

## Virtual Events

- **VIRTUAL GONG MEDITATION 30 JUNE 2020, 6pm**

Join us for this virtual sound meditation (aka 'gong bath') to reset and revitalize at the end of your workday. In just 30 minutes, you'll be transported into a deeply tranquil state and give your eyes and mind a much needed rest. The sound of the gong helps to entrain and downshift your brainwaves to a relaxed and restorative state, and it's a great way to reap the benefits of meditation without any experience required. Especially for people with busy minds, gong baths make meditating easy and enjoyable. All you have to do is find a comfortable place to lie down, put on some headphones, close your eyes, and listen.

The session will be led by [Selma Studer](#), Founder of [GONG](#), and will start with a brief introduction, followed by 20 minutes of sound meditation, leaving time for some Q&A at the end. Tickets are £5.00 for members and £10.00 for non-members. Tickets available on [Eventbrite](#).

All ticket proceeds go to The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network, a social enterprise which aims to address the inequality of access to psychological services for Black, African, South Asian and Caribbean people in the UK. They accept donations to support their mentorship programme which provides support to Black and Asian students training to become therapists: <https://www.baatn.org.uk/donate/>.



## CONTENTS:

Page 3 – Our Chair’s Address

Page 5 – Welcomes to and farewell from AWS London Committee

Page 6 – AWS London AGM and Dinner at the Ivy February 2020

Page 7 – Solicitors Benevolent Association (SBA) – The Solicitors’ Charity

Page 8 – AWS London Committee Meetings and Covid-19

Page 9 – Impact of Covid-19 on Women Lawyers

Page 11 – Racism has no place in our society : Statement by AWS London Committee

Page 12 – 10,000 Steps for Justice

Page 13 – And now for something completely different : Margaret’s Morale-boosting Salted Caramel Ice Cream

Page 14 – Book Review : Career Management for Lawyers

Page 15 – Book Review: The Dragon Lady by Louisa Treger

Page 16 – Book Review: “A Hidden Home in the Gwydyr Forest” by Janet Corke

Page 17 – Book Review : Women’s Legal Landmarks – Celebrating the History of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland

Our Editor: [Rachael Dunn](#)

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## Our Chair's Address

### Welcome to this issue of the AWS London newsletter from our current AWSL Chair, Virginia Cannon.

Hello, and a very big welcome to you all !

I had the great honour, and pleasure, of being elected as your Chair for 2020 at our AGM, which Margaret, our Vice Chair, has reported on below. Among other things, we celebrated the extremely successful year of our previous Chair, Amy, and the wonderful news that Christl had been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. I then spoke about my plans for events for the coming year. Before writing this address, I looked back at what I said at the AGM, and realised how different my plans were before COVID-19 became a serious threat, lockdown was mandated, and we found ourselves in open-ended pause mode.

Although the Committee and I were slightly shell-shocked to start with, we quickly adapted, turned 360 degrees and started exploring the new possibilities for remote events that were exploding on the scene. We circulated an e-mail to you giving support, information, and links to free online cultural and fun events, which we hope went some way to providing comfort when you wanted a break, as well as links to organisations that could give you practical help and advice, including financial support. Three of the most relevant links are repeated below, in case you missed the earlier e-mail.

AWS London then fielded a successful team for the 10,000 Steps for Justice event in aid of the London Legal Support Trust, which exceeded its target. Please also see the link below to the LLST follow-on Virtual Quiz event to support legal advice centres taking place on 25<sup>th</sup> June. We hope you will either host an event or join in the LLST Quiz, as in spite of the huge success of their Emergency Advice Appeal raising over £400,000, many legal advice centres are still under imminent threat of closure.

On the health and relaxation side, we are holding a Gong (Sound) Bath event on 30<sup>th</sup> June, for which we recently sent out a flyer. This is a therapy that is rapidly growing in popularity, as I discovered after Kavita, our Secretary, suggested it, with enthusiastic online testimonials to it inducing a state of peace and relaxation, reducing stress, and helping people to sleep better, so I hope that many of you will join us.

For pure fun, we are hosting a Murder Mystery event on 15<sup>th</sup> July with a 1990s theme. This has been organised by our past Chair, Amy, who is also a (very talented) actor in the piece ! We will send out a flyer shortly.

We have a number of other ideas for events during lockdown, which we are pursuing, but would be very glad to hear from you as to what type of events you would prefer – health, relaxation, legal educational, or something completely different. Please do get in touch with ideas by emailing [AWSLondon1@gmail.com](mailto:AWSLondon1@gmail.com).

We are also looking forward to events post-lockdown which are in development. In particular, I have the following ideas on which I should really like your feedback.

The first idea is for an event examining career development alternatives to the standard process of progression within firms, such as either:

- setting up a firm yourself – we have a growing number of women doing just that, and very successfully, including our distinguished speaker at our AGM, Laura Devine; or



- becoming a member of the judiciary, where again there are an increasing number of female solicitor judges and ex-judges at various levels.

I hope to find women who can talk to us from personal experience about taking these alternative courses – how to do it, what the obstacles are likely to be, and how they can be overcome.

Secondly, I would really like to hold an event involving AWS London together with the City of London Solicitors' Company, with which we already have some members in common, including me. I am on its Court as Steward, as are other women of increasing influence in the Company, and I believe that encouraging the development of links between the two organisations would be of benefit to members of both. (If any of you want to know more about the Company, please contact me via the above e-mail.)

Are you interested in either of these events ? Do you have ideas for others ? Please let us know by e-mailing [AWSLondon1@gmail.com](mailto:AWSLondon1@gmail.com) .

Finally, thank you for reading this – particularly if you respond to it ! - and I very much hope to see you, either at a remote event, or maybe even in person, in the fullness of time.

These are the links mentioned above:-

- LawCare (Mental Health) : <https://www.lawcare.org.uk/covid-19>

And you may also be interested in these two Law Care seminars :-

Law in Lockdown - Support for Junior Lawyers : [https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/7ul4LpXM90ILcs-WzIzeR44cDrzLaaa8hHUf\\_fIPyxkccC4muHRZOZLRUSqUyMIo](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/7ul4LpXM90ILcs-WzIzeR44cDrzLaaa8hHUf_fIPyxkccC4muHRZOZLRUSqUyMIo) ; and

Staying Well, Working Well in the Home Office:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ZBvNZff60hOW6f87XH-RoQrAoL\\_eaa8hiMeq6FYnhmuVU6ltMEyPGTk7Lio\\_hBN](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ZBvNZff60hOW6f87XH-RoQrAoL_eaa8hiMeq6FYnhmuVU6ltMEyPGTk7Lio_hBN)

- Solicitors' Benevolent Association £1M Personal Hardship Fund : <https://www.sba.org.uk/covid-19/>
- Law Society information and advice : <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-updates/>
- London Legal Support Trust Virtual Great Legal Quiz : <https://www.londonlegalsupporttrust.org.uk/our-events/virtual-great-legal-quiz-2020/>

Stay safe and well, with very best wishes from your Chair.

*Virginia Cannon*



# Welcomes to and farewell from AWS London Committee

At our AGM in February we were very pleased to confirm Committee membership and welcome four new members who had been co-opted during the previous year :

- Hina Belitz, who is a senior solicitor author and trainer at Excello Law based at Bishopsgate in the City of London. Hina has specialised in employment law for over 20 years heading up employment law teams, in law firms including DLA Piper, Dentons and Pinsent Mason;
- Miné Toufeq, who was also appointed Deputy Vice Chair at the AGM, who is an LPC MSc Law, Business and Management graduate specialising in M & A, Intellectual Property Law and Commercial Law. During her undergraduate studies Miné volunteered at the Bar Bro Bono Unit and Triage legal helpline to aid individuals with no means of access to legal services, and her work included distressing cases such as abuse of young girls and deportation of young adults who were worried for their safety;
- Rachael Dunn, who is the Editor of this Newsletter. Rachael trained at Surrey County Council, qualified in 2013, and currently works as an in-house Commercial Solicitor for Transport for London. Rachael is also a mentor to LPC students at the University of Law;
- Zerine Bolat, who, like Miné, is an LPC MSc Law, Business and Management graduate specialising in M & A, Intellectual Property and Commercial Law, who during her undergraduate studies volunteered as a legal assistant at the legal advice clinic triage to help individuals with no means of access to legal services to obtain free advice from Barristers and Solicitors.

We were also extremely sad to say goodbye to Jessica Standley, who had been a long-standing supporter and Committee member, serving as Chair during 2016, but decided to step down in June this year.

At Slater and Gordon since 2010, Jessica moved to Bolt Burdon Kemp in January last year. Whilst having a wide experience in the personal injury area, her specialism is abuse cases, and she has worked on a number of high profile cases including the Savile litigation.

Jessica is also a keen runner and very active fundraiser, and achieved the extraordinary feat of running 10 marathons in 10 countries over 3.5 years, whilst battling with injuries, finally raising almost £16,000 for two charities, Wheelpower and National Association of People Abused in Childhood. Jessica ran the final marathon in Edinburgh in May last year in fancy dress as Wonder Woman !

We on the Committee at AWS London will all miss her warm and inclusive presence, inspirational and inventive ideas, and indomitable spirit, and wish her every success with her future career.

*Virginia Cannon*



# AWS London AGM and Dinner at the Ivy February 2020

On 20 February AWSL held its AGM and annual dinner at the Ivy Tower Bridge. The Ivy was the most delightful venue. The private dining room is on the first floor and we had fine views of the Tower of London and Tower Bridge. The staff at the Ivy were superb.

Unfortunately, even by that stage Covid-19 was exerting its influence. Turnout was not quite as high as usual, and we had a minimum spend to reach. We rose to the challenge and ordered champagne for our AGM, which is open to all our members, rather than our usual prosecco.

Our outgoing chair Amy Wedgwood outlined what had been a very busy year for her and our association and shared the news that our long-standing committee member Christl Hughes had been awarded an MBE for her services to equality and charity. Vice chair Virginia Salter was elected Chair and our committee was duly elected with several new faces. I was elected as Vice Chair. As I had previously held the office of Chair of AWSL, I will not be standing for election as Chair in 2021.

Our guest speaker was the leading immigration lawyer Laura Devine who set up the boutique law firm Laura Devine Immigration in London and New York. The firm focuses on UK and US immigration and European free movement. The firm is top ranked in the legal directories for immigration work.

Laura is the Managing Partner and is an English qualified solicitor and US attorney. Laura was the highest rated Europe, Middle East and Africa immigration lawyer in 2019, standing out for her superb work. Prior to establishing her own firm, Laura established immigration practices at Coopers & Lybrand (now PwC) and Eversheds (now Eversheds Sutherland).

Laura is the UK representative of the International Bar Association Immigration Committee. She used to be a Council Member of the Law Society and sat on the Law Society Immigration Committee for 15 years. She is immigration consultant for the Law Society Gazette. Quite apart from her distinguished academic record, including an LLM and admission to the New York Bar, she found time to do a Dip Lit at the Open University.

Laura's view is that women do not need to be empowered. Workplaces should offer an environment that is unquestioningly inclusive giving every person a voice irrespective of seniority, gender or sexual origination where workers encourage each other to be themselves and collectively aim high.

Our AGM 2020 was a very special evening, and in these strange times it stands out as a memorable evening providing an opportunity to network and learn from an inspirational speaker in a wonderful setting.

*Margaret Hatwood*

# Solicitors Benevolent Association (SBA) – The Solicitors’ Charity

Although we are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel (albeit in what appears to be a new world order), the sheer enormity of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic for individuals, businesses and solicitors cannot be downplayed.

It is difficult as professionals who “don’t like surprises” to be in a situation where matters are somewhat out of our control. Therefore, the need for a network of support has never been greater.

Luckily, there are numerous resources that may be exploited in a number of areas.

The SBA is an independent charity working for solicitors both past and present and their families. Every year we help hundreds of people of all ages who are in serious financial need as a result of illness, accident, redundancy or other adversity.

The [COVID-19 Support Hub](#) provides a wealth of support information for individuals, businesses and even how to apply for financial assistance from the [£1 million Personal Hardship Fund](#) for those affected by COVID-19. Since launching these schemes, the SBA have identified that junior lawyers in particular are engaging with the services and have produced a helpful section on their website considering this group in particular. This can be found at <https://www.sba.org.uk/junior-lawyers-weve-got-your-back> and lawyers are reminded that [LawCare](#), the [Solicitors Assistance Scheme](#) and [Junior Lawyers Division](#) are out there for support, information and practical help when things appear impossible.

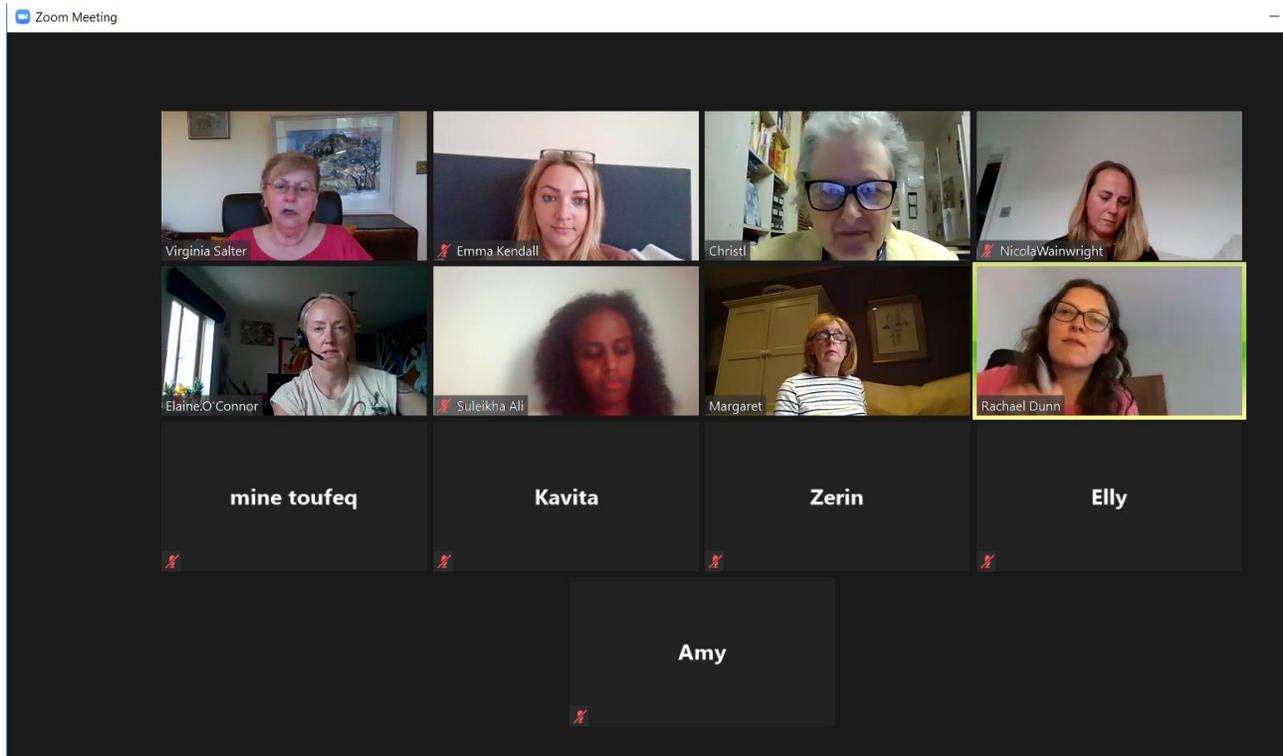
If AWS London members have any stories they would like to share or just need to reach out, please email us on [AWSLondon1@gmail.com](mailto:AWSLondon1@gmail.com) in complete confidence.

*Elaine O'Connor*

## AWS Committee Meetings and Covid-19

Like every other organisation, the AWS Committee quickly adapted to the 'new normal' of video conference meetings when lockdown started. Pre-covid, AWS met in person or committee members could dial in to the meetings, so the transition to zoom hasn't been too difficult for us all. Video conferencing is fast becoming the new normal, the hardest part is getting used to the video conferencing etiquette, such as the ensuring you firstly turn on your microphone/camera (it is always slightly embarrassing when you talk and no one responds because you have not turned your microphone on!), having your camera with the right backdrop and with no unwanted disturbances from children and pets.

Here is a photo from our most recent committee meeting of us in action busily preparing our next events.



*Rachael Dunn*

# Impact of Covid-19 on Women Lawyers

## Equality in a crisis?

There has been a clamour of outspoken articles on the unequal impact of COVID19 on women. This is for a host of reasons, some pre-existing COVID19 which mean that the impact has been more severe. Women predominate in many of the sectors which have closed completely during the pandemic and there has been no working from home option. Even where this is offered, for many, it is completely unrealistic depending on other commitments, particularly, if they have elderly relatives or children living with them. Of course, this may affect everyone, but as we know, these commitments typically fall more heavily on women.

Law is clearly a job where we can and should be able to work flexibly from home. Some are achieving this by taking it in turns with their partner to look after children. This can only be a short-term solution, as it means exceptionally long days, if both parents need to complete a minimum of a seven-hour day. One legal couple with two children, aged 2 and 4, showed me their schedule starting at 6 am, juggling client appointments and meetings around each other's work commitments, and swapping to childcare for the 'free' periods, such that they were lucky to finish work at 9 pm in the evening. We all do days like this from time to time, but week after week, it certainly takes its toll. Others have returned to work in their law firms after maternity leave – even with two parents juggling, working with a baby nearby, is a strategy to frazzle the coolest-tempered Mother or Father.

Some parents, women and men, elected for furlough pay and I've seen no clear UK statistics that show the proportions between the genders, but I'm not holding my breath. The next stage will be to see how many of these parents have jobs to return to. No-one knows what the outcome will be at this stage, but if you opted for furlough, where do you stand, if and when, redundancies are considered? There's already wide-spread anecdotes of blatantly discriminatory dismissals taking place. If this could affect you, be ready. Some solicitors have attended on Zoom, what they thought was an HR meeting, for returning to work after maternity leave or a performance review and found that packages were presented, with short periods to accept. During that time, the individuals need to decide whether to accept it or turn to an employment lawyer. An incredibly stressful time but don't assume you have to accept the package, take advice first. Most employment lawyers will provide a short fee-free interview to assess your case.

The government suspended the requirement on businesses to record gender pay gap this year and half decided not to provide records. Is equality something that should be jettisoned in a crisis? For the economy as well as individual businesses to make a speedy recovery, it is important that women can produce an income. The solutions government should be looking for are related to childcare and care for the elderly, both commitments which are carried out by a far higher proportion of women than men. It's then that women can be economically productive, pay into their own pension and not require state support. This should be a win/win but is often overlooked, I would suggest because there simply aren't enough women at the decision-making table.

After the financial crisis of 2008, it was widely accepted that the lack of diversity of many Boards directly affected poor-decision making; an up-to-date example is the scandal of personal protective equipment for frontline (predominantly female) NHS workers, which was only available in sizes, suitable for the majority of men. Who was ultimately responsible for procurement? Yep, a man. If it had been a women possibly she would have overlooked ordering the men's PPE which demonstrates the need for including as many inputs as reasonable. I doubt anyone deliberately would exclude the other gender.

Saying we haven't got time to address equality and diversity in times of crisis simply leads to more problems. It is not a 'nice to have extra' but a fundamental part of how our society should function. If we have equality, diversity and inclusion in our decision-making bodies, problems and opportunities are

spotted far more readily than any single group, however composed, can possibly do. A plea to all our law employers – please remember that the best performing businesses are the most diverse.

There is a Parliamentary Committee reviewing the impact of COVID19 on various groups. One is entitled:

**Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact**

The deadline to respond is Monday 13 July. Please review the guidance on the link below

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/319/unequal-impact-coronavirus-and-the-gendered-economic-impact/>



*Coral Hill*

Chair, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, <https://www.cwhls.org.uk/>  
Twitter @corahill1

## **Racism has no place in our society : Statement by AWS London Committee**

As an organisation with gender equality at the heart, AWS London supports and encourages diversity and inclusion across the legal profession and in any other walk of life.

This is therefore why we cannot let recent events in the USA and the UK following the death of George Floyd go by without reinforcing the message that racism has no place in a just society.

Our hearts go out to anyone that has been affected either directly or indirectly by racism in any form. We at AWS London believe that to inform, educate and support organisations with justice and liberation at their core will go some way to hopefully redressing the imbalance in society.

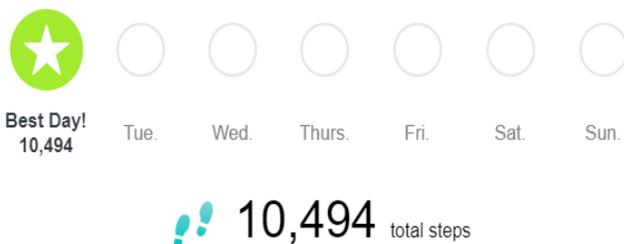
In addition, AWS London is planning a series of events and workshops designed to help our members become effective allies against racism and deconstruct and demystify concepts such as the move from merely “not being racist” to become “anti-racist” and unconscious bias. We hope to identify practical steps to achieve equality and diversity in the legal profession.

We would like to invite our members to help develop and shape our strategy by providing suggestions of formats for events, topics for workshops and any other experiences that, in these troubling times, people would like to share with us. If you would like to submit your thoughts, please email these to [AWSLondon1@gmail.com](mailto:AWSLondon1@gmail.com) . We at AWS London shall keep all information submitted confidential.

## 10,000 Steps for Justice

The annual London Legal Walk, which supports the London Legal Support Trust has been postponed due to Covid-19. Instead on 8 June a virtual walk took place with each team member undertaking 10,000 Steps for Justice individually.

Many people walk with their firm's team so AWSL had a small team of walkers, Elly May, Mine Toufeq, Paloma Rao and I.



*Fitbit tracker results from Elly May*

Fortunately, 8 June was a lovely sunny day. I walked in sleepy Somerset and took a few photos of landmarks along the way, including a typical thatched cottage and Cider Farm.

I am delighted to say that to date we have raised £445 with Gift Aid. These funds will provide grants to law centres and other advice agencies in London and the South East to enable them to provide free legal advice. Demand for legal advice has increased in lockdown with employment issues and domestic violence being two areas of need.

It's not too late to support us, if you are able to do so the link is below.

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-display/showROFundraiserPage?userUrl=AWSLondon20&pageUrl=9>

*Margaret Hatwood*

# And now for something completely different: Margaret's Morale-boosting Salted Caramel

*(Actually, Nigella's recipe from More Nigella Recipes)*



Photo: Jonathan Lovekin

## Ingredients

- 397 grams carnation caramel / dulce con leche
- 300ml double cream
- 1-2 teaspoons soft sea salt flakes – I use one
- 1-3 tablespoons bourbon or brandy – optional
- Pecan nuts for serving – optional
- This makes one litre

## Method

Scrape condensed milk into a bowl, add cream and one teasp salt and whisk until it thickens.

Taste to see if salty enough. When frozen it will taste less salt. I would recommend using one teaspoon and sprinkling a small amount of salt flakes on the ice cream if needed when you serve it, so you allow for individual taste. Add alcohol if using. I don't find it necessary. Fold by hand with a silicone spatula then place into freezer proof container and freeze for about 8 hours. It's fairly soft serve.

Enjoy!

# Book Review : Career Management for Lawyers

**Rachel Brushfield - The Law Society 2019**

Not another book by a Career Coach! Yes but this one is a bit different.

Despite the title the book is mainly aimed at solicitors and in my view more at women than men in that for example the majority of the Role Models featured are female and there is good and realistic coverage of part time/flexible working and returning after a maternity/caring break. That said the three day week is no longer an issue solely for women – it is increasingly embraced by male GP doctors for example.

Image CV preparation, willingness to drive forward and take risks (difficult for all lawyers who are trained to spot snags), resilience after rejection, developing your personal brand are all covered together with Questionnaires and pages on Action Planning.

But the most interesting chapter is the first one which addresses the sadly very high attrition rate for lawyers particularly but not exclusively female. Chapter 1 entitled “Lawyers and Career Change” actually acknowledges that those who give up legal practice have not failed but have instead discovered that legal professional training imbues transferable skills and strengths that are much in demand outside the law. Yes it may be time to consider eg moving from private practice into in-house or the Government Legal Service for example (although I am not sure that the traditional partnership model has gone completely “mouldy” as the author suggests) but there are other options.

Under “Useful Career Resources” what is available from The Law Society is recited and AWSL gets a mention as one of the recommended organisations for networking, learning from peers, mentoring etc.

Finally for the involuntary job seeker there is a paragraph on the LawCare Helpline which of course offers confidential advice on everything from redundancy to alcoholism. If I have a criticism it is that there is no mention of the Solicitors’ Assistance Scheme \* for those affected by regulatory issues or SBA The Solicitors’ Charity\*\* for (financially eligible) solicitors unable to work due to illness or needing assistance seeking a job.

At just 102 pages including Appendix and Index this a very useful, readable book and I highly recommend it.

*Christl Hughes*

\*<https://www.thesas.org.uk/>

\*\*<https://www.sba.org.uk/>

## Book Review : The Dragon Lady by Louisa Treger

Fed up with reading depressing headlines? Struggling through War & Peace or Ulysses? Try something different. I have recently read The Dragon Lady - by Louisa Treger

This book is an elegant account of the life of Virginia (Ginie) Courtauld, known as the Dragon Lady on account of the striking tattoo of a snake on her leg. Ginie is the wife of Stephen Courtauld, of the Courtaulds family who owned the eponymous textiles business. The novel focusses on Ginie and Stephen's time in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe in the 1950s. Although much of the novel is based on historical fact, this is a fictionalised account.



The Courtaulds were enlightened residents of Rhodesia and did much to improve the life of their workers establishing schools and other facilities, during a time that Rhodesia was segregated and deeply divided. The Courtaulds also founded the what is now Harare National Museum with Stephen Courtauld donating many fine works of art.

The book starts with a shooting and weaves back and forward through time and place, with several narrators, including Ginie. This device creates tension and helps keep the reader intrigued. I found the book immediately gripping and I was intrigued, not only to know who was responsible for the crime but also to discover what this oddly matched, but stylish couple had found in each other and what their personal story was.

Ginie was an unconventional woman at a time when women were still expected to play a submissive role in society.

*Margaret Hatwood*

## Book Review: “A Hidden Home in the Gwydyr Forest” by Janet Corke

Janet Corke qualified as a solicitor in 1960. She served her articles (training period) with Agnes Twiston Hughes, who was the first woman to qualify as a solicitor in Wales, and only the sixth to be admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of England and Wales.

An eccentric chain-smoker, who came top of both men and women in the 1923 Law Society Finals examinations, Agnes Hughes was a formidable figure in her home town of Conwy. Eventually, she became senior partner of the family firm of J W Hughes, founded by her father in 1904, and was also elected Mayor of Conwy. A photograph of her in her mayoral robes still hangs in Conwy Golf Club, where she was Captain. Some men were intimidated by her, although she was generally regarded as terse but fair. She joined the 1919 Club (the forerunner of our AWS) in 1949.

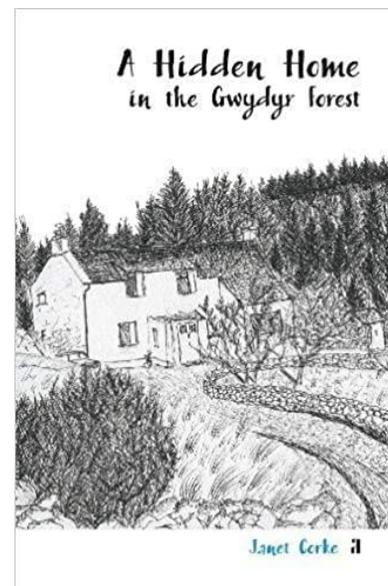
Janet’s first professional post after qualification was with a firm in Denbigh which entailed driving fifty miles every day through narrow lanes in a non-automatic, and probably unheated, Morris Minor. How to keep warm was one of the main subjects of Janet’s memoir of the years she spent in the 1950s and 1960s in the “hidden home” of her book’s title. This was a run-down cottage up a steep track in the Gwydyr Forest in North Wales, which Janet and her husband Charlie, a civil engineer, renovated in the 1950s and early 1960s during the post-World War II years of shortages and ‘make do and mend’.

The simplicity of Janet’s writing style makes it easy to empathise with the challenge of refurbishing such a remote cottage and the later difficulties of living there with no refrigerator, no washing machine and, for years, no electricity. She recounts, in often amusing detail, the struggles with open fires and guttering oil lamps and how when she was heavily pregnant, she hauled a second hand electricity generator over the hills in the boot of her prized, but suffering, Morris Minor.

Running parallel with Janet’s account of her domestic experiences are her descriptions of the very basic working conditions of the legal offices of the time. Despite all Agnes Hughes’ intellectual achievements and undoubted money-making ability her offices had only one cold tap and one toilet, both situated in the yard outside. As the most junior member of the firm, Janet’s first task every morning was to make tea for everyone, including the secretaries. After three months, she was taught to type and to operate a primitive copying machine. She worked with dusty parchment documents and deeds fetched down from the creaking attic, many of them handwritten in the cramped script of previous centuries.

The more I read this book the greater my admiration for Janet’s determination to make the cottage work even through all its’ unexpected difficulties, which ended in 1963, when Charlie’s employers posted him to Malta. “*But that,*” she said, “*is another story.*” I ended my reading of “A Hidden Home” hoping that Janet might be persuaded to write a second book dealing with the family adapting to life in Malta and her own grappling with the Maltese legal system.

*Elizabeth Cruickshank*



## **Book Review : Women’s Legal Landmarks – Celebrating the History of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland**

*A fantastic review of Women’s Legal Landmarks – Celebrating the History of Women and Law in the UK and Ireland (Edited by Erika Rackley and Rosemary Auchmuty) by Committee Member, Elaine O’Connor.*

It was difficult as a lawyer, and certainly a female lawyer, in 2019 to be oblivious to the fact that it was a somewhat landmark year for women in law. 2019 marked 100 years since the passing of the Sex Disqualification Removal Act 1919 and thus was the centenary celebration of females being legally permitted to become jurors, magistrates, solicitors and barristers. The ‘big day’ was 23 December 2019 and the fact that this was common knowledge is largely due to the First 100 years Project, the national campaign to mark the anniversary which is managed by inspirational charity, Spark21, and led by Dana Denis-Smith. The initial campaign was launched by Dana’s company, Obelisk Legal Support Solutions in 2015 and runs until 2020. Obelisk uses a pioneering outsourcing working model where lawyers work remotely for clients. This allows flexible working solutions for men and women who may previously have had to take time out of their careers for family reasons.

2019 was a great year for AWS London, and we were lucky enough to have Dana attend our event in Parliament on 13 May 2019 where, with 50:50 Parliament, we celebrated women in law and politics with a somewhat esteemed panel. Along with Dana, we were lucky enough to have in attendance on the panel, the Hon. Mrs Justice Amanda Yip DBE, the Hon. Mrs Justice Clare Moulder DBE, Frances Scott of 50:50, Clare Kelly, a former equity partner at Anthony Gold Solicitors and now Chambers Director at 5 Pump Court, Sarah Jones MP, Antoinette Sandbach MP, Wera Hobhouse MP, Mims Davies MP and Baroness Glenys Thornton. It was a privilege to see these high-profile ladies openly discussing their personal trials and tribulations in playing an integral part in our modern democracy.

We have, in 2018, already celebrated 100 years of the Representation of the People Act 1918 which gave women the (limited) right to vote. I was lucky enough to attend an event late in 2018, organised by the Fawcett Society, where Lady Hale gave an awe-inspiring speech about the courage of women in fighting for equality in the vote, education, professional life and equal pay.

I have therefore been fortunate to be privy to several “Women’s Legal Landmarks” recently which segues neatly into the narrative of this piece.

To follow the special centenary edition of the AWS London newsletter, I was tasked with reviewing the tome at the beginning of this page which I will simply refer to as WLL in the interests of reducing repetition and word count. On that point I must admit that, when I received the book, I was a little perturbed about the task ahead given its hefty weight and abundance of pages. However, on reading the acknowledgment by the editors, I am actually amazed that this account is not the size

of the human genome library at the Wellcome Collection. WLL took five years to coordinate, engaged more than 100 participants and therefore was a mammoth operation to put together. This included a series of workshops to develop the book's structure and thematic grouping as well as training events to equip and examine academic research.

This is therefore not a quick or unchallenging read, but for the reasons explained below, is an essential one.

The foreword by Helena Kennedy begins by explaining that this is the story of the law and the legal profession from the perspective of women and how, “unless a heroine, villain or victim”, women traditionally went unmentioned in historical scholarship of the law. Helena is a QC practising from Doughty Chambers, Chair of the Human Genetics Commission, a member of the World Bank Institute's External Advisory Council, on the board of the British Museum and is also a broadcaster and Labour member of the House of Lords. She holds nothing back in retelling how, when called to the Bar in 1972, only seven percent of barristers were women and many chambers were unashamed to declare that they only accepted males. Female applicants for pupillage would be asked if they were planning to get married and, notwithstanding the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, when challenged, Heads of Chambers would say: “Women? We've got one.”

We have used the word “celebration” many times in 2019 (and this piece already) and progress is acknowledged by Helena. However, her frank description of the accounts to follow set the tone for the book excellently. What we are “celebrating” is the removal of injustice, incredible discrimination, indignities and outright misogyny. Helena states that WLL is “a model of feminist legal history. It should make us both proud and angry.”

Although we often hang our exultant jackets on the coat hooks of legislative reform and innovative case decisions, WLL considers the important role performed by feminists in achieving legal change. Lest we forget, the actual changes were often resisted and opposed and when finally enacted, were done so in a grudging fashion by “generous men in long wigs”.

The themes of the book are further developed by the editors in the introduction. When calling for expressions of interest, the only criteria were that the landmark – be it a case, statute, event or monument – be from the UK or Ireland and “be significant for feminists”. As the project developed, an additional category of ‘first women’ was introduced to include pivotal moments where roles and achievements were first attained by women. This has resulted in a collection that is varied, holistic and extremely eclectic. No apology is given for the predominance of landmarks associated with property, money and body. The intention was not to produce an historic encyclopaedia as the editors explain, “as feminist scholars we work and write on issues that matter most to women, the most basic denials”.

The landmarks themselves each begin with summary of landmark and then continue with context and detail before illustrating what happened next and the significance for women.

Our journey begins with a Welsh prince, Hywel ap Cadwell (known as Hywel Dda or “Hywel the Good”) who on or around the year 940, codified existing laws in Wales and recognised the rights of women in doing so. Although women and men were certainly not treated equally, Hywel's laws recognised women not as chattels but as individuals with their own freedoms and responsibilities.

We then travel between books (A vindication of the Rights of Women, Mary Woolstonecraft, 1792), plays (A Pageant of Great Women, Cicely Hamilton, 1909-12), actions (Match Women's Strike, 1888), firsts (Carrie Morrison, First Women Solicitor, 1922), cases (Unmarried woman granted equitable share of property, Grant v Edwards, 1986), Acts of Parliament (Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 – yes you read that right, **1985**) and academic landmarks such as the publishing of the first Feminist Legal Studies Journal in 1993.

Although the structure of the landmarks themselves is clearly laid out in WLL, there are a number of pervasive themes throughout the book from equality, justice, representation in the legal profession and gradual elevation to the higher judiciary. Access not only to legal and political representation but to money, property and health services are explored as well, as is the use and abuse of the law to control and discipline women. On a more positive note, the importance of feminist organisations, networks and campaigns is lamented and championed, and the Association of Women Solicitors is given a place in the landmark list at number 22, for which we are extremely honoured.

Aside from being an exceptional educational history book, WLL does a lot more. In producing WLL, the editors discovered that in the UK and Ireland, there is little in the way of feminist legal history as opposed to the well-established feminist treatment of history per se. WLL has political as well as academic aspirations to identify women's voices, show how feminist activity has caused seismic shift (rather than being the result of social and institutional change), and challenge the inference that just because progress has been made, there is sufficient parity with regards to gender. There is clearly a long way still to go.

I anticipate that anyone reading WLL will come away incredibly proud, certainly angry, definitely grateful and I hope, inspired.

*Elaine O'Connor*

# Association of Women Solicitors London Newsletter



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[@AWSLondon](https://twitter.com/AWSLondon)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**Virtual Gong Meditation**

6:00pm via Zoom



Thank you for understanding that most of our annual events have had to be cancelled this year. We are working hard on finding alternative events around wellbeing which our members can par-take in online.

Remember... AWS London members get discounted or even FREE tickets for most events, plus priority booking for our special events. If you would like to join, download and complete the application form by clicking [HERE](#), visiting [www.awslondon.co.uk](http://www.awslondon.co.uk) or contacting us by email at [awslondon1@gmail.com](mailto:awslondon1@gmail.com).

We currently have capacity to join our wonderful  
AWSL Committee!

2018 was a momentous year of change for  
AWSL, we went through many transitions to  
digitise and modernise AWSL. Naturally, the time  
came for a few of our dear long-time Committee  
members to take a step down.

*If you would like to find out more about being part  
of the AWSL Committee, please email our Chair,  
Amy Wedgewood on [awslondon1@gmail.com](mailto:awslondon1@gmail.com)  
and she will be delighted to give you more details.*

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