

Her Edit

QUARTERLY



Issue Twenty-two
Autumn 2017

Her Edit

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thank you

Margaret Borley
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Front cover picture
Courtesy Nicole Lawler

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Welcome to Her Edit

It's great to be back and the team are immensely proud to bring you another eclectic issue. After a summer which has seen the profile of women's sport higher than ever before, we meet the inspirational baseball team founder Margaret Borley and hear from one of her young players about how empowering sport can be.

Zoë Stevenson gives a feminist appraisal of this year's blockbuster film, Wonder Woman, while elsewhere a new exhibition of work by May Morris raises questions about the status of women's art. In an occasional series on the world of work, Claire Collins who shares her insight and experience of a long and hugely successful career in the male-dominated accountancy industry.

In 2015, we carried a piece by Julie Hambleton whose sister, Maxine, was killed in the Birmingham Pub Bombings in 1974. Along with fellow supporters of the [Justice4the21](#) campaign, she continues her fight for an inquest into the death of Maxine and the other victims, and to bring those responsible to justice.

In this issue, we sadly highlight another campaign for truth and justice. Nicole Lawler writes about the death of her son, Zane, and her battle to uncover the truth of how he died. Over 50 years since the bombings in Birmingham and almost 30 years since Hillsborough, our justice system continues to fail the people it is meant to serve. Please support the [Truth About Zane](#) campaign and help to amplify the voices of people our establishment seems intent on silencing.

As ever, do share Her Edit with your families, friends and colleagues and if you would like to contribute, do get in touch at jayne.phenton@heredit.com via Twitter, post something on our Facebook page or post your comments on our [website](#).

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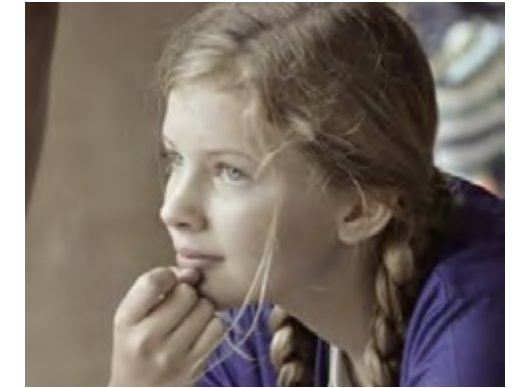
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Clockwise from above: The truth about Zane campaign, Margaret Borley, Claire Collins, Holly Barker, Zoë Stevenson, May Morris

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Answers needed... not a cover-up!

We want a public debate

Answers needed... not a cover-up!

Public safety should be the highest priority

Answers needed... not a cover-up!

We want a public debate

We want the truth about Zane

We want the truth about Zane

We want the truth about Zane

Why is there deadly HYDROGEN CYANIDE in our community?

Why is there deadly HYDROGEN CYANIDE in our community?

Will future generations be contaminated?

A healthy little boy



The truth about Zane

Nicole Lawler's son, Zane, died in February 2014. The inquest concluded that the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a faulty pump; a pump which Nicole and Zane's father, Kye Gbangbola, maintain hadn't been used.

Despite evidence which showed the presence of potentially fatal quantities of hydrogen cyanide, which left Kye paralysed and in a wheelchair, and a flawed inquest which failed to call crucial witnesses, Zane's parents have been denied legal aid to unearth the truth and find justice.

Former Shadow Home Secretary, Andy Burnham, who has proposed the new Hillingsborough Law, said, 'Once again an inquest leaves a bereaved family feeling like it was they who were on trial.'

The Truth About Zane campaign is calling for an independent panel inquiry into the death of little Zane. This is his mum's story.



©Nicole Lawler

Zane was a highly intelligent little boy; a seven year old full of love and promise of a bright future ahead.

He aspired to be the fastest mathematician on the planet, dreaming of taking over from Wing Commander Andy Green first-class Oxford maths graduate, Royal Air Force Fighter Pilot and Land Speed Record holder and driver of Zane's much beloved Bloodhound Super Sonic Car. But this beautiful boy's life was tragically cut short by a dark incident I believe the authorities have conspired to cover up.

The loss of a child is a pain and degree of suffering that is impossible to grasp without experiencing it first hand. You will experience a lifetime of the most painful tears that fall from your heart and cover your soul.

Compound this with the relentless cruelty heaped upon

us by a system designed to protect institutions, not people, and when the evidence points everywhere except towards the verdict the coroner actually reached, you are starting to see just a glimpse of the reasons for the Truth About Zane campaign.

The campaign aims to expose the real cause of the death of my precious son.

'...this beautiful boy's life was tragically cut short by a dark incident I believe the authorities have conspired to cover up.'

In the early hours of 8 February 2014, Zane, his father and I were all taken ill in our Surrey home.

During the floods that swept the country that year, our basement in Chertsey, Surrey was flooded. The water rose silently up through the soil floor of the flood basement.

Although it was impossible for us to lower the water table, the use of powerful, fully submersible electric pumps was effective at keeping the habitable areas dry. We had three more electric pumps set up and ready, should we need them, together with a hired pump.

When Zane died, both my husband, Kye, and I were also hospitalised. Kye was in cardiac arrest and in a critical condition. He is now a paraplegic as a result of exposure to the nerve gas and uses a wheelchair.

Both Zane's father and I have reams of evidence suggesting Zane was killed by hydrogen cyanide carried by floodwater from a nearby landfill site, but we have faced an extraordinary battle with authorities to prove this.

According to the Environment Agency's National Incident Recording System report, read out at a coroner hearing, the Surrey Fire and Rescue

Hazardous Material (HAZMAT) teams who attended the scene detected the house was infused with '25,000 parts per million (very high) readings of Hydrogen Cyanide Gas'.

The report also states that some information in the document was to be 'vetted' and not 'in the public domain'. The matter had been taken 'extremely seriously' because the Government's Cobra emergency committee meetings were held in relation to Zane's death.

The committee was briefed by the Environment Agency on the day he died. A further meeting was held the following day chaired by Prime Minister David Cameron. It was classed as a major incident, the area was evacuated and 17 other people were taken to hospital by ambulance.

The quantity of Hydrogen Cyanide detected is many times greater than that used to kill people in World War II Concentration camps.

In 2016, the coroner ruled that Zane's death was caused by carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty petrol pump hired the day before, but which was never, in fact, used.

No carbon monoxide was detected and there was no evidence of the hired pump being in use. Public authorities blame carbon monoxide for Zane's death, though it can

'...the area was evacuated and 17 other people were taken to hospital by ambulance.'

hardly be the case that it spread from our house to the tens of other properties in the area that were evacuated.

A leading neuropathologist, Professor Al-Sarraj, told the coroner that he had been brought in to examine Zane's brain after an autopsy by two Home Office pathologists could not establish why he had died.

He said he found evidence of 'toxicity', but did not consider cyanide because he was unaware it was a factor in the case.

'Had I been told [about cyanide], I would have made efforts to investigate in a different way and analyse the data in a different way,' he said.

'I was only given this story [about carbon monoxide]. This is how I reached my conclusions.'

Prof Al-Sarraj told the inquest that cyanide and carbon monoxide acted in a similar way on the brain.

Police and public health experts latched on to the Professor's findings to lay the blame for Zane's death on fumes from the hired pump and divert attention from the landfill.

Extraordinary lengths were taken to make a square peg fit a circular hole and Zane's date of death was changed to the

day before, despite all medical evidence and the testimony of 10 paramedics and two consultants.

Surrey Police pursued a 10 month investigation into the water pump, which was dropped when prosecutors said there was no case to answer. Public statements by the establishment told the world that we are just parents in denial.

We felt vilified, blackmailed and stripped of our responsibility to Zane, being told, 'he is the property of the coroner'.

We are financially broken because we dare to fight for truth. We continue to suffer nasty defamatory and dishonest abuse designed to silence us.

Leslie Thomas QC, a barrister acting for us, said the pump theory had 'collapsed like a house of cards' on account of the pathologist's evidence to the coroner.

It later emerged that the Environment Agency and the local council were aware of potential risks of ground gas from the old landfill site next to our home.

The Environment Agency – which is responsible for regulating waste sites and dealing with floods - own the property next to ours. They placed a gas-proof membrane in their property protecting their occupants, but did not warn residents about any risk.

Spelthorne Borough Council documents also show that as far back as 2007 planning officials knew that the ground could contain 'harmful substances', but residents were only told if they applied for permission to alter their homes.

There are many parallels with the Hillsborough disaster. Despite the deaths of 96 people and 766 injured, the guilty still refused to admit culpability.

It took 25 years of campaigning for any official inquiry to accept the assertions of the families of the dead. A quarter of a century of deliberate cover-ups, misdirection and lies and blame placed on Liverpool fans by the police, supported by scurrilous reporting in some parts of the media.

The obfuscation by the police, Football Association and the Government was driven by a fundamental will to protect the establishment and, in doing so, vilified working-class people.

The same authorities who are supposed to protect the most vulnerable in society refuse to investigate the death of Zane, an innocent child who died when one of the most deadly toxins known to man infused his home.

Still, we do not know why. Zane should still be alive today. He is so desperately missed by all who loved him.

Nicole Lawler's statement read out at Zane's inquest.

"We are profoundly concerned by the conduct, the content and the outcome of Zane's inquest.

"Our concern regarding the rejection of our application for legal aid, clear deficiencies in the administration of evidence and given the contested circumstances, the failure to have that evidence heard before a jury.

"This extends beyond our case and is a matter of public concern. We requested legal aid and an Article 2 inquest with a jury and both were rejected.

"Zane's inquest was deficient legally and evidentially.

"We applied for full disclosure and this was rejected. The inquest satisfied neither our [interest] nor the public interest and at the discretion of the coroner, the primary concerns were not addressed and significant evidence not given to us - nor examined.

"We were also dependent on public donations to gain legal representation and present our case while the authorities had considerable resources. This was a significant failure in achieving equality of arms.

"As a consequence, we requested an independent panel of inquiry.

"The precedent being the Hillsborough independent panel to review all documentation from all interested parties, specify witnesses not called to this inquest and to make recommendations accordingly.

"Only when all of the available evidence is assessed by a panel with the collective expertise to provide a thorough and open examination of all of the available material and to make informed recommendations will we consider that the state has acted in the best interests and therefore in the public interest.

"We expect to be consulted on the membership of such a panel.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the public who have supported us in our quest for justice for Zane.

"At the top of this was a deeply loved boy. A very special little boy. The world is a much poorer place without Zane.

"Our love for Zane keeps us going and while we have breath in our bodies, we fight to expose the inconvenient truth."

Read more about the campaign at www.truthaboutzane.com and please support on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Making it past first base Her Edit



IMAGES
All images courtesy Margaret Borley

Margaret Borley is 88, a graduate from Bristol University and retired modern languages school teacher, an artist, mother and grandmother. She founded the [Tonbridge Bobcats](#) baseball team 35 years ago and in 2007 was awarded an MBE for her services to sport.

Margaret spoke to Ann Clark about how it all started and why sport is so valuable for young people.

Margaret Borley MBE, with her broad smile and sparkling eyes, welcomed me into her living room. I'd asked to talk to her about her remarkable sporting life.

I glanced around at all the trophies, medals, stained glass, fused glass and mosaic work. I knew nothing about the art work – I'd come about the trophies and medals. This year Tonbridge, Kent, celebrates 35 years since Margaret and her sons set up a baseball team in the town.

Margaret and her family had been inspired by a spell in the batting cages in Boston while on a holiday in 1982 and they were hooked. Neil, the middle son, went to the council and successfully persuaded them to give some land for a baseball field or diamond.

At first they spent time just watching other clubs playing but within a couple of years they had enough friends to make a team and the Tonbridge Bobcats (the Bs representing Boston and Borley) were founded. The 15-year-olds started playing friendlies against the adults and joined the league. I asked, why did it become so popular?

'Baseball is a much better game for youngsters as players are kept involved by retaining their position and the innings change after three outs. What's more in a team of nine you can easily carry novices or weaker members.

'We were very fortunate too as this was a time when the US was trying to encourage baseball here and they held a tournament in London. I went round the local schools and all but one signed up and received Baseball kits provided by the US (some schools still have the kit). Girls joined too'.

So two youth teams were founded: the Lynxes up to the age of 14, and then the Cougars for the over 14s. Margaret says,

'They were very talented and won the national title in first year, playing against teams from all over the country. Interest grew and more players came forward but there was no youth baseball'.

At one stage 60 youngsters showed an interest in playing and that meant 30/40 being available for a game. Margaret qualified as a coach and took the exams to be an umpire. There were very few of them nationally which is why, she told me that,

'I even umpired a game at the Oval when Ian Botham was involved in a demonstration game.' The Bobcats started to win more national trophies and played in Germany. Television programmes were made with Margaret and the Tonbridge teams. Some players went on to represent Great Britain. Margaret says,

'Sport should be fun. At this level, you should play for enjoyment. You don't play any sport if you don't want to win, but there are teams who are constantly carping about umpire decisions and it takes away the pleasure from playing if it becomes too competitive.'

In 2007 Margaret was awarded an MBE for her services to sport which included hockey (she was also President of the Kent Hockey Association), but unsurprisingly Her Majesty talked exclusively about Margaret's role in baseball.

In the same year Tonbridge and Malling Council awarded her a lifetime achievement award for coaching by. At the 2010 British Baseball Federation AGM, Margaret was awarded the BBF Lifetime Achievement award.

With characteristic modesty Margaret feels that all these awards are 'unwarranted as I've had such immense satisfaction from watching the progress of youngsters, some of whom have had their lives transformed by the game.'

She says, 'One young man greeted me in the High Street and said 'hello Mrs B' (that's what they call me) and gave me a hug. Now that's special for a teenager to do that in public'.

We talked about club ethos and how that is engendered. Margaret feels once it is imbued it can last for generations. One club, still behaves in what she would consider a ruthless and unsporting way, just as it had done 30 years ago.

Now she makes stained glass and mosaics, and pursues her interests in gardening, reading, lepidoptery and history; as well as enjoying all team sports and watching the Tonbridge Bobcats every weekend, when she can. She is delighted that the ethos of enjoyment is still there.

'Sport should be fun. At this level, you should play for enjoyment'

Playing ball

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Holly Barker is 14 years old, lives in Tonbridge and is a member of the Bobcats team. When she's not playing she enjoys making art, particularly portraits, and hopes to go to art college. She has written in support of the [#ThisGirlCan](#) campaign and here explains how baseball has had a huge impact on her life.

Baseball has made me a stronger woman and a better person. I have become more confident in myself, more sociable and more passionate in what I do.

It has given me the chance to prove that women can do absolutely anything as long as they put everything into what they love.

The dramatic changes I have seen in my everyday life is crazy. Before baseball, I would lounge around at home all day; I was a real couch potato. Now, when I wake up, I have training that day I am excited and count down the hours until it starts.

I have had my ups and downs, like everyone, but I love the game so much that I wouldn't stop playing for anything.

Before I started playing baseball I was a shy, timid and nervous girl, but the second I started playing I realised I'm not that person anymore and I could be so much more.

It has given me a chance to become a better me. I'm inspired to see other girls taking up the game, whether it is with the youth team or the seniors.

Baseball is not an easy sport, however, if you love the game as I do, you put your everything into it. When I play, I feel passion, spirit and joy. I feel proud of myself as living proof that women can do anything.



Making it count

Claire Collins left school at 16 and was told by her parents 'don't bother with qualifications'. After a brief spell in the civil service she worked in an accountants and found a job she loved. She is now a Director with the City firm [Buzzacott](#). In the first of an occasional series where women share their career journey, Claire tells us about her own route to success.



What led you to your career choice and how did you get there?

When I left school with a bunch of reasonable exam results there wasn't much in the way of careers or further education guidance from my school. The most support I got from my careers teacher was 'can you type?' I thought I might try banking, but didn't receive any offers.

I saw a position at the job centre for a role in the Cabinet Office in Whitehall and was offered the position. It was my first real job in the heart of Westminster. It was a poorly paid job and once I had learned it, I was bored a lot of the time.

Every week I saw adverts in the free magazines for accounts trainees, which I really knew nothing about except they were being paid a lot more than me! I looked into accounting courses at my local college and discovered they were offering evening classes to study a three year course for the AAT qualification. The Government (my employer) paid for the course and I started attending 2 nights a week. My role at the Cabinet office had no relevance to what I had started studying and I felt that even if I transferred across I would be bored and under challenged in no time at all.

I started looking at the job ads and came across one for a small firm of Chartered Accountants

in the City for a trainee. I went for the interview and didn't get the job even though they had liked me. Two days later I got a call from the agents to say that they had created another role in the firm and wanted to offer it to me as a proper accounts trainee. The new role came with an additional £250 a year in salary. I loved working in my first accounts job; learning so much and the people who took the time to train me and guide me. I had always liked numbers, but English and reading had been my strongest subjects so I had never assumed I would go into a numbers orientated career.

Unfortunately our little firm was swallowed up by a top ten firm a couple of years later and I never thrived as part of a larger faceless conglomerate. Once I took my last exams and was AAT qualified I moved on to Buzzacott where I am still after 27 years.

What do you most look forward to in your working day?

A lot of accountants who train in what we call Public Practice move in to industry when they qualify, but I have never been tempted. The thing that keeps me in Practice, and I look forward to each day, is the variety and that no two days are ever the same. Sometimes it has been too much of a challenge, but I can always look back and say I have been pushed to my limit, tested and

forced to continually stretch my mind and learn new skills working for an amazing firm. Every day there will be something new from a client that I will not have addressed before and my team look to me for answers and/or views.

I also enjoy working with a portfolio of clients from around the world and working in so many diverse industries. It's great getting to know them along with guiding my team and interacting with my colleagues.

What motivates you at work?

Bringing on board a new international or domestic start up and giving them outstanding advice that they value; developing my team and seeing them progress up the career ladder and expanding the team as we become more successful as a firm. In the words of the 80s show the A-Team, 'I love it when a plan comes together'.

Recent figures suggest that although 44 per cent of accountants in the UK are women, less than a quarter are partners. What barriers exist to career progression for women in the sector and what measures would you like to see taken to tackle them?

Having a family will unfortunately slow down your career progression, but I do not believe it is a barrier to progression to partner if you take

the decision to continue to work. My firm may be an exception, but we have a female managing partner and a number of other female partners who have children. What a working professional mother needs from her employer more than anything is flexibility to enable her to juggle career and children.

Tell us three words that sum up your attitude to life.

Don't sweat the small stuff; life is too short; take your work seriously, but not yourself; no regrets.

What advice would you give to your younger self setting out on her career?

Be more forward in asking for promotions that were deserved. Women are notoriously bad at being upfront, unlike most men. Be more clear about your objectives and how you are going to achieve them. Do what you love not what you think you should do or pays the best

Who inspires you in your work or personal life – or both?

Our team leader who I have worked with for the last 15 years has taken our team from a straggly team of bits and pieces to a highly successful team of over 100 people with a variety of specialisms. In my personal life I have always admired Tina

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Turner. She is a woman who took on another man's two children, brought them up as her own along with her own two children whilst touring and singing for years and still maintained her dignity, beauty and human decency whilst being severely abused by her husband.

What has been your biggest triumph?

Professionally speaking the day I qualified as a Certified Accountant back in 1994. It was after 7 years of studying including the three years night classes with the AAT. I had sat 30 three hour exams (mostly first time passes) in that period to achieve that qualified status and for someone who had not undertaken any further education after 16 it was a massive boost to my confidence.

Personally speaking the day my children were born. Becoming a mother changed me enormously and my views and belief in my own abilities.

And your biggest disappointment?

The end of my marriage and how it would affect my children's lives in the future

Tell us three things that make you smile.

Witty off the cuff humour; friends and family time; hot sun on my skin

You've had a difficult day at work – how do you restore your equilibrium and raise your spirits?

A glass of wine, red or white as I don't discriminate; put on heavy rock music as loudly as possible; a cuddle from kids or my partner, don't mind which!

Your top tip for managing difficult clients/colleagues.

Think carefully about what you say before you say it; count to ten if you have to! Try to understand where they are coming from better. If you cannot understand their viewpoint then always ask 'why?'. Patience and politeness go a long way

What are your ambitions for the next decade?

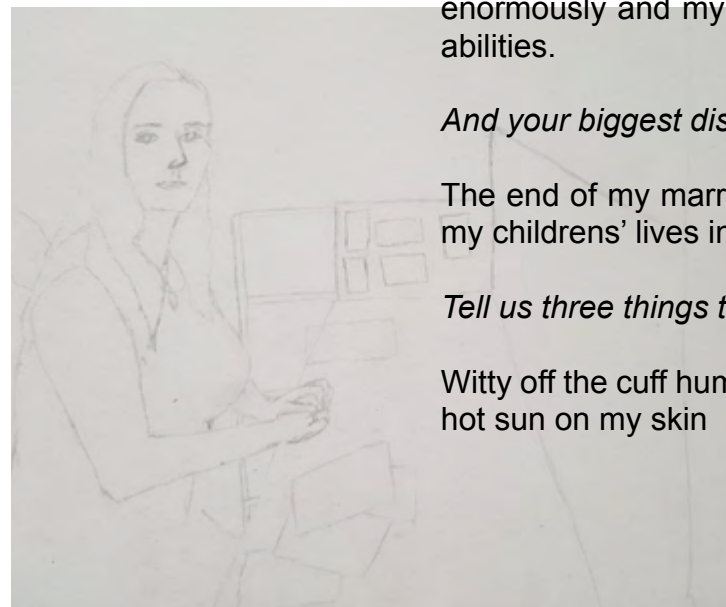
To make partner to show younger women it can be done; more travelling and holidays; be fitter and healthier than I am now

What are your three wishes for the future?

Continued good health; to see my children start their careers and actually enjoy what they do, whatever career they choose. Just enjoy life.

Draw us a picture of you at work.

Courtesy of my daughter!



IMAGES
Above: Courtesy of Claire Collins
Right: drawing of Claire by her daughter

The wonder of film

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Zoë Stevenson is a marine environmental educator currently trying to live as plastic free as possible in Kent. When she's not crying over superhero films or The Great British Bake Off, she can be found on the beach or wishing she was on a ski slope. She talks about feminism - a lot!

Here Zoë writes about this year's blockbuster, Wonder Woman, and why she believes it redefines the female super-hero. You can read more of her writing at punchingpigeons.wordpress.com

Wonder Woman reduced me to tears. I'm not talking 'crying at the heroic scene' tears or 'sobbing at a touching moment' tears either. I am talking full-blown racking sobs, number ten on the unattractive crying scale.

Turns out Wonder Woman is the superhero film I hadn't even realised I was waiting for, and it was so powerful that women around the world reacted in the same way that I did.

When you strip it down, the plot of Wonder Woman follows pretty much the same trend as other successful superhero films. The central character is idealistic, special in a way they don't fully realise, there's a war (or world threatening villain) to contend with, and, within their desire to do the right thing, the protagonist becomes the hero they were always destined to be. Oh, and

there's normally a love interest shoe-horned in there for good measure.

It's a plot that's worked well in the past, but Captain America didn't turn me into a puddle of tears, nor did I go around telling everyone I met that they had to go and see Ant-Man in the cinema as soon as was physically possible or preferably sooner. So what made Wonder Woman so special?

Obviously there are a number of factors that contributed to the success of the film, but for me, at the heart of them all is the treatment of Diana, Princess of Themyscira, and the lack of male gaze.

Diana's outfit might be, for lack of a better word, skimpy, but it has elements which can be attributed to stylised Roman armour, showing the intent as a costume for war rather than underwear. There are no gratuitous lingering skin shots.

Despite the main character spending most of her time effectively with more than half her skin on show, it is never focused on. Instead the camera focuses on the details that make her Wonder Woman; we get close-ups of her lasso, her sword, her steely gaze.

Diana drives this story forward and her character is allowed to grow and change in a way women aren't usually in action films. Her imperfections are not hidden from view, her thigh clearly jiggles as she lands after the final fight and she fights with a face like thunder. Diana is given room to make mistakes and this agency over her own destiny is another thing that has been lacking for women in this film genre for far too long.

It would have been easy for the writers to fall into the trope of a 'strong female character' with Diana, because that's exactly what she is. However, this term has been warped to describe someone who fights extremely well, but is emotionally closed off and doesn't need any help to get the job done. Not only do we see the emotional support Diana has in her family on Themyscira, she clearly chooses Steve as a love interest.

Notice I said 'chooses' there and not 'has', because choose is exactly what Diana does. Steve, despite his obvious interest in her, makes no move whatsoever; the relationship develops because Diana wants it to. She has control over her own sexual agency. In a world where the

line between sexual assault and romance is too frequently blurred in visual media, this decision was extremely important.

Make no mistake though, Diana is a strong female character. She is willing to leave her life and everything she knows behind, to save a world she's never been to, but still cares about.

Diana's compassion is key to the emotional heart of the film, without it, it would have been like any other superhero blockbuster. All fights, no heart. Diana constantly feels for those around her - even the animals - and not only that, but she can convey that compassion in a way that does not belittle others. She effortlessly gives purpose back to PTSD suffering Charlie and wants to help the wounded soldiers on the way to the front.

I could write an entire essay about Diana's characterisation, but that's not what this review is about. I will say however, that the defining reason that Diana's characterisation works so well is that she is always treated as an equal.

She has no reason to believe that she is inferior to men, and therefore has no need to prove herself. That's the type of feminism I want in my action films - where equality is already assumed, not a thing to be earned.

The pinnacle of the film ironically comes halfway through it, in what is now known as The No Man's



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Land Scene. It was this scene that really broke me the first time I watched the film. Never, in all my time watching and consuming visual media have I ever seen a scene so powerful or so beautifully shot. In action films we are used to the good guys fighting specific bad guys, or fighting people to further their mission.

Diana crosses No Man's Land for neither of these reasons. She crosses it because it is the right thing to do. It is at this point that she puts on the crown and fully unveils her weapons and power. It would have been so easy to have a lingering boob shot as Diana climbed those steps, but there wasn't.

Instead we focused on Diana being revealed as Wonder Woman and as she crossed the muddy field she became the hero she was meant to be. It wasn't a major battle that was Diana's defining moment, it was doing a difficult and dangerous thing to protect innocent people and that, more than anything, is what makes Diana a hero.

There was a lot of pressure on Wonder Woman as a film. It was the first female led superhero film since Catwoman (2004), which was an unmitigated disaster, like most before it. In the 13 years since then we've had so many male led superhero films that even I, a self professed superhero nerd, probably couldn't name them all.

Patty Jenkins, only the second female director to be given a budget of over \$100 million, has born that pressure and delivered. She reimagined DC's gritty pessimistic look into something hopeful and full of emotional punch.

Wonder Woman manages to tell a sincere story of optimism and love without ever being over the top or a cliché. It struck a chord with so many people that it currently has a score of 92 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes and has made more money than the last two DC films combined. It is full of heart and actress Gal Gadot in the lead role captures the essence of Wonder Woman perfectly.

I have always loved superhero films. Despite the fact I have always wished that there was a female led one, I have never thought that women have been treated too badly in the last 15 years of superhero blockbusters.

Wonder Woman showed me just how wrong I was, and how good it can get when you put women in charge of their own on-screen depiction. Marvel will have to work very hard to ensure that their upcoming release of Captain Marvel doesn't come up short. Women now know what is possible with female led superhero films, we're not likely to give it up without a fight.

'It would have been so easy to have a lingering boob shot as Diana climbed those steps, but there wasn't.'



TEXT
Zoë Stevenson

IMAGES
Courtesy of Zoë Stevenson

Morris not-so minor

A new exhibition of the work of May Morris, gives Jayne Phenton pause for thought on the inherent gender bias in the art world and whether technology offers the possibility of a re-appreciation of those skills deemed 'feminine'.

As the education agenda is increasingly framed in the context of the much vaunted Digital Revolution, 'skills', especially those non-replicable by automation, are frequently cited by policy makers as being critical to our economy and the future careers of the current generation.

Looking back to the first industrial revolution, it's interesting to reflect on the philosophy of art critic, social thinker and philanthropist, [John Ruskin](#), whose polemic informed the Arts and Craft movement of the late 19th century.

Ruskin believed that mechanised production, and the division of labour it necessitated, was detrimental to the health and moral welfare of workers. If low-skill functions are to be replaced by robots and algorithms in the future, does that elevate the status of creativity and craft and move us some way towards a Ruskinian utopian future?

My thoughts have been turned to Ruskin by the opening of a new exhibition at the [William Morris Gallery](#), in north London, of work by May Morris.

Inevitably over-shadowed by her father William, the leader of the Arts and Crafts movement, May was a prolific artist whose creativity encompassed wallpaper and embroidery, jewellery, dresses and book designs, alongside sketches and watercolours.

In the same spirit as exhibitions of recent years which have sought to shine a spotlight on women artists eclipsed by their significant others - Winnifred Nicholson and Vanessa Bell at the Dulwich Picture Gallery immediately come to mind - May Morris: Art & Life, recognises not only the extraordinary quality of May's work, but her influence in elevating 'craft', such as embroidery, to the realm of its more muscular and highly-prized sibling, 'art'.

Inevitably, given the social circles of her parents, May was exposed to a range of artistic and political influences from an early age, including artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones. A pastel drawing of May by Rossetti is included in the exhibition.

This not only shaped her artistic career, but her politics. In 1907 she founded the Women's Guild of Art - the existing Art Workers Guild did not admit women - as a forum '...to meet women who are not playing at art.'

In 1885, aged 23, May became the Director of the Embroidery Department at Morris & Co. She was an accomplished embroiderer employing the freehand stitching and delicate shading in silk thread that characterised the 'art needlework' form revived by her father.

The assumed dichotomy between 'art' and 'craft' and the parameters of gender ascribed to each, has a long history. It is well articulated in this 1918 quote from the architect Le Corbusier and the cubist painter Amédée Ozenfant.

'There is a hierarchy in the arts: decorative art at the bottom and the human form at the top. Because we are men.'

From seminal feminist works such as Judy Chicago's [The Dinner Party](#) in the 1970s, to

the appliquéd blankets of Tracey Emin, women artists have sought to reclaim those 'crafts' traditionally ascribed as female, and employ them as part of their art practice.

This exhibition helps not only to reassert May Morris's rightful position as an integral and hugely influential figure in one of the most significant artistic movements, but serves as a reminder of women's struggle for recognition and parity in the wider art world.

As we move towards a world of work where the handmade, the unique and that which is touched with humanity acquires an even greater value, the beautiful and accomplished work in this exhibition raises questions as pertinent today, as in Ruskin's time.

May Morris: Art & Life is at the William Morris Gallery from 7 October to 28 January at the William Morris Gallery in Waltham Forest.

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IMAGES

From left to right: Maids of Honour, Designed and worked by May Morris, c 1890s, ©William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest; Honeysuckle wallpaper, design by May Morris, c 1883, ©William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest; Detail of embroidery, design by May Morris, worked by May Morris and Theodosia Middlemore for Melsetter House, Orkney Wool, linen, metal, c 1900, ©National Museums Scotland; Tapestry embroidered bag, designed and worked by May Morris, c 1932, wool on canvas 25.7cm x 25.4cm, ©William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest.

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