

# Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN



Issue Eight  
November/December 2014

# Her Edit

Issue Eight  
November/December 2014

The Work Issue

[editor@heredit.com](mailto:editor@heredit.com) [www.heredit.com](http://www.heredit.com)

@her\_edit

editor: Jayne Phenton

Ann Clark

Allison Lindsay

contributors

Dame Margaret Anstee

Evy Barry

Shazia Mirza

Almuth McDowall

thank you

Sue Christoforou

Arabella Dorman

Neil Evans

Hannah Pearlman

Front cover picture

©Robert Michael Schuster

©Her Edit



## Welcome to Her Edit

It has always seemed to me that there is something paradoxical about the issue of women and work. A century ago the opportunity to work outside of the home seemed to offer the possibility of independence and freedom, but the reality of unequal pay, discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace means it has perhaps not quite delivered the emancipation we might have hoped for.

According to the Office of National Statistics women now make up 46 per cent of the workforce, but one in four of us are on low pay. We're working harder than ever, but it would take a woman an extra 14 years to earn the same amount as her male counterpart over a life time.

The reality may be salutary, but for this issue we are all about celebrating the fabulous careers women can and do have and the wonderful things they achieve. If the toad work squats on your life, then I hope the sheer joy and satisfaction these women derive from the work they do will be an inspiration.

How did you get your dream job? Do tell us on our comment page on the website [www.heredit.com](http://www.heredit.com)

# Her Issue Eight

2 The Editor

5 The War Artist  
Arabella Dorman finds humanity in Afghanistan

13 The Peace Keeper  
Dame Margaret Anstee talks about her legendary and unique career

19 The Comedian  
Heard the one about the female Muslim standup? The fabulous Shazia Mirza

23 The Film Maker  
Evy Barry sees the world through a lens

27 The Juggler  
Almuth McDowall on balancing work and life

29 The Change Maker  
Allison Lindsay on why a change of career can be a life change

33 The Engineer  
Young Woman Engineer of the Year nominee Hannah Pearlman

35 Her Agenda

23



5



19



# This is war baby

Arabella Dorman has an international reputation as a portrait painter and a war artist. She spoke to Her Edit about the motivation behind her work and her extraordinary experiences.

IMAGES

Previous page: THE EXTRACTION, oil on canvas, 2013  
Opposite: DISPLACED, oil on canvas, 2013



The 18th century portrait painter Henry Raeburn might not be the most obvious influence on a contemporary woman artist, but the strength, drama and affection which characterise the Scottish artist's work, is evident in the paintings of Arabella Dorman.

A work by Raeburn dominates a wall of her studio casting a paternal eye over the gloriously archetypal tools and detritus which populate her workspace on the north side of the Thames, a short walk across the river from where she lives in South London.

Dorman has sustained a successful career as a portrait painter and admits that the paid-for commissions have allowed her the freedom and means to continue her practice. However, it is her belief that artists are 'story tellers' and that the process of painting someone's likeness can extract the essence of their history and personality, which gives substance to her images beyond the self-aggrandisement of those who can afford to be immortalised.

Now in her thirties with a young family, Arabella Dorman began her career as an artist rejecting the prevailing modernist principles at art school and studying

philosophy and English instead. She went on to study a more traditional painting practice in Florence, inspired by Raeburn and the spirit of enlightenment.

What most obviously distinguishes Dorman from the conventional mediocrity of being a 'portrait painter' is the large body of work she has created as a war artist in Iraq and Afghanistan and most particularly how she acknowledges and embraces the legacy of artists such as Lady Elizabeth Butler.

She was invited to Iraq in 2006, where she travelled for a month, and then to join the same regiment again in 2009. While appreciative of the risks attached, Arabella says she always felt drawn to conflict as a subject.

'Nowhere is more compelling than the subject and the theatre [of war]. There is the whole range of what humans are capable of - professionalism, heroism - and it had been in my psyche for a long time. I jumped at the chance.'

Clearly there are risks attached to being in an area of conflict, but Arabella says her great fear was that she might 'be a burden', although she was described by her military hosts as the 'most un-needed guest'.

As a woman, she clearly feels a responsibility to bring a different perspective and much of her work depicts girls, women, market places and the realities of a nervous soldier having a cigarette before a dangerous manoeuvre.

'The adventure wasn't so much the thrill, as the fascination of seeing something from the inside. It re-kilters your whole appreciation of life.'

The exhibition of the work she made consequently was a sell-out success, but the mark of achievement for Dorman was a little deeper.

She was overwhelmed by the public response, receiving thousands of appreciative emails from people connected with the forces or who had lost someone. She was already planning her trip to Afghanistan.

It seems that Afghanistan was not just the backdrop to the theatre of war for Dorman, but she developed a genuine and profound love of the country and its people. She connected with local people by doing quick portrait sketches to explain why she was there and this was clearly a strategy that allowed her to develop meaningful experiences and relationships.



IMAGES

Above: PATROLLING, NAD-E-ALI, oil on canvas, 2013

Overleaf: ZAKIA, charcoal, 2013

## Is there a portrait commission she would refuse? 'Tony Blair.'

'It is the most extraordinary country of contradiction – so gentle, cultured and beautiful, as it is savage and wild.'

She was so enchanted that she and her husband returned the following year as independent travellers, staying with Afghan families.

Last year she spent time with four or five different regiments around Helmand and Lashkar Gah. These trips form the subject matter of her latest exhibition opening this month.

In Lashkar Gah she met female Afghan police, women whose lives are threatened on a daily basis on account of the patriarchal and religious mores under which they live. Arabella told me that one woman, who she had sketched, had since been shot and killed. Dorman's love of Afghanistan and its people is palpable as she speaks, and is profoundly evident in her paintings.

She recognises she is part of a lineage including Manet, Velasquez and Goya – perhaps most particularly Lady Elizabeth Butler – and keenly feels a responsibility to tell the stories of the people she feels privileged to encounter.

'You're one link in the chain and you build on that with what you do. You're staying with your subject and witness the consequences of conflict and the human stories that lie underneath. I'm not a thrill-seeker, but I'm motivated to represent something contemporary. It's a sense of duty.'

Whilst she may not be a thrill seeker, Arabella's career has put her in some very hostile situations.

She recalls attending a tribal elder's meeting where about a third of the party were Taliban and she was the only woman present, but she continued sketching.

Is there a portrait commission she would refuse?  
'Tony Blair.'

It seems to me that Arabella doesn't seek to address the politics of gender or religion or power, but is really interested in the strengths and vulnerabilities of the human character. That may be heightened or accentuated by the extraordinary situation of war, but people's fears and hopes are probably the same and not so far removed from the characters observed by Raeburn.

Arabella tells me she has always wanted to be an artist.

'I can't imagine anything else. It gives me the greatest joy to stand on a mountain with a blank canvas or in my studio. Every single human being has their story. You unwrap and unpack the person and try to get below the surface. I can't wait to wake up every morning.'

Arabella's latest exhibition, *Before the Dawn*, is at La Galleria Pall Mall in London from 5-15 November. It is sponsored by Afghan entrepreneur and patron, Mirwais Alizai, and ten per cent of all painting sales will be donated to the charities *Walking With The Wounded* and *Afghanaid*.

For more information visit  
[www.arabelladorman.com](http://www.arabelladorman.com)



# Margaret Anstee



DAME MARGARET JOAN ANSTEE  
by Julia Hedgecoe  
bromide print, 4 July 1988

©JuliaHedgecoe/National Portrait Gallery, London  
with kind permission of the National Portrait Gallery,  
London

@JuliaHedgecoe



# Never learn to type

Dame Margaret Anstee served at the United Nations for over four decades until 1993. She was the first woman to rise to the rank of Under-Secretary-General and to head a UN peacekeeping mission.

She was in Kuwait after the first Gulf War, headed peace talks in Angola and rescued people from Pinochet's brutal coup in Chile.

She continues to write and lecture on the UN and has written about her adventures in her autobiography, *Never Learn to Type*.

have had an adventurous life and a very lucky one. Who would have thought that a girl growing up in a working-class family in a country village would realise her dreams of travelling all over the world, living and working in over a dozen countries and visiting 140 more? Or that she would be the first woman to occupy senior posts in the United Nations that had previously been an exclusively male domain,

eventually becoming the first female Under-Secretary-General, then the post second to that of the Secretary-General, and later the first woman to lead a UN military peacekeeping mission?

I certainly needed luck to do that, but luck alone is not enough. You also have to work exceedingly hard and be ready to take on new challenges and accept risks. Recently I came across a most apt saying by Eleanor Roosevelt:

'Do what you think you cannot do.'

My mother brought me up on a more earthy motto:

'Never say your mother had a jibber.'

That is a saying from the Welsh Marches, where she was born, and means 'a recalcitrant horse that jibs at a fence or refuses to carry a heavy load'. That message has remained with me all my life and

meant that I constantly charged over fences, when it might have been better to go around them, and often fell into the water on the other side.

I went first to the village school, where we were told that, as country children, we were not as bright as our urban counterparts nor, as girls, could we hope to compete with boys. Yet I won scholarships to grammar school and to Cambridge University and then, after an academic post at Queen's University, Belfast, I passed the examination to join the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Service as one of the first tiny group of women who were at last permitted to apply. I did so almost as a joke, thinking that success was out of my grasp. It was a good example of Mrs. Roosevelt's precept.

There is still discrimination today, but it is perhaps more oblique than that faced by my generation when we were young: then, for instance, women could not be members of Cambridge University and received a titular degree through the post rather than the glamour of a graduation ceremony at the Senate House. In the Foreign Office we were paid

less than male colleagues at the same level and had to resign on marriage, while an unwritten law ensured that no woman diplomat could be sent to Latin America.

One of the most alarming things was to find myself as the only woman in an organisation staffed exclusively by men, all ready to pass judgment. In those early days in the Foreign Office we, the first women to enter those august portals, were treated

**'We were paid less than male colleagues at the same level ...and had to resign on marriage'**

either with patronising kindness and ill-disguised surprise that we could actually do the work, or by outright hostility.

When, as an international field officer of the UN, I first attended a conference of my colleagues in Latin America, the first one I met immediately tried to dictate a letter to me and looked exceedingly unimpressed when I said I could neither take

shorthand nor type. What else was a woman good for? Even when I was very senior, it was often assumed that I was either the secretary or the wife of one of the male members of my staff. On two occasions I was publicly mistaken for the wife of the then Secretary-General, errors that were almost career threatening!

If you are a woman trying to break through the glass ceiling you must be ready to take anything on and not expect to be offered soft options because of your gender. I always adhered to the oath I had sworn on joining the UN: that I would accept any mission the Secretary General wanted me to do. Consequently I served in many remote places where conditions were difficult and sometimes dangerous and where men were often reluctant to go. The advantage of this was that, if you did well, then your abilities would be recognised and further chances would open up.

Through a series of unexpected events I found myself in charge of one of the UN's largest operational programs in Latin America when I was still under 30. This was in Colombia, a very macho country then, where women did not yet

have the vote. The UN mission was composed almost entirely of men much older and more experienced than me. I remember trembling all over as I went back to the office after seeing off my departing boss at the airport.

I had to prove myself to be not only as good as a man would have been in the post, but probably better. Later in life, when in charge of large UN departments, I did my best to increase the number of women in professional posts. Apart from the customary bureaucratic obstacles, my major frustration was the low opinion women had of themselves and their potential. Many would go to great lengths to persuade me that they were not qualified for the post for which I was encouraging them to apply, whereas male staff members, whom I knew to be less able, would readily expatiate on their supposedly outstanding suitability for that position.

I am not of course, suggesting that you should be excessively self-confident. I had a horror of the few women I encountered who insisted that they should be preferred for a job simply because of their gender. I always stressed that their professional record must be the deciding factor.

Of course, being as good as a man professionally does not mean behaving as a man would do. As women we should have something different to contribute, especially as regards management style, or in areas such as mediation and diplomacy.

From this flows a comment that might seem superficial. There is no need to be less feminine in

order to compete with men in today's world. There are many disadvantages in being a woman, so we should make the most of the advantages – without going to excess, obviously. Always try to look your best. I found this to be helpful, not simply because of the impression given to the audience and to other colleagues, but also because it gave a psychological boost to my own self-confidence, especially during public speaking in the early days when I had little experience of performing to a large audience.

Sexual harassment has always been with us, but in my young days it was hushed up, and there was no ombudsman or official body to which one could complain. I suffered many instances of unwanted

**'a military dictator, flushed with the success of his coup and too many libations, fell asleep on my shoulder.'**

approaches, but had to deal with them on my own as best I could. The most dramatic, and perhaps the funniest, occurred when a military dictator, flushed with the success of his coup and too many celebratory libations, fell asleep on my shoulder, murmuring sweet nothings, when we were inaugurating a new project in the jungle. It was a worrying moment. It had been rumoured that the new government was about to declare me persona non grata and suddenly I was persona too grata! It was hard to know which was

worse. Fortunately there were no subsequent repercussions. It is imperative to develop a thick skin, for your gender will always make you vulnerable and be used against you in any criticism of your work. In Angola, the leader of the rebel movement used to call me 'mother' in the run-up to the elections. When he lost his presidential bid, in elections that I had declared to be free and fair, he changed his tone, declaring that I was a smuggler of diamonds and mercury, in receipt of bribes from the government and, in addition, an 'international prostitute'. In short order I went from mother to prostitute. A worse sting was in the tail for he added 'and a stray bullet is going to find her'. At the same time the government was spreading rumours that I was the lover of several leading figures on the rebel side of the conflict. On hearing this my personal assistant rolled her eyes and asked: 'How do you find the time?'

Joke as one might, these calumnies can be hurtful but the only thing you can do is try to ignore them. Over the long haul, it is physical and moral stamina, as well as unrelenting perseverance, that will keep you afloat, despite the inevitable setbacks that will sometimes block your way.

Does this sound too great a challenge? On the contrary, it is the very challenge that makes the striving all worthwhile. And there can be no greater satisfaction than knowing that one has planted another flag along the road to the full emancipation of women.



## IMAGES

Above: Dame Margaret addresses UNA-UK's UN Forum in 2012

Right: A tense moment during Angolan elections in 1998



Not for comedians

Shazia Mirza is an award-winning stand-up comedian. She tours internationally and will be familiar from her many television appearances including BBC's Have I Got News for You.

She was named as one of the most influential Muslim women in Britain in the inaugural Muslim Women Power List along with Baroness Warsi and news anchor Mishal Husain. Inexplicably she writes a weekly column in the Guardian, Diary of a Disappointing Daughter.



@MartinTwomey

I never planned to be a stand-up comedian. I planned to go to space and make films with Robert De Niro, but I never planned to tell jokes in public for money.

I said, 'Yes.'

'You get paid for that? Full time?'

I used to be a science teacher in an East End comprehensive school and that was my training for becoming a comedian. It was rough. No-one has ever stood up since and shouted,

He said, 'I've never seen a comedienne as pretty as you before. You're not fat, or a lesbian I presume?'

'Yes'

'Oh so it's your job. Can you do that? I mean do women do that now?'

'God this is boring, when are you leaving Miss?'

**'I'm so relieved when people stop me in the street and think I'm that news reader off Channel 4.'**

I have had many insults over the years from other comics, promoters, audiences, reviewers and my parents.

I used to turn up to comedy clubs and be refused entry because they didn't believe I was a comedian - they thought I was trying to get into the club for free.

I performed at a wedding last week. I turned up and said to the toastmaster, 'I'm the comedian'.

The week before I performed at a medical school reunion. I sat next

to a woman who said, 'How come you're here tonight?'

At one club the doorman showed me to the broom cupboard - he thought I was the cleaner.

He said, 'What you? You're the comedienne?'

I said, 'I'm the comedian'

I always get nervous when people use the term 'comedienne'; I just know they're still in 1942.

'Is that your job?'

Although I didn't plan to do stand up, now that I'm doing it, I realise there is nothing else I'd rather be doing.

'Yes'

It is difficult, tiring, draining, and hard to keep going, but if you really love it you'll always find ways to carry on. It is not the kind of thing you can do to pass the time till you find a rich husband - you'd never last.

'I saw your daughter on TV doing comedy.'

'Oh you don't look funny, you don't do proper stand up do you? It's more sketches. Do you get paid for that? What's your proper job? Why do you do that?'

Every comic faces challenges, but that's part of the adventure. My parents wanted me to be something respectable and to get married.

My mum would say, 'Oh yes that's just a hobby, she's really a biochemist you know. She's got a degree and a masters'.

None of it matters, as I love my job and when it's going well, everyone's laughing, all the gags are hitting, it feels like you're flying and nothing comes close to that high, certainly no biochemistry degree and no masters.

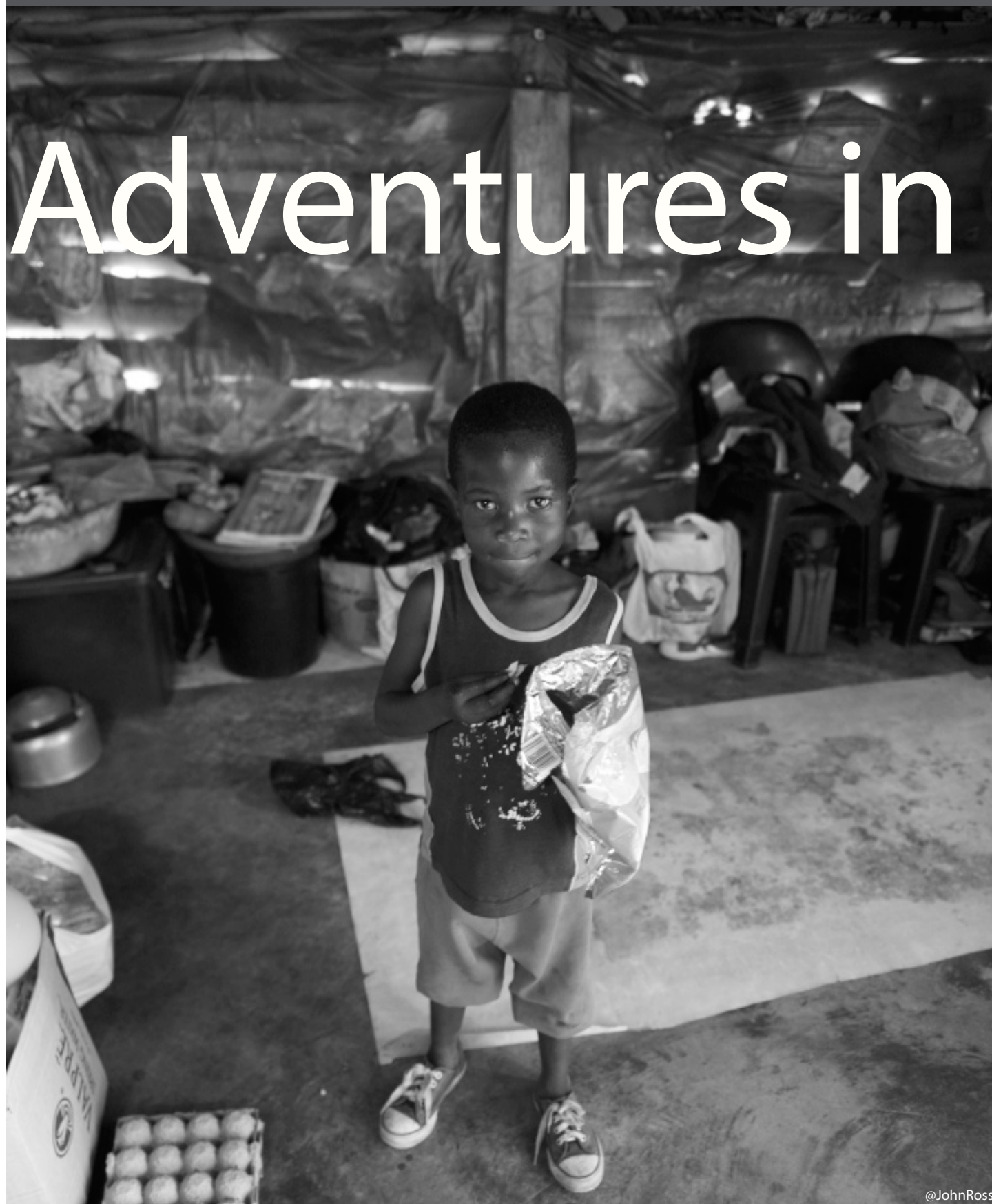
They could never bring themselves to tell people what I did. If someone stopped my mum in the street and said,

My challenge is just to be accepted as a comedian. I never tell people what I do, unless they recognise me, and even then I deny it's me. I'm so relieved when people stop me in the street and think I'm that newsreader off Channel 4.

I've always had people say to me,

More about Shazia at [www.shaziamirza.com](http://www.shaziamirza.com), follow her on twitter @shaziamirza1 or watch her on [youtube](https://www.youtube.com)

# Adventures in motion pictures



Evy Barry is a film producer and director. Her company Evy Films has created award-nominated documentaries such as 'Torso in the Thames' for Channel 4 and 'The Boy with a Tumour for a Face' for Five.

Evy shares with us the joy of her job and why she's keen to try new things.

#### IMAGES

Left: Tsheppo who Evy filmed in South Africa

Overleaf, page 30  
Above: filming with AIDS orphans in South Africa  
Below: Evy editing

'I remember thinking how ridiculous I must have looked, but I got the shot!'

Being in film or television isn't a job, it's a lifestyle. You won't find anyone doing it because they think they are going to earn a fortune; the hours are long, you can be away from home for long stretches and the pay is never going to buy you that mansion in the country. No – you do it because you love it.

It's a great privilege in many ways because it's the kind of job where you get to meet people you would never ordinarily meet and go to places you would never go.

I've been making documentaries for ten years and during that time I have found myself in some strange places. For instance, I found myself once standing in a muti market in Johannesburg looking at a pair of monkey hands for sale (I wasn't buying). Or on another occasion I watched a juju priest chanting so wildly he made the candles flicker as he supposedly summoned some capricious spirit from the other world.

I've been in the modest living room of a special needs teacher as she collapsed on the floor when her son was arrested for murder. I spent hours once desperate for the loo, but unable to leave a barn because I was filming a cow giving

birth. There was the time I wanted a shot while filming a joust so I galloped down the middle of the arena with my camera in front of a crowd of a good few hundred people. I remember thinking how ridiculous I must have looked, but I got the shot!

I went to Nigeria and saw hawkers selling dead rats on a string by the roadside – don't ask me why. I guess you cook them.

I've filmed AIDS orphans in the remotest of villages in Limpopo Province in South Africa. It broke my heart when I watched a boy of ten wash his little brother with water from a rusting bowl and then dress him in his school uniform. There are so many moments like that I could mention - and I do feel so lucky to have experienced them.

The scene in Blade Runner when replicant, Roy Batty, played by Rutger Hauer, dies, is playing through my head. He says to Harrison Ford:

'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain.'

Not that I'm planning on dropping off my mortal coil any time soon, but that is how I want to have lived my life – to have seen things you people wouldn't believe. I've always said I don't want to get to 70 and say I wish I had done that. So far so good!

Just recently I started writing short dramas. It's something I never thought I would be able to do, but the process of creating a world rather than pursuing the most interesting parts of the real one rather appeals.

I am just finishing Winged Warriors now. They do say never work with children or animals; well - I'm not sure what possessed me, but I did. The story is about the remnants of a British Army platoon which reaches the enemy trenches in World War One and are then forced to rely on their messenger pigeons to survive.

And what after that? I'll let you know, but I am currently writing a feature film.

Follow @evvyfilms or visit www.evvyfilms.co.uk

Read more about Winged Warriors on www.facebook.com/Warriorwingsofwar or follow @WarriorsWings



@JohnRoss

@JohnRoss

# Balancing act

Almuth McDowall knows a thing or two about the juggling act, combining academic posts at City University and Birkbeck University of London with directing her own consultancy Work-Life Consulting Ltd. She regularly publishes in the academic and practitioner press. She lives in London with her husband and three daughters.

I grew up with parents who both worked fulltime as they ran their own business, my dad coming up with ever-new business ventures and my mother helping him to make them happen.

So when we had our three girls over a period of five years, it never once occurred to me that I would stay at home and 'just be a mum' for a while.

There is of course no denying that my choices brought their challenges. When I had my first daughter, Nimue, I was still studying for my PhD, and my very meagre bursary paid for the childminder, but not for much more.

Daughter number two was easier to juggle, as by then my income had increased and I had a wonderful boss who understood all about flexible working.

When I was pregnant with daughter number three I moved jobs and now had a lengthy commute by train and bicycle. Things were not all plain sailing, as I suffered from pre-eclampsia and spent twelve weeks in hospital

due to severe bleeding, meaning that my maternity leave had to start early.

I vividly remember giving a telephone interview to the BBC just after having given birth in the hospital, as a piece of research I had done was all over the media. As little Annalia had to be delivered early due to the complications, she would not feed properly for months to come. This meant I often had to sneak off early from work, and then put in a late night shift, in order to help feed her.

So, am I a work-life balance researcher because I have issues with work-life balance? There is no doubt that being a working mother has given me deep insight into how tricky the juggling act is on some days, but equally just how rewarding it can be - of course the rewards were emotional rather than financial.

Hence I don't regret my decisions, as they were also about 'holding a job open', and quite frankly keeping me sane.

But work-life balance is not just for working parents, it should

be a fundamental right for every human being. I do remember tricky, and sometimes funny situations, such as giving a lecture to a huge group of undergraduates with a baby on my arm, as the childminder had called in sick.

As my baby was desperately cute, all hair and eyes (look, I can say this, I am her mum!), this was a great ice breaker. So bringing in a baby was an acceptable thing to do in my context, but would it be just as acceptable to rush off home to look after an elderly parent with dementia?

Many of us are part of the 'sandwich generation', with dual caring responsibilities and the voices of relatives as carers often remain unheard on the topic.

One way of facilitating work-life balance for working individuals is through more flexible work options such as working part time, flexitime, job sharing, hour-banking and so on.

Since June 2014, all employees have a right to request flexible working if they have been with the same employer for at least

half a year. We do know, however, that men are less likely to avail themselves of such options than women, so there is still writing on the wall that such options are a 'women's issue' alone.

These notions have to change and we have to fundamentally rethink work-life balance if we want to make it work. Any policies should be equitable and uptake monitored and encouraged. But employers and policy makers can only do so much; we also have to take responsibility for our own actions.

It is all too tempting to work anytime and anywhere and as a result we neglect to 'switch off' and have down time.

In preparation for a recent seminar which I organised with my friend, senior colleague and mentor, Gail, we asked all delegates to do a 'digital detox' where they would abstain from using their tablets, phones, laptops for just one day a week. Oh, the incredulity! "No, I can't do that", "oh, I just had some sneaky peeks", "who is giving me the rules for how to do this?"

Very few people actually managed

our 'self experiment', and we had a very lively discussion. How is it that we are all 'nomophobics' who prefer to continue working than taking breaks and doing something different.

This, I believe, is a work-life challenge which we have not yet fully grasped as technology is affecting our lives. Watching my three daughters not only at play, but also at homework time, they are now such regular users of technology that the mere concept of switching off seems alien to them.

On the one hand, this is a good thing as they learn and connect with others differently.

On the other hand, I can also see the dangers - you try having a nice conversation over dinner with a twelve year old who is texting under the kitchen table! So, where do you stand - are you a digital detoxer, or a nomophobic?

Follow Almuth @almuth.mcdowall



@AlmuthMcDowall

# Changing tracks

Five years ago, Her Edit co-founder Allison Lindsay was a successful conference director running events for organisations in the energy and financial industries. Frustrated in her career, she left her job and did a masters degree in psychology. She is now a business psychologist for an international public relations company. Allison tells us how she made her change and shares what she learned.

**A**bout five years ago I decided I wanted to change, not just my job, but my whole career. It's a common enough aspiration, but not one everybody achieves. I'm glad I am one of those who managed it successfully.

I am now in a different role, in a different field and finally feel as though I am doing something worthwhile and learning something new every day.

Plenty of people change careers for various reasons and there is a growing trend of people being motivated by wanting to get something more meaningful from their nine to five. Certainly for me, it was about getting my life back.

On the surface it sounded glamorous, organising large-scale conferences around the world which involved lots of travel and staying in five-star hotels.

In reality, it meant I spent a lot of time working in airport lounges, often alone and, although I went to places I would never otherwise have had the chance to see and met some incredibly interesting people along the way, I had no time to do things at home

that I wanted to. I barely saw my family and my friends thought I was permanently 'in China'.

When I was back in the UK, I spent the entire time rushing around trying to 'catch up' with people and my house felt more like a hotel than a home because I was there so seldom.

Since changing jobs I have changed so many other aspects of my life. Now I have the time and energy to make a commitment to something other than work, I've taken up running, become a Samaritan and co-founded Her Edit - all those things that I simply never had the time or opportunity to do whilst I was constantly on the road.

I also enjoy coaching others who are questioning their own careers – whether they are looking to make a complete change, or simply to get more satisfaction out of doing something they already love.

Here are a few of the things I've learned along the way which might help if you're thinking of a change in direction.



IMAGES

Above: An early Her Edit meeting with Sue Christoforou



**IT'S HARDER AND TAKES LONGER THAN YOU THINK** But I promise it is completely worth it. Inevitably you're likely to be moving from a senior job in one industry to a more junior role in your now chosen field. I've had my fair share of frustration in jobs shortly after I'd qualified, when I felt my considerable experience and broad range of skills were not being recognised.

It's a challenge to retrain and yet bring with you the skills and interests from your original career. It takes some time and effort to move back up the ladder again (hopefully more quickly the second time around!), but I'd spent far too many hours sitting on planes repeating the mantra, 'I have to get out of this job' not to have followed it through.

**GET A COACH** Being able to talk through your options with an independent third party is invaluable. It may not change the outcome of your decision but, in my case at least, it meant that I was so much more confident in pressing ahead, knowing that I was really sure about the choice of new direction I had made.

**TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR PLANS** Once I started talking to people about what I wanted to do, it was extraordinary how many people casually said to me, 'Oh I think I know someone who does something like that'. I got at least six introductions in that way and yet when I started thinking about business psychology as a career option I didn't know anyone who worked in the field at all.

Once you have been introduced, talk to your new connections. It was so useful to get a picture of what my new career might entail from people already doing it. And it is surprising how willing people are to give up their time and talk to you, I never expected that!

**CHOOSE YOUR COURSE CAREFULLY** If you are going for an academic qualification to help you move into your chosen new field, then remember you are interviewing them too. Once I had decided I was going to do a masters, I narrowed down my possible options in terms of geography and then called up each university and arranged to go and meet the person running each course. It was a great investment of time and energy as I would have

found it much harder to make the choice between them without the insight this gave me.

It also allowed me to 'weed out' the weaker courses – if a tutor will not give you a straight answer to a question then you know you are on to a loser. On one occasion I had to ask the same question four times before I got an answer. It was a simple question, 'how many people are there on the course?' It turned out there were three, which I am guessing is why it was so hard to get a direct answer!

**MAKE IT A CALCULATED RISK** You can never have 100% of the answers and trusting your instinct is critical, but weigh up all your options, and get yourself a back-up plan - or even two. Mine was to rent out the spare rooms to lodgers to help pay the mortgage, and if I had to, then to take on some freelance work in my old industry. I only did this

once, for two weeks, whilst I was writing up my dissertation – and then only because the job fell into my lap - but I knew I always had that option. This way you are giving yourself all the chances you can to succeed.

**LEAVE YOUR OLD JOB/INDUSTRY ON GOOD TERMS** My current boss's sister works at my old company and he got her to use her network there to get an

additional off-the-record reference for me. I didn't find out about this until my first day in the job! You simply never know how connections will work. Going off in a dramatic flurry of 'I never have to work in this industry again so let me tell you exactly what I think of you', may be satisfying at the time, but could have untold consequences further down the line.

I think that one of the best things about my career change though, apart from doing something that I love every day, is how empowering it is. Knowing that I have successfully made one major change, I realise how much easier it would be to do it again. It could be making the move to a new country or finding a new specialist niche within my chosen industry, but I now have the confidence of knowing I've done it once, so if I find something else I think might keep me fascinated, interested and employed for the next 20 years, I can pursue it. It really is never too late.

'Since changing jobs I have changed so many other aspects of my life.'



IMAGES  
Above: Allison graduates from Surrey University  
Below: Allison, centre, celebrating completing her first 5k run

# Non-genetic engineering

Only six per cent of engineers in the UK are women. Hannah Pearlman has been nominated for the Institution of Engineering and Technology's Young Woman Engineer of the Year Award. She told Her Edit what she loves about her career and why there's no oil or overalls involved.

**H**annah Pearlman says at school she loved the subjects known as STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Her fascination with making things may have originated from time spent in her architect father's office at home. She and her older brother wandered in and out and her father's old technical drawings became their scribble pads. It certainly influenced her career choice.

'I didn't want to do civil engineering or anything to do with buildings.'

Hannah attended a girls' school and, without resorting to clichés, says she was a tomboy. She loved Formula One as a very small child, got up early especially to watch it, and was fascinated by the technical explanations at the beginning.

Hannah moved school so she could study design technology ignoring the advice of her head teacher who said, 'You could do art. It's almost the same.'

She wanted to do something practical and make something tangible. Hannah was encouraged by the Smallpeice Trust which runs residential engineering taster courses for young women.

'For me the whole thing is that the engineer is part of the process of making something happen either from a design, an idea or to meet a need.'

Having graduated from Warwick

**'If you're a woman and you just turn up and say 'I'm an engineer', you've done half the job already.'**

University in 2010 with an honours degree in Mechanical Engineering with Automotive, the car industry seemed a natural home and Hannah went to work for Aston Martin.

The appeal of working for the company that makes cars for James Bond is clearly not lost on Hannah, but the experience was more valuable than the glamour

of working for a high-end brand.

'Because it's a small company - probably only about 300 engineers - you get to do a bit of everything, not in great detail, but good experience. I did some brand and marketing which was great. It's a luxury sports car costing about ten times the amount of the cars I'm working on now.'

Hannah now works for Ford, leading an international team working on the cooling system for the next generation Fiesta.

'It's the opposite end of the market from Aston, but the same techniques apply to both. I'm working in much more detail now though.'

Hannah is passionate about her subject and particularly about sharing with others the support she's had from mentors. She is a STEM ambassador.

'I try to encourage young people to pursue STEM subjects, visit schools and work with the Smallpeice Trust. The charity helped me, so it's great you can



go back and give something in return.'

She is a great advocate for the benefits of an engineering degree. The kind of analytical skills you gain clearly make graduates appealing to employers from banks to Tesco.

And how about bumping up that six percent figure?

'I'm not only focused on women because I think if you're a woman, and you just turn up and say 'I'm an engineer', you've done half the job already.'

'Men and women bring different qualities to engineering and I

think the best teams are mixed, so we definitely need more women. It's not going to happen naturally and there need to be more women at senior management level.'

For Hannah, part of the motivation to join a big company like Ford is the greater opportunity it can offer to balance work and family life, but for the moment she's focused on her career.

'No two days are the same. I work with a fantastic international team which means I've made friends all over the world and learnt about those cultures, even if we're meeting on Skype.'

I wonder who has been an inspiration to Hannah.

'Not one big name - lots of people have been incredibly supportive - but if I had to pick one, it would be the design and technology teacher who, when I said I wanted to be an engineer, didn't say, 'are you sure, it's not what girls do', but just 'what type?'

The Smallpeice Trust is an educational charity which runs STEM activities and courses for pupils in years 6-12. Read more at [www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk](http://www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk)

The winner of the IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards will be announced on 10 December.

# Her Agenda

<p><b>A word to the WISE</b></p> <p>The annual WISE Awards celebrate female talent in science, technology and engineering - from classroom to boardroom.</p> <p>13 November <a href="http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/about-us/wise-awards/2014-wise-awards">www.wisecampaign.org.uk/about-us/wise-awards/2014-wise-awards</a></p>	<p><b>City limits</b></p> <p>Women in Business - Generating Exposure for your Start-up Business</p> <p>How to make the most of PR opportunities on a budget.</p> <p>25 November Visit <a href="http://www.wearethecity.com">www.wearethecity.com</a></p>	<p><b>Buy the board</b></p> <p>This site started life in 2011 as a blog by Amanda Bolt, keen to share her experience of being a first-time mum, running a career and starting a business.</p> <p>A useful website whether you're a mum or not.</p> <p><a href="http://www.boardroommum.com">www.boardroommum.com</a></p>
<p><b>Hot in the City</b></p> <p>Work in the City of London? Annual celebration lunch at Plaisterers' Hall</p> <p>Opportunity for networking, lunch and keynote speaker.</p> <p>28 November <a href="http://www.womeninthecity.co.uk">www.womeninthecity.co.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Saturday job</b></p> <p>Small Business Saturday UK is a grassroots, non-political, non-commercial campaign, which highlights small business success and encourages consumers to 'shop local' and support small businesses in their communities.</p> <p><a href="http://www.smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com">www.smallbusinesssaturdayuk.com</a></p>	<p><b>Guardian angel</b></p> <p>The Guardian careers website is packed with advice on getting a job and career development.</p> <p>Visit <a href="http://careers.theguardian.com">http://careers.theguardian.com</a></p>

# Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN

Issue Nine  
out January 2015

Join the discussion  
@Her\_Edit  
Read our blog at  
[www.heredit.com](http://www.heredit.com)

Copyright

All views expressed, except where explicitly stated otherwise, remain those of the authors, and not the publishers and or owners of HEREDIT. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted without the express written permission of HEREDIT.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders of material in this publication. If any rights have been omitted, the publishers offer their apologies. "No responsibility is assumed by the publisher for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions or ideas contained in the material herein.

Although all advertising material is expected to conform to ethical (medical) standards, inclusion in this publication does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the quality or value of such product or the claims made by its manufacturer.