



## **Newsletter issue 18**

### **Editorial** – Maggie Hammond<sup>1</sup>

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023. I am pleased to be presenting the work of the Association of Women Solicitors (London) and to introduce myself, as a new member of the committee.

In this edition, Christl, our esteemed Chair, takes you through much of the work of the AWSL and its committee. Anna Wesson, who led one of our webinars, talks more about partnership issues. We reproduce a fascinating article about the first woman solicitor in England and Wales, plus Christl's blog about the Legal Services Board and its diversity strategy. Former AWSL chair, Virginia Salter, reports on the Solicitors' Charity and what next. Our aims are also set out below, just to remind you of our reason for being and find out more details about what the AWSL does. We finish up with a word from the Sponsor of our Summer and New Year parties (LEAP), a report on some research about women solicitors, and finally a book review, always popular, from our membership secretary, Margaret Hatwood.

### **Address from the Chair** – by Christl Hughes MBE

Greetings! It is a while since the last newsletter but your organisation, the AWSL, has been very active in meantime. My predecessor Virginia Cannon stepped down in October 2021 on her appointment to the Board of The Solicitors Charity. Many thanks to you Ginny for an excellent tenure as AWSL Chair during a very challenging time. Please see her article later about the work of the Charity.



Pictured, honorary member Madeleine Heggs and AWSL Chair Christl Hughes enjoy a lunch at The Queens Head, Billesdon Leicestershire.

In October I went to Windsor Castle to receive my MBE from Anne, Princess Royal, now the most famous British working mum. We extend our sympathy to the Royal family on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who in her 70-year reign hardly ever put a foot wrong. We welcome the reign of our King, Charles III.

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<sup>1</sup> Maggie is a new member of the committee. A property and licensing lawyer, who ran her own business as an in house lawyer for many years. She worked as a lawyer in academia, most recently at LSBU. She writes for Legal Woman and is a community rugby coach.



Pictured, AWSL Chair Christl Hughes speaking about the late Linda Davies at her wake.

At the start of May I was honoured to be asked to speak at a wake for our former Committee member the late Linda Davies. I hope I was able to put across the true professional she was both as a long-standing committee member and very efficient administrator alongside her other roles as beloved sister and aunt.

### **Events**

During my tenure as Chair, AWSL has offered members the usual mix of serious and social events as well as noting what is going on elsewhere in our profession. The media have confirmed that female barristers still earn 35 % less than males, there has been an increase in complaints to the SRA concerning sexual harassment and solicitor Helena Biggs was awarded a substantial sum for sex discrimination. On the other hand, we congratulate solicitor Dame Sarah Falk on her appointment as a Court of Appeal Judge and to Lubna Shuja on becoming President of The Law Society.

### **CPD**

Our unique 'virtual' webinars have included:

- "The Death Penalty- We have a Dream" in recognition of Black History month with speakers from Amicus and Reprieve,
- "No Fault Divorce - a new era for Family Law" by esteemed family lawyer Fiona Lyon,
- "The practical, financial, and ethical aspects of the Bar strike" by Jo Morris of 5 Pump Court Chambers,
- "Is Partnership your future?" with psychologist and executive coach Anna Weston (see her further comments on page 6),
- "Demystifying Part 36" for civil litigators by Lucy Meredith and Nancy Williams of 5 Pump Court.

And of course, a Judicial Appointments session, for alternative career seekers, with recent appointee Linda Lee then describing her journey to becoming a County Court Deputy District Judge. AWSL having supported the introduction of the Equal Merit tie breaker for Judicial Appointments in 2013 I was delighted to hear about the latest development, namely the first-round procedure of an online anonymous test before candidates supply any other information. So, goodbye to "Who you know" the



“tap on the shoulder,” or reluctant references from current employers etc. Refreshingly, more emphasis on ability.

## **Representation**

Your AWSL Committee accepted invitations to represent members at the Legal Services Board, Sole Practitioners Group and SRA events, to network, update and give our input on current issues affecting our members. At the SPG Conference I engaged with high profile Law Society officers on the then proposed closure of the Solicitors Indemnity Fund and met for the first time our new Sponsor Craig Dade of LEAP (see below, page 16).



Pictured, Craig Dade from Leap, with our chair, Christl Hughes, MBE

## **Parties**

The Summer Party on 7 July (albeit a lot of work!) was a huge success with excellent company, good food (including a cake to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary) and drink and a wonderful, relaxed atmosphere on a cool dry July evening on the roof overlooking New Square Lincoln’s Inn. Many thanks to our hosts Radcliffe Chambers, our sponsors LEAP and all who worked so hard to ensure the success of the evening. With grateful thanks, your AWSL awarded Honorary Membership to the Chief Executive of Radcliffe Chambers and Past AWSL Chair, Fiona Fitzgerald. Congratulations Fiona!.



Pictured, President of the Law Society Stephanie Boyce, with attendees at the AWSL summer party 2022.

In November sixteen of us attended an evening at HOBBS, Covent Garden, with the shop to ourselves and a 20% discount. I exited with a beautiful new black cocktail dress. Drinks were served, but we must have behaved ourselves, as the store has subsequently extended the discount to all AWSL members. Enjoy!

The New Year 2023 launched with an evening at Sadlers Wells for a wonderful revival performance of Tchaikovsky's 'Sleeping Beauty' by Matthew Bourne. There then followed our Christmas/ New Year Party at Baranis Chancery Lane with food, plenty of wine and a game of Pétanque thrown in. Many thanks to LEAP for sponsorship and to Baranis for the hospitality and commiserations to those unable to attend after tickets sold out. We were especially pleased to see the mixture of those in attendance, including students, sole practitioners, members of the judiciary and representatives from the bar and chambers.

Pictures below from the belated Christmas Party, 2023, attended by c 50 including the president of the Law Society of England and Wales, Farzana Choudhury, pictured with our chair, Christl Hughes, MBE





A great time was had, informally networking and some, pictured below, playing Pétanque.



## **100 Years**

My vice Chair Renee Wright (pictured below) and I were delighted to represent AWSL, at the Centenary Celebrations of the admission of the first solicitor Carrie Morrison at Chancery Lane on 7<sup>th</sup> December. Past Chairs of AWSL and the former national Association of Women Solicitors<sup>2</sup> also attended plus members of the current Law Society Women Solicitors Network.

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<sup>2</sup> Dissolved in 2014



Pictured, past and current members of the AWSL at the Law Society, help celebrate the first women solicitor in England and Wales.

Later on the actual anniversary 18<sup>th</sup> December The Law Society set up a social media montage featuring exceptionally successful women solicitors and I was delighted that our nominee Suleikha Ali was accepted. Congratulations Suleikha.



Our own committee member, Suleikha Ali, pictured here was included in the Law Society montage.



Follow this link for the montage of inspiring contemporary women solicitors:

[The Law Society on Twitter: "📅 #OnThisDay, in 1922, Carrie Morrison became the first woman to qualify as a solicitor. ✨ Thank you for nominating inspirational #WomenSolicitors to feature in our celebratory photo montage 🌸 We'll share the amazing stories of the women in this montage soon https://t.co/qd6O27OuWL" / Twitter](#)

Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM in person. Save the date for our AGM: Thurs 23rd March 2023 at 6.00pm at Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP 125 Wood St London EC2V 7AW.

***Is partnership in your future?*** – by Anna Wesson<sup>3</sup>.

64% of newly qualified lawyers are women, yet they represent only 33% of partners. What's going on? And what does that mean for you if you are thinking about partnership in the future?

When you are considering if partnership is for you, there are many important questions. Some of these require research – what would partnership look like in your firm? What support is offered to aspiring and existing partners? Other considerations require self-reflection – do you want to lead your firm? Are you prepared to make the time commitment that partnership requires? What would this mean for life events and caring responsibilities? These questions are by no means all but, start the process of working out whether partnership is something that you want.

Once you have decided partnership is for you, the focus becomes how you make it happen. It is unlikely to happen by accident: being in the right place at the right time is not enough. Instead, it is time to get strategic about your career. This means understanding what you offer, what you want to be known for, and how you ensure those around you are aware of this. It is worth considering who is supporting your partnership case, particularly in terms of sponsorship, but also mentors, coaches and out of work supporters. Getting the right people in your corner will allow you to understand what you need to do to be successful, and whether there are areas in which you need to develop.

There is no questions that there need to be more women partners in law firms. Getting to partnership requires you to be intentional, strategic and focused. The good news is you don't need to do it on your own.

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<sup>3</sup> Author: Anna Wesson is an executive coach, working extensively with new and aspiring partners in law. She can be contacted here [anna@path2leadership.com](mailto:anna@path2leadership.com)



### **AN UNLIKELY LAWYER - Elizabeth Cruickshank<sup>4</sup>**

CARRIE MORRISON (1888 -1950)

In December 1922, Carrie Morrison became the first woman to qualify as a solicitor in England and Wales. In 1928 she became the first woman to address a Law Society Provincial meeting and the first woman to take a divorce case under the Poor Persons Rules. By her contemporaries she was regarded as “the senior woman solicitor of England”.

Almost all the 100 women who qualified as solicitors by 1930 came from legal families. By contrast, Carrie’s background was relatively humble. One grandfather was a labourer and the other a Scottish innkeeper. Her mother was a cook, but her father rose over several decades from working as a lowly clerk for Tharsis, a Scottish mining company, to being a member of the London Metal Exchange.

Thomas Morrison’s business entailed lengthy sojourns in other countries. As his family travelled with him, Carrie had, by the age of 15, been round the world and had been educated in three different schools in England, France and Spain. When in 1901 he died in Barcelona, Carrie’s mother removed Carrie aged 12 and her sister Maggie aged 10 to Hanover.

However, Germany’s growing atmosphere of militarism and chauvinism convinced Judith Morrison that her family should return to England, where Carrie attended Manchester School for Girls from 1904-1907 and then Girton College, Cambridge, where she obtained First Class Honours in Mediaeval and Modern Languages.

In common with more than half her Girton cohort, Carrie became a teacher on graduation, but after four years teaching in Penarth and Putney she “hated it and that was not good for the children that I taught”. Her real ambition was to become a “political secretary”, but the First World War intervened.

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<sup>4</sup> Past Chairwoman of both the old national Association of Women Solicitors and AWSL , the first Editor of AWS Link magazine and author of “Women in the Law”. This article was published with kind permission of the author and the Law Society and was previously published in the Law Society Gazette.





In 1915, this “black eyed and black haired” woman was recruited by MI5 and worked in the Ministry of Munitions and the Military Permit Office where she processed the permit applications of those wishing to travel to war zones. Fortuitously, Alfred Baker, a partner in the firm of Kenneth Brown Baker Baker was so impressed with her handling of his application that he offered her a position in his firm “after the war was over”.

But the end of the war saw her seconded to work in “general staff intelligence” with the Army of the Black Sea in Constantinople, at that time a dangerous hotbed of revolution and social disturbance. Meanwhile, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 enabled Baker to offer her articles, for which he unusually waived the customary training premium and paid her a small salary. Carrie’s “essential war work” in Constantinople operated to reduce the period of her articles to two years instead of three. She thus became “the First” because her articles expired at the end of 1922, whereas those of the other three women who passed the Finals with her in December 1922 did not expire until 1923. (I have identified no other woman solicitor able to claim this dispensation.)

Her undoubted intellectual ability enabled her to pass both the Law Society Intermediate and Final examinations within nine months of each other while simultaneously working full-time for Baker and supporting her mother and sister.

The prominent career predicted by friends and journalists was cruelly deferred by the ill-health and subsequent death of both her mother and her sister Maggie in 1924. Her mother died of cardiac failure; her sister committed suicide by setting herself alight and jumping from a first-floor window of Carrie’s flat.

Once qualified, much of her professional efforts were directed to helping those less fortunate than herself. Volunteering as a “Poor Man’s Lawyer” at Toynbee Hall in London’s East End she met Ambrose Appelbe, a young solicitor with whom she entered into partnership in 1927 and married in 1929. She was 41 and he was 26.

They had much in common; as well as working up their legal practice, they advocated substantial legal and social reforms, especially as they appertained to familial and marital relationships. In 1943 Carrie acted for Mrs Blackwell in her notoriously unsuccessful appeal against the decision that a husband had the right to any savings his wife might make from her housekeeping allowance. In her 1928 paper “Courts of Domestic Relations” Carrie argued keenly for special and less intimidating courts for the resolution of family disputes.

Carrie believed in equality between men and woman and, unusually, advocated that women must act fairly towards men. She acted for those in straitened circumstances, for East End prostitutes “those poor women”, and for those who demonstrated against the eviction of a war widow by the local council; she praised the police for their restraint and “sporting attitude” in this case.

Even when she divorced Ambrose in 1937 on the grounds of adultery, Carrie continued to practise with him in Whitechapel and Lincoln’s Inn, much to the horror of her solicitor friend, Maud Crofts.

She died in Broxbourne on 20 February 1950 in the house she had lived in for almost 20 years. In a short letter to Girton College her ex-husband wrote that “She was well-known in the Broxbourne area for her kindness, sympathy and the legal advice she gave so freely in the evenings after work to



those who were in need She had the good hardy qualities of a Highland Scottish ancestry on both sides, integrity, frankness and sincerity, with sympathy to all who were suffering.”

### **The Solicitors' Charity**

By Virginia Salter



Just over a year ago, I was privileged to become the Chair of the Solicitors' Charity. I want to tell you about it, because although it does a great job of helping those who turn to it, not enough people know it exists, or what it can do for them. Its purpose is to be there for Solicitors when times get tough. It has been supporting solicitors at times of need or crisis since 1858.

When times are hard, the Charity provides financial, emotional and practical support to help solicitors and their families get back on track. We are there to help them when they face serious financial hardship or need emotional and practical support. We aim to make a permanent and positive impact on the lives of the people that we help. We have been known by a few different names in our history (The Solicitors' Benevolent Association and SBA being the most recent) but our purpose has never changed.

We can provide financial help if:

you are a solicitor (current or former) on the Roll for England & Wales, or you are (or have been) financially dependent on a current or former solicitor and  
your total household income is below our thresholds and  
you do not have access to liquid assets of more than £10,000.

We use research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Minimum Income Standard' as our baseline for establishing eligibility. A short email enquiry form, an email or a quick call to one of our case holders can let you know if you are eligible.

In situations where you have low or no income from work, we can help maximise your chances of sustaining yourself in the long term. We can make awards for varying periods of time, and also help with exceptional costs relating to health and wellbeing, including nursing and residential care fees as well as home adaptations or aids. We can also offer financial awards to support you re-entering work by funding things like laptops, travel to interview costs and even new work clothes, to make sure you are prepared and confident for your new role.

Additionally, if you are living with long term health issues or with a disability, besides ongoing financial support, we may be able to help with additional needs or the costs of items not available through the NHS or your local authority. These could range from support for additional therapy to mobility aids or adaptations to your home to make life a little easier.



We can also signpost you to a host of partner organisations, who can provide non-financial support, for example : FCA-registered debt advisers, who can provide advice in strict confidence; specialist advice on statutory benefits you may be entitled to, via Citizens Advice Manchester (no need to live there to benefit from this); career transition and job search support via the Renovo Career Coaching programme; free confidential advice (a minimum of an hour) for solicitors and their families on a wide variety of legal and regulatory areas via the Solicitors' Assistance Scheme; and in the critically important area of mental health and wellbeing.

Recognising that demand for help and support available via the NHS or through your firm's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), such as counselling services can be very high, with long waiting lists, we are piloting a new project to provide fast access to clinical assessments, to help determine the most appropriate mental health therapy options (eg, CBT or EMDR). We can help fund the cost of therapy, as long as this is beyond the means of the person asking us for help.

We also fund our sister charity LawCare, which is the mental health and wellbeing charity for the legal community, to make sure you can access the support you need when you need it. LawCare offers a free, confidential emotional support service to all legal professionals, their support staff and families in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. The team is there to listen, with helpline calls, emails and webchats answered in confidence by trained staff and volunteers who have first-hand experience of working in the law. It also has a network of peer supporters. It has a wider scope than that enabled by the objectives of the Solicitors' Charity – the whole of the legal profession, support staff and families – and no financial qualification for support.

A crisis can happen to anyone, at any time. That's why the Solicitors' Charity offers impartial, non-judgemental help for all solicitors in crisis – no matter what their background. Even if you do are doing fine and do not see the need for any help now – which I hope you are ! – I hope you may remember enough of this article to get in touch with the Solicitors' Charity if you find yourself in crisis and need help later on in your life. And bear it in mind if you have a colleague who is struggling. Don't be afraid to get in touch, we can help.

Here you will find case studies with examples of people we have helped:

[The Solicitors' Charity - Financial support and help for solicitors in need \(thesolicitorscharity.org\)](https://thesolicitorscharity.org)

If you are going on the London Legal Walk next year, pop over and see us, our stall is right next to the start !



**Virginia Salter, AWSL Committee Member and Chair of The Solicitors' Charity**

### **About us – The AWSL**

Association of Women Solicitors, London is an independent organisation.

The Objects are

- 1.1.1. To represent, support and develop the interests of women solicitors.
- 1.1.2. To provide professional, business and social activities for women solicitors.
- 1.1.3. To offer educational courses, lectures and seminars designed to benefit the standing of, and to improve opportunities for women solicitors.

The organisation offers both training and social events (both physical and virtual) thus giving younger members in particular opportunities to network with more experienced professionals outside their own firm.

Our wide membership includes lawyers at all career stages. We have successfully put forward nominations for Honorary Queen's Counsel status and on our application a room at The Law Society is named after family lawyer Joan Rubinstein.

Using our independent voice we issue Press Releases, respond to Consultations, and liaise with organisations such as the Legal Services Board and the Solicitors Regulation Authority. We also file Responses to Government Consultations when appropriate. Membership of Association of Women Solicitors, London is open to all women solicitors with associate membership open to other women lawyers including trainees.

Some of our recent events:

### **AWSL working for you**

Members of the Committee attended the Legal Services Board Conference on diversity within the legal professions in October 2022. Christl Hughes, the current Chair of Association of Women Solicitors published her account of the proposed LSB strategy in her recent blog:



*‘The Legal Services Board strategy document “Reshaping Legal Services” includes goals such as “Dismantling barriers to a diverse and inclusive profession at all levels” and “Legal professionals as diverse as the communities they serve.”*

*Association of Women Solicitors, London was founded in 1992 and therefore celebrates its 30th Anniversary in 2022 the same year as the Centenary of the admission of the first woman solicitor Carrie Morrison in December 2022. The excellent book produced by the First 100 Years project outlines progress over the ensuing 100 years but as recited in its Epilogue issues remain.*

*There is no longer a barrier to women becoming solicitors. Since 2017 more women than men have been admitted every year and in 2020 women accounted for 64.2% of trainees and 52% of solicitors holding practising certificates but issues remain on retention, pay and promotion particularly in the private sector. In 2020 only 32.9% of partners were female.*

*Research indicates that the problems are cultural and structural. Despite the long and intensive training qualifications will not, without more, ensure survival. It is believed that that as many as one third of women solicitors leave the profession within 5 years of Qualification and do not return. Why do these professionals leave? We would like to see more research on why these women go and therefore do not proceed to partnership. Is it the Gender Pay Gap? (11.3% in 2021) Is it the stress of the job? Recent research by LawCare found that women remain more likely to experience bullying and harassment. Is there any variation between work sectors and types of firms, or can the attrition rate be explained simply by the difficulties of combining legal practice with childcare? Has the new pandemic emphasis on working from home affected “presenteeism”?’*

First published here: [Association of Women Solicitors London - improving gender equality in the legal profession - Reshaping Legal Services](#)

Update- the Legal Services Board in its Consultation on the Draft Business Plan 2022/23 has now announced research into the EDI aspects of progression and retention within the legal professions. We await the outcome of this with interest.



### **23 March 2022, AWSL AGM at the Reform Club – By Margaret Hatwood**

The AGM was hosted at the Reform Club in Pall Mall. The Reform Club is one of the best-known London Clubs. It was where the fictional Phileas Fogg set off on his journey “Around the World in Eighty Days”. More relevantly for the AWSL it was the first London Club to admit women to membership in 1981.





The Club was founded in the ferment of ideas, ideals and political activity which resulted in the Great Reform Act of 1832. Having succeeded in securing the passing of the Reform Bill, Radicals and Whigs needed a centre for their political activities. The Club first opened its doors to members in 1836 at the present site. However it was decided that a new building should be constructed. Charles Barry was the architect selected. His building was inspired by the Italian Renaissance architecture that he enjoyed as a young student in Rome. The new club house opened in 1841. The interior of the Club is especially fine with a beautiful atrium, with a glass roof constructed from a thousand crystal lozenges. The club has an exciting range of activities, including Bridge and Golf. There are various groups, including the Wine Group and an Economics and Current Affairs group. There are also regular jazz and classical musical concerts and talks by luminaries such as Michael Beloff QC.

The Club hosted AWSL as part of its drive to recruit more women members. And our association was especially grateful to the Reform Club's Lucy Morgan, one of our members, who extended the invitation to host to the association.

The new Chair Christl Hughes thanked the outgoing Chair Virginia Cannon for her excellent stewardship taking the Chair during the pandemic and then extending her term to fit in with Christl's intention to stand this year following Christl having served her term of office as President of Leicestershire Law Society. Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the pandemic Ginny had kept the organisation visible and active and had boosted the morale of members during the very difficult first lockdown.

Christl thanked those present for electing her in this 30th Anniversary year and advised that she hoped to enjoy a special celebratory tenure. There would be good social events and seminars.

In addition Christl promised to continue to promote AWSL as the independent voice of women solicitors in liaison with other organisations, such as The Legal Services Board and the SRA on matters relevant to members such as the ongoing debate on the proposed closure of the Solicitors Indemnity Fund.

Christl welcomed the new committee members and thanked those departing, many of whom had served for many years on the committee, especially Amy Wedgwood, a former chair and Hannah McCrindle our former treasurer. She then welcomed all attending to eat drink and be merry. To that end the club provided us with delicious Champagne and canapés. Due to the Club's generosity, we were able to offer the event free to our members. During our reception many of us were able to enjoy a guided tour of the club.

This is the first time that AWSL have, to my knowledge, had an informal drinks reception with canapés as opposed to a sit down dinner. We would be interested in knowing whether our members enjoyed this opportunity to network informally or would you prefer a formal dinner with speeches. Please let me know your views. Equally if you missed the AGM and would like to meet me at the Reform Club for a drink and a tour, please let me know. Margaret Hatwood, AWSL Committee Member [em.hatwood@gmail.com](mailto:em.hatwood@gmail.com)



### **Sponsorship news**



LEAP very generously sponsored our summer and New Year parties. Details of the services they offer are set out below. Please mention the AWSL if making an enquiry – you never know what discounts membership may follow for our members.

### **Get started today**

LEAP offers subsidised training and implementation and reduced rates on data transitions to help AWS London members benefit from true cloud technology.

LEAP is focused on designing legal technology specifically for the needs of small to mid-sized law firms and continuously refines its technology to create an unparalleled legal practice productivity solution.

LEAP's powerful features expand beyond traditional practice management software to include legal accounting, document assembly and management, and uniquely, legal publishing tools in one integrated solution.

### **Why solicitors choose LEAP**

Continually investing over £13 million a year into research and development of its many productivity tools, LEAP provides legal practitioners access to the very latest legal tech innovations including:

- Integrated time recording
- Billing and client accounting
- Automated legal forms and precedents
- Full remote working capabilities
- Client collaboration tools



World-class integrations

LEAP's highly secure, cloud-based software solution eliminates the need for a server, reducing hardware and support costs, and simplifying your IT infrastructure.

Running your entire firm from one application eliminates the mess, confusion and risk that comes with using multiple programs and databases for different areas of practice or parts of the business. Picture of myself with Craig at one/both of the parties

### **Research discussed – by Maggie Hammond**

*Lost to law – why women leave the legal profession earlier than men?*

AWSL is pleased to commend to our members research conducted by The Centre for Professional Legal Education at the University of Birmingham. The paper<sup>5</sup> explores why and when women leave the professions of solicitor and barrister.

There are useful statistics, in the introduction, about the attrition rate of women in law. We study law and join these professions in greater and increasing numbers than men but fail to progress into senior positions – as partners or KCs - in the numbers one would expect given our 'critical mass'. One of the reasons of course, is the lack of retention of women in these professions. Women largely leave within 10 years of qualification and around their mid 30s.

The research found 6 distinct but overlapping reasons for the early departure of women from these professions – supporting spouse (a man); health (self or other family members); falling out of love with law; firm structures (long hours culture / target driven practices (the idea of assistance and service to clients can be lost to other goals - attracting lucrative retainers against fierce competition and then delivering "good" Invoices ); stress; childcare issues. The findings accord with earlier research both in England and the USA. The reasons why women leave are the same gendered reasons why women leave other careers earlier than men.

Women participants were asked what would have made a difference. Better return to work schemes, including retraining in a different practice area and career mentors were strongly suggested. Others thought more flexibility and capacity in teams, including working from home options. Of course, changes in culture, which support the status quo, were also mentioned – long hours, relentless targets etc. One respondent said of her career in law "It is a wonderful job for someone who has a wife at home to run every other aspect of their life". No surprises here.

A surprise to the author, was the number of law graduates who did not qualify into these professions at all – less than one third of law graduates go on to qualify. It might be interesting to explore this further and the value of a law degree in other professions / careers. It also occurred to me that we don't generally share or record how our lives as women work or have worked. I remember when I qualified, speaking to much older women solicitor about what it was like for her and what advice they would give to a newly qualified woman. The advice was simple – (1) don't learn to type as you'll become the secretary for all the men and (2) buy in help, you can't do it all.

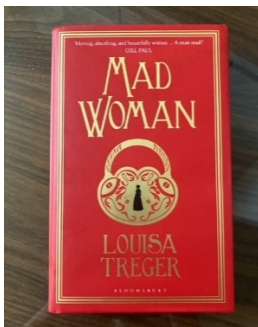
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<sup>5</sup> [Lost to Law: Why Women Leave the Legal Profession - ePapers Repository \(bham.ac.uk\)](https://www.bham.ac.uk/ePapers/Repository/Why%20Women%20Leave%20the%20Legal%20Profession.pdf)



Maggie Hammond, editor of the Newsletter and AWSL Committee Member.  
BA (Hons), Pg Dip (Law), Pg Dip (Legal Prac), LLM, MSc. Solicitor of the Supreme Court (Non prac)

### **Book review – Madwoman – by Margaret Hatwood**



I enjoyed Louisa Treger's third book, Madwoman published by Bloomsbury. It is the story of Nellie Bly who became a leading journalist at a time when women journalists were few. This self-imposed assignment led to reform in the treatment of the mentally ill in the USA. Bly has a difficult childhood after her beloved father dies leaving his second wife, Nellie's mother, bereft and almost penniless. Her mother remarries and the stepfather is very violent towards Nellie's mother. Despite the social shame that would result from a divorce Nellie's mother has the courage to divorce her husband which results in greater penury but physical safety for the family.

Nellie decides she would like to pursue a career in journalism and has some success writing for the Pittsburg Dispatch. Emboldened by this success she moves to New York and tries to obtain employment on a major newspaper The New York World owned by Joseph Pulitzer. There is at this time much prejudice against female journalists, especially those who wish to tackle more difficult



subjects than fashion and beauty. In 1887 after encountering difficulties in finding employment she conceives an audacious plan to expose the treatment of women in an asylum on Blackwell's Island New York.

Incredibly she manages to convince sufficient people that she is suffering from mental illness to be committed to the asylum. She does this with the connivance of Joseph Pulitzer. The plan is for Bly's release to be secured by Pulitzer after 7 days of incarceration. However, the plan does not work out as planned. The book brilliantly evokes the period and the horrors of the asylum. This is not an easy read, due to the horrors. However, it is compelling. I could not put the book down once Nellie was in the asylum.

Nellie is a woman ahead of her time with empathy for the poor and badly treated. What is especially shocking is that many of the inmates were there because their husbands had tired of them! Many patients would have had no recognisable mental illness. This is a work well worth reading and a fascinating account of a pioneering journalist. Bly's exposé published in the New York World was a success. It brought about a large-scale investigation of Blackwell and significant changes in the overseeing institution, including more funds, additional staff to supervise and new regulations to protect against overcrowding and fire hazards. Blackwell closed in 1894. Bly's pioneering work captured the public imagination gaining her 'celebrity' and creating a new journalistic movement known as stunt or detective reporting, the forerunner of full-scale investigative journalism.

Nellie Bly is an intriguing character. After her incarceration on Blackwell Island Bly decided to try to beat Jules Verne's hero Phileas Fogg's record. Nellie travelled 'around the world' by ship, horse, rickshaw sampan burro and other vehicles in 'less than 80 days' – in fact just over 72 days. Formidable or mad – you decide!



Margaret Hatwood, AWLS Comittee Member.





Finally, save the date for IN PERSON AGM:

Thurs 23rd March 2023

at 6.30pm at

Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP, London.  
EC2V 7AW.

Drinks reception from 6pm.

Guest speaker to be announced.



The AWSL are looking for new committee members and others to get involved with the committee.