout this episode.

‘Chevaliere’ translates as Knightess in English. La Chevaliere d’Eon is the name engraved on that sword held here in Leeds at the Royal Armouries. The engraved and inlaid inscription in French, translates as “given by the Knightess of Eon to her old friend, George Keate, Esquire, 1777.”

D'Eon was born to the de Beaumont family in Tonnerre, France on the 5 October 1728. In her memoirs, she tells us that she was born as a girl but her family had to raise her as a boy. Her father, Louis d’Eon de Beaumont, a lawyer, was in severe debt and her mother, Lady Francoise de Chavanson who came from an old, wealthy French family, would receive a hefty inheritance, on the condition that she gave birth to a boy.

There’s not much else we can tell you about d’Eon’s childhood, except that she was exceptionally bright. She learned to read at a very young age and excelled at languages and memorisation. She was a talented swordfighter and could ride a horse with ease.

She went on to graduate from College Mazarin, in Paris, having studied law. She became a Secretary of Monsieur de Sauvigny, Administrator of the Fiscal Department of Paris. And that really could have been the end of her story, living the life of an accountant, crunching numbers day in and day out. It was a good job. She’d even written a book about finance in the French government. But I suspect she needed more – she needed excitement and danger.

This is where Secret du Roi comes in. Now, the Secret du Roi, or the King’s Secret, was a network of spies working for French King Louis XV and let’s be very clear here, they weren’t working on behalf of France, just Louis XV and his own personal interests, no matter how morally dubious they were. Shh! This really was a secret between you and the King, let’s keep the country out of it.

D’Eon joined up in 1756 and was sent to Russia. There are lots of varying accounts here of what actually happened, but the story goes that France were quite desperate to improve their relations with Russia, who at the time, were quite friendly with the British, France’s great enemy.

One version of her story has her, still presenting as a man to keep up the family secret she describes in her memoirs, working as an ambassador in the French embassy in St Petersburg. Another version of this story claims that she would have actually been posing as a lady in waiting for Empress Elizabeth of Russia, we have no actual evidence that this happened. It’s a good example of the many not-so-reliable legends that would have swirled around d’Eon and her career as a spy, somewhat complicated by her own unreliable narrating!

We know that d’Eon wasn’t assigned female at birth - although we don’t know how early on in her life she may have started identifying as a woman. She wrote about her childhood and the events in Russia once she was openly living as a woman many years later. So with this in mind, why did d’Eon choose to present her early life in this way? And how do we balance this with all the facts vs the more fictional parts of her story?

We were delighted to talk to Cheryl Morgan, a historian who specialises in trans issues and a former co-chair of Out Stories, Bristol:

**Cheryl Morgan**: There's a lot that we have to be very careful of. And the first point I would make is that much of what has been written about d'Eon to date has been written by people who have been quite transphobic. The second point is that the autobiographies of trans people tend to be deeply unreliable, because it is very difficult to negotiate life as a trans person out in the world, and you have all sorts of pressures on you. But back when I transitioned in the 1990s, the advice that we received from the medical profession was to construct an entire backstory of our lives, as children and so on, so that we could maintain the pretense that, in fact, we had never undergone a gender transition. So you, you, would invent the school that you went to, boyfriends that you had, so on and so forth, so that you could then hold a conversation with other women and talk, talk about your past life as if you had always been a woman.

Now we can see that sort of thing happening with d’Eon as well in that though she must have known that she had male anatomy, she constructed this story that she had always been a girl. That she'd been dressed in boy’s clothes by her father and so on and so forth. So clearly that's unreliable. And some of the other stuff that she wrote in her autobiography is suspicious.

 For example, the story that she cross-dressed, became a lady in waiting to the Empress of Russia is not borne out by any of the diplomatic correspondence between, the Chevalier Douglas, on the French court. So that probably didn't happen, and of course, there were also people that wrote sensationalist biographies about d’Eon at the time.

**Anna Ward:** In 1761, her time in Russia came to an end. D’Eon was about to embark on another mission but this time it came on the battlefield, at the tail end of the Seven Years’ War as Captain of the Dragoons. The Seven Years War took place between 1756 and 1763. It was a global conflict that spanned five continents. The British declared war on France in 1756, in a fight over territory in North America and India.

D’Eon’s sword wielding on the battlefield was short-lived. She sustained injuries to her head and thigh which took her out of the fighting. But no matter, d’Eon would still have a monumental role to play in this war. In 1762, Louis XV sent her to London, where she was part of a team negotiating a deal for peace. On the 10 February 1763, the Treaty of Paris was officially signed. D’Eon was rewarded for her part in the negotiation and received the Order of Saint-Louis, a chivalric order, given by the King to honour great military officers. Alongside it came a generous pension and the title of Chevalier or Knight.

Claire Mead, the incredible feminist swordswoman historian, who has been working closely with us on this series tells us more about the Chevaliere’s new title.

**Claire Mead:** What’s interesting is that we have to remember that obviously, at the time, D’Eon would still have been presenting as a man, and so the title that she received at the time was the title of ‘Chevalier’ or ‘Knight,’ the title of Knight would have only been reserved for men. It was pretty much a masculine title. What’s interesting about the title is how she later feminised it, when she presented as a woman later on in her life. So, instead of using the title ‘Knightess’, which would translate in French as “Chevaleresse”, d’Eon made the active choice to feminise the title that she had previously received from ‘Chevalier’ to ‘Chevaliere’.

**Anna Ward:** Now, d’Eon had a wonderful time in London – it would become a haven for her, somewhere she could express herself, experiment and live authentically. She must have been thrilled when the King sent her back to take up the role of an interim French ambassador.

D’Eon was still working for the Secret du Roi and Louis XV entrusted her with an explosive mission. She was to gather intelligence on the British Army and its coastal defences and identify sea locations for a potential French invasion.

D’Eon was living it up in London and amassing some serious debts in the process. You can kind of understand why she does what she does next. It’s got to be incredibly tough to lead a life as a duplicitous ambassador and spy, holding onto the matches that could start the next World War. She was stressed, what’s wrong with buying yourself a little treat every now and again to make yourself feel a bit better? King Louis was too foolish to know what he had in her and what if it all went wrong? Wouldn’t it make sense to have a little insurance to protect herself? So, she started taking documents and adding them to her own little pile, just in case.

Her spending sprees were certainly not going unnoticed. One of these extravagant expenses was wine imported directly from her family vineyards back in Tonnerre, duty free! This led to a fair deal of resentment from the English side. It’s not clear if the excessive wine spending was the last straw or some other reason, but Louis XV sent a new ambassador, the Comte de Guerchy, to permanently replace her, demoting her to secretary. D’Eon had only ever been acting ambassador without full powers - but the demotion must have stung. She did not get on with de Guerchy and repeatedly wrote to her superiors accusing him of attempting to poison her and throw her in the Thames – wow, that escalated quickly.

But what was that rivalry all about? Cheryl Morgan again:

**Cheryl Morgan**: the main divide in the court was between the supporters of the king's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, and the enemies of Madame de Pompadour. Now the Count de Guerchy was a protege of Pompadours, and he would have been well aware when he accepted the job as ambassador in London he will have known that d’Eon was an employee of the King's secret, because it wasn't very secret and therefore was an agent of the Count de Broglie, who was the head of the secret and an enemy of Madame de Pompadour. So, she would have assumed that it was part of d’Eon’s job to spy on him and report back, as to anything he did wrong. So the first thing de Guerchy would’ve wanted to do in arriving in London was to get rid of this annoying little spy. It would make his life a misery.

**Anna Ward:** She was told in no uncertain terms to get herself back to France and she refused.

A furious King Louis stopped her pension, a shame, but that wasn’t going to stop her. It was nothing a little blackmail couldn't fix – just as well she’d been making that little pile of documents. In a ridiculously bold move in 1764, she published Lettres, memoires, et negociations particulieres du Chevalier d’Eon. It was a scandalous leaking of private diplomatic correspondence into a very readable book. It stopped short of exposing the Secret du Roi and Louis XV plan of invasion, but it was extremely embarrassing and showed she wasn’t messing around.

The book became a bestseller – and miraculously, although d’Eon had to go through a case for libel against De Guerchy, she only had to lay low in the English countryside for a while and didn’t face charges nor a loss of pension. All in all, a relatively successful exercise.

In 1774, King Louis XV died and his grandson Louis XVI ascended to the throne. You may remember he was played by Jason Schwartzman in Sofia Coppola’s 2006 film ‘Marie Antoinette’ and that may be the only image you can picture when you think of him. Anyway, Louis XVI had quite the mess to clean up after his grandfather’s death and d’Eon was a big red wine stain on the carpet that had to be dealt with before it set. He needed those documents back.

So, he invited d’Eon back to France and offered her an annual salary for life of 12,000 livres to hand the documents back and leave that poor De Guerchy alone. Louis XVI then also legally proclaimed her as a woman – but there was a catch. She could no longer wear male clothing, including that of her Dragoons uniform she had worn so proudly during battle in the Seven Years’ War. She must always dress as a woman on French soil. Louis 16th even went so far as to have his wife – Marie Antoinette’s costume designer, Rose Bertin, create an entirely new wardrobe of lavish dresses, fit for a noblewoman.

King Louis’ legal proclamation of d’Eon as a woman is something that historians have hotly debated over the years. Some like Gary Kates argue that d’Eon switched gender as part of a social and political strategy. Dr Valerie Mainz, who co-edited ‘The Chevalier d’Eon and his Worlds: Gender, Espionage and Politics in the Eighteenth Century’ argues that “there weren’t women ambassadors or diplomats so d’Eon couldn’t rise to power again, it was a clever way of marginalising [them].” Effectively, what Mainz is saying is that in declaring d’Eon a woman, Louis XVI has gotten rid of that headache. When will these Louis’ of France finally learn?

D’Eon herself may have had conflicted feelings about coming out publicly as a woman, again with the narrative she had in fact been disguised as a man the whole time. Even though the King’s certificate confirming her legal status as a woman was signed in 1775, it wasn’t actually made public that very year.

We know that as early as 1774 her account books show she was buying dresses for herself and may have been privately disclosing her gender to some of her friends and collaborators. But when rumours circulated in London around her being a woman as early as 1771, and escalated into extravagant betting with people taking on ridiculously high insurance policies, D’Eon was not happy.

In fact in 1776 she sued a blackmailer she had previously worked with, Charles de Morande, for libel regarding his public claims she was a woman. Morande in turn accused her of being in on the betting about her own gender and that she’d been the one to reveal her gender to him. All of London was in a stir, hoping that a dispute in court over the bets would mean that d’Eon would have to be publicly examined and dramatically reveal her gender.

Neither the English Law court nor d’Eon entertained this concept, though d’Eon apparently provided very entertaining written insults about Morande. D’Eon also challenged Morande to a duel, at some point according to an affidavit by Morande’s wife, she was waiting in a carriage outside his house with two swords and two pistols. Morande allegedly refused to duel her because she was a woman...how gallant and not at all a convenient excuse.

Some of the evidence used by historians to show that d’Eon was not actually identifying as a woman was linked to those fancy French court dresses, and her discomfort with having to wear them all the time, with accounts describing how much she preferred her old military Dragoon uniform. I don’t know about you, but I rarely wear dresses - just because you are a woman does not mean you always want to be ultra feminine and if I were a warrior woman who still had a lot of pride in what I’d accomplished in battle - I might want to wear my uniform! In fact, in many portraits we have of d’Eon as a woman, she is sporting her Order of Saint Louis medal, a military reward and constant reminder of her past as a soldier.

There’s also another crucial part of the story we left out until now. Like us throughout this entire series - d’Eon was fascinated by warrior women! She had a vast library of women’s literature, and very well may have felt directly inspired by that other famous French warrior woman who donned men’s clothing and challenged gender norms - Joan of Arc.

Cheryl Morgan again:

**Cheryl Morgan**: I think d'Eon was definitely an admirer of Joan. In fact, it's been suggested by some biographers that she saw herself as a reincarnation for modern times of the famous woman warrior. So there's no question that that was an important influence in her life. There are also a number of paintings of d'Eon presenting her as an incarnation, as the goddess Athena, as the Greek goddess who is famous for dressing in armour, carrying a shield and a spear. And this obviously reflected the fact that d’Eon had been a soldier, and was proud of that fact and was still, post transition, quite keen to be involved in military matters. But of course, as a person of noble birth at that time, d’Eon would have been very well versed in the classics. That's why she would have known about Athena. She would have known about the Amazons, and she would probably have known about other warrior women of the time.

**Anna Ward**: So d’Eon may have felt at home as part of a long lineage of warrior women, many of which were gender non-conforming. And her interest in warrior women as well as perhaps her nostalgia about being actively involved in warfare led to a bold proposal in the years leading up to the French Revolution...

But before the French Revolution that would lead to a lot of trouble for the King and for aristocrats like d’Eon further down the line, there was the American Revolution. As the Americans fought for independence against the British, France joined them as allies in 1778.

D'Eon, believing that she was the heroine the moment needed, wrote letters to the French foreign ministry, offering to don her Dragoon uniform again and lead a battalion of Amazon women into battle in America, fighting on behalf of the French. It probably wasn’t the time for this offer, as her suggestion was met with a resounding no, and the response that she was in direct defiance of the King’s orders. She was summoned to Court – where she chose to wear her uniform – brava! She was exiled to her hometown of Tonnerre and threatened not to make a nuisance of herself again - or else. Life back home in Tonnerre proved to be boring and stifling for d’Eon and she soon petitioned to be allowed to travel back to London.

D’Eon’s reasons for returning to England may have mainly been to get back to her massive library. But no doubt the increasingly hostile climate in France would have played a part in things as well - and indeed, as the French Revolution began and Louis XV lost his head...she would lose her pension. But she would have also had a number of British friendships cultivated over the years to look forward to. One of these friendships is with English poet and writer George Keate - yes, the one who was gifted the sword. (...) Keate and d’Eon often corresponded, writing each other letters which illustrate the beauty of their close friendship.

Claire Mead translated the letters. They can be found at the University of Leeds’ Special Collections in the Brotherton Library. Claire now tells us more about their relationship:

**Claire Mead:** So, what I really loved about reading through these letters and deciphering this very, very elaborate eighteenth century handwriting is just, yeah, that really deep friendship that united them and the kind of casual nature of it all really. We have moments of Keate inviting d’Eon to tea, saying that you know, his wife and daughter are going to be so happy to see d’Eon again. Urging d’Eon to give news. It’s quite clear that d’Eon was obviously very enthusiastically responding but probably not as frequently as Keate is. So, you know, there’ll be moments of Keate describing where he is staying with his family. They will have some debates on the translation of Shakespeare. Keate always refers to d’Eon as Mademoiselle, er, so miss and genders her with feminine pronouns and grammar and d’Eon, in the one letter we have of her in that stack also refers to herself in such terms.

And Keate is also very passionate about women’s rights and has this to say at some point in one of his letters, “they discuss at length the rights of men, they ought to respect the rights of women. Especially one who has been a credit to France.” So, he’s basically saying that those rights are important and that those rights should be extended to d’Eon. D’Eon herself was also very passionate about feminism and women’s rights, so she may have seen him as one of her best allies and probably justifies why she gifted him that sword in the first place, all those years ago.

And finally, I remember this absolutely beautiful quote in one of the letters that says “despite my silence, not a day has gone past without Mrs Keate and I talking about our dear Knightess…” Our dear Chevaliere, in the letter, “who was born to honour her own sex, and charm and astonish ours.”

Often, when we talk about historical figures that are linked to LGBTQ history, we often define them by their romantic relationships, who they loved. And I think it really drives home the point about the Chevaliere d’Eon being such a powerful figure and being such an inspiration for others, because it’s not so much about who she loves but about how she loves herself, and how she embraced herself in all these different facets of her identities and how she was able to form these strong friendships with Keate and many other people.

**Anna Ward**: We know that Keate deeply admired d’Eon and recommended that the famous French philosopher Voltaire meet her, which ended up happening in 1778, a year after she gifted him the sword. And these letters show us that Keate unconditionally regarded d’Eon as a woman, and it would have been important for her to have this backstory she could rely on to not only be respected within British society, but to forge strong friendships. She was also friends with Angelica Kaufmann who painted a portrait of her - one of many depicting her in women’s clothing. And in fact, another strong friendship would lead to another important facet of her identity...as a sword fighter. Cheryl Morgan, again.

**Cheryl Morgan**: Fencing was the primary sport of the nobility. If you were going to be a successful nobleman, then it was important to be a good fencer. She attended the famous fencing school of a chap called Bertrant Teillagorry, that was where all of the French nobles went to get their fencing training. And there she probably met a chap called Domenico Angelo Domenico Malevolti Tremamondo, and he, at the time, having made his name in Paris, learnt from the best fencing master in Paris, fell in love with an English actress and moved to London. Now that affair didn't last very long, but he married an English girl while he was there and set up in business. So, Angelo started a fencing school, which was in Soho Square in London, and run the middle of the town, and he got a whole bunch of famous pupils. And when he became too old to keep it going, he passed the business on to his son, Henry, and that then continued on being the most famous fencing school in London. D'Eon, having presumably known Angelo in France, then would have caught up, when d’Eon went to London, because that's what emigrates do, and would have then met a whole bunch of people from British high society who were having their lessons in fencing. Interestingly, after d’Eon had undergone her gender transition, she was still friends with the Angelos. And, Henry Angelo was, you know, a keen diarist who wrote memoirs and stuff. So quite a bit of what we know about that d’Eon as fact comes from that. And it was notable that the fencing school was open to women. How could it not be? D’Eon was one of their star pupils. (...)

It was in London that she opened a fencing school and taught young people as a Master of Arms. She toured England putting on performances where she would challenge champion swordsmen to duels. This brought her to Leeds, and it’s her connection to Leeds that we’ll come back to in a minute.

Cheryl Morgan, again:

**Cheryl Morgan**: The thing that most people will know about d’Eon was a bout that was fought, at Carlton House in 1787 for the entertainment of Prince George. This was a huge thing at the time. And the opponent in this fight with another famous French fencer, a chap called, the Chevalier of Saint George, who was unusual in being of African ancestry, Saint George’s father had owned slaves in the West Indies. He had a child with, one of the female slaves, and very unusually, had, taken to the lad, taken, brought him up, in France. So, Saint George was not only a well-respected soldier. He was also a brilliant musician. If you want to know more about him, he's one of the people featured in Olivette Ottele’s book African-Europeans. (...) So this was a fight between probably the two most famous French people in England at the time. Saint George was much younger, probably fitter as well, but he couldn't beat down and was very fulsome in his praise for the lady fighter, who was, of course, also having to fight wearing skirts, whereas Saint George would have been effectively in tights.

**Anna Ward:** But the remainder of her life wasn’t very kind to her. Even though she was miles away in London, the French Revolution deeply impacted d’Eon.

 **Cheryl Morgan**: (...) her pension as a government diplomat was stopped, so she had to have a means of making money, and she did this through a friend called Mrs. Bateman, who was an actress, but also what we'd call an impresario, somebody who put on events. And Mrs. Bateman was also an experienced fencer. Presumably the two had met at Angelos school, and she put on this tour whereby d’Eon and various other fencers would, put on exhibitions as part of the evening's entertainment, which also included plays, in which Mrs. Bateman was the lead actress.

She would try again to suggest leading an army of women into battle, but this time against the Habsburgs - the family of Marie Antoinette. She wrote to the French National Assembly, but while some accounts say she was met with another resounding no, other accounts tell us that d’Eon was granted permission on condition that she would raise the funds herself to make this a reality, which also sounds like another way of saying no. D’Eon couldn’t raise the funds, so this didn’t happen.

King Louis XVI and his wife, Marie Antoinette were executed. D’Eon’s estate in Tonnerre was seized by the revolutionary government and she had to sell her possessions - her huge collection of books, and beautiful garments made for her by the Queen’s costume designer. Her touring performances aided her somewhat, but in another cruel twist she was badly injured in 1796 and her fencing career ended, along with her livelihood.

**Cheryl Morgan**: So, Monsieur de Launay was the chap who tended to fight against d’Eon as part of these exhibition matches. And in April 1796 they were rehearsing for a bout in Southampton. And unfortunately d’Eon tripped on her skirts and, as a result, fell on his sword. It got into her upper body, giving her a wound, which made it impossible for her to fight from then on. So that put an end to her fencing career. (...)

**Anna Ward:** She lived the remaining fifteen years of her life bed bound, and in poverty, living with a housemate, the widow Mary Cole. The Chevaliere d’Eon passed away aged 81 on 21 May 1810. She was buried at St Pancras Old Church Cemetery.

So, back to Leeds and the connection the city has with the Chevaliere d’Eon. So, we know that she performed here, and there’s a piece in the Leeds Intelligencer from 21 May 1771 which says “it is now certainly known that the person who has long been received in England under the name of the Chevalier D’Eon is a woman.”

And of course, we have the sword which spells her name out in gold on its blade...though parts of it remain mysterious. We of course know about d’Eon’s friendship with Keate and the fact that she would have carried a military sword during her time as a dragoon as well as been a fencer, but is this the type of sword d’Eon would have actually used before she gifted it to her friend?

We spoke to Eleanor Wilkinson-Keys, Assistant Curator of Arms and Armour to tell us more about the sword.

**Eleanor Wilkinson-Keys:** So, it’s difficult to know what the sword might have been used for. The blade may have originally been part of a sword used for both civilian or military purposes. Regulation swords for the military weren’t really a thing yet in the seventeenth century. Broad, flattish blades like this one were common across Europe in this period as was the practice of blade makers inscribing their name on their work.

So, the blade is handily engraved on one side with the name ‘Lorenzo’ and it has a stylised anchor mark, and on the other side it’s engraved with the name ‘Carvalho’ and another mark, which might be a winged heart. So based on this inscription we can surmise that it was possibly made by the blade maker Lorenzo Carvalho, who was a lance and sword maker in Lisbon in the 1640s. So, this gives us a probable window for when the blade was made. What we don’t know is if someone else was imitating Carvalho’s work.

A second inscription on the blade suggests that the sword might have been put together in its current form, as a presentation sword in 1777. And the hilt has features that are of a type that we see from around 1720. It also has the addition of these decorative shell piercings which are similar to other surviving examples made by English cutlers Bland and also Bland and Foster.

Re-hilting an older blade was common practice and not just in Europe. Quality blades were expensive and time consuming to make, so it makes sense to recycle a blade, especially if it’s marked by a known maker, or if it has significance to the owner, perhaps as a piece of historical interest, or as a family heirloom.

Presentation swords were a popular way not just of showcasing the wealth, status and generosity of the person or organisation commissioning them. But they also signified gratitude, friendship, promotions, length of service, feats of arms and battle honours of the person receiving the sword.

**Anna Ward:** Claire Mead argues that the inscription on d’Eon’s presentation sword is a powerful trans metaphor.

**Claire Mead:** So many queer and trans people have used fantasy and sword fighting and the kind of romance and excitement around it to find ways to reclaim and reaffirm their own identities. And so, each time I talk about the fact that we have in the Royal Armouries, a sword that was gifted er, by a trans woman to a friend, that’s actually signed, engraved in the blade with the title under which she wanted to be known, I think there’s something extremely powerful about that.

So, I think there’s something very intentional about this sword being made of kind of a different blade, with a different hilt and being engraved with that message to tie it all together, because in a way it also reflects the Chevaliere d’Eon’s own kind of identity, kind of made of all these different facets of her, as a woman and as a warrior.

**Anna Ward:** D’Eon’s legacy continues to inspire others, and it inspired the Beaumont Society, the largest and longest established transgender support group in the UK. The Beaumont Society was named after d’Eon, Chevaliere d’Eon de Beaumont.

If you have enjoyed this episode of Warrior Women there are more available in the series.

This episode was written using the following sources:

Some of the sources do not use respectful language when engaging with d'Eon's identity or wider trans identities and histories. Please be aware of this if you are interested in reading more about her story.

[Gary Kates,The Transgendered World of the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon, The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 67, No. 3 (Sep., 1995), pp. 558-594](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fstable%2F2124220&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134085833%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=jryB2qkZcZICdHuB3wut7O3UkH5Ot1XiW6kWAVeGQ5o%3D&reserved=0)

[Roland A. Champagne, Decoding "The Maiden of Tonnerre": Translating Gender from the Eighteenth Century,  The French Review, Vol. 85, No. 6, Les Lumières, au passé et à présent (May 2012), pp. 1039-1053 (15 pages)](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fstable%2F23214091%3FsearchText%3Dd%2527eon%2Bdecoding%2Bgender%26searchUri%3D%252Faction%252FdoBasicSearch%253FQuery%253Dd%252527eon%252Bdecoding%252Bgender%2526so%253Drel%26ab_segments%3D0%252Fbasic_search_gsv2%252Fcontrol%26refreqid%3Dfastly-default%253A082e9e732f2543e222087255706392ed&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134142811%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=WLHunv%2Fxh5Y3HQXgztVNGc5xCk3WTg0vDzWGJtA35QY%3D&reserved=0) => This is really good because it engages directly with D'Eon primary sources, namely the autobiography.

[Marilyn Morris, The Chevalière d'Eon, Transgender Autobiography and Identity, Gender and History, Volume31, Issue1, March 2019, Pages 78-90](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fonlinelibrary.wiley.com%2Fdoi%2Fepdf%2F10.1111%2F1468-0424.12405&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134160071%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=csWqTBlBOQwFeIFbuArO1pFEI3mKSX2r9ECF1qiTGvk%3D&reserved=0)[Buchan Telfer, The Strange Career of the Chevalier D’Eon de Beaumont, published 1885, (via Wellcome Collection)](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwellcomecollection.org%2Fworks%2Febbacw38&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134175157%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GxAeV2lVxuoNX11edLiPbaTH0Jx6bBky0g4OU%2FlGCrs%3D&reserved=0).

[Fraser Easton, Gender's Two Bodies: Women Warriors, Female Husbands and Plebeian Life, Past & Present, No. 180 (Aug., 2003), pp. 131-174](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fstable%2F3600742&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134190983%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=G8%2BKPmJFx2WBNr16L3W6fawoLwhXgicwLtb3%2F04v0hM%3D&reserved=0)

Simon Burrows, ed., The Chevalier D'Eon and His Worlds: Gender, Espionage and Politics in the Eighteenth Century, A&C Black (2010)

[Anna Clark, The Chevalier d'Eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and Politics in the Eighteenth Century, Eighteenth-Century Studies, Vol. 32, No. 1, Nationalism (Fall, 1998), pp. 19-48](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fstable%2F30054266&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134208710%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=IHNCGJ5fJU5zrNrJ1VqhPHJaVpFgScQRM3j2m3Iw9lw%3D&reserved=0)

[Greta Lafleur, Sex and "Unsex": Histories of Gender Trouble in Eighteenth-Century North America, Early American Studies, Vol. 12, No. 3, Special Issue: Beyond the Binaries: Critical Approaches to Sex and Gender in Early America (Fall 2014), pp. 469-499](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org%2Fstable%2F24474867&data=05%7C02%7CAnna.Ward%40armouries.org.uk%7C173ce8dd4c9243c394b308dd54d6a8fa%7Ce24ee688785f4d4baf309b09c33938f7%7C0%7C0%7C638760003134223252%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2F9li24SZ70C2HFsvaKjjMRK6Jdpi%2F4oBQfE%2F4ViDCKY%3D&reserved=0)

For more about the Chevalier de Saint-Georges:

Olivette Otele, African Europeans: An Untold History, Hurst (2020)