

Her Edit

FOR THE INDEPENDENTLY MINDED WOMAN



Issue Eleven
May/June 2015

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The Speed Issue

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thank you

Karen McDonald

Front cover picture
Courtesy Lizzy Yarnold

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Welcome to Her Edit

When we're thinking about themes for forthcoming issues, the Her Edit team like to think tangentially, but I don't think even we anticipated the diverse experience 'speed' might cover.

I'd like to think the bravery and spirit of women who flew in the ATA referred to in our interview with pilot Marion Wooldridge is reflected in the determination and ambition of Lizzy Yarnold.

I write this on the day of the London Marathon and while the professional athletes headline the sports pages, it's the personal stories of the amateur runners, many motivated to run for charities, that tend to capture our imagination. Sometimes it's not the fastest that achieve the most, but those who resolutely and doggedly pursue their goal no matter how long it takes.

We would love to hear your ideas for themes for future issues or topics you would like to read about or people you would like to see feature. All thoughts are welcome. Do email us editor@heredit.com or tweet @her_edit and in the meantime, I hope you enjoy the May issue.

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A slippery slope

@LizzyYarnold

The fast winter sliding sport Skeleton originally evolved in the Swiss resort of St Moritz in the late 19th century as a diversion for wealthy British tourists. It became part of the Winter Olympics programme in 2002.

Competitors ride a small sled down a frozen track while lying face down and experience forces of up to 5g while reaching speeds of over 80 mph. Lizzy Yarnold MBE cemented her place in sporting history after winning every major title in Skeleton in just 407 days.

She was 19 when she started in the sport via the Gold4Girls scheme designed to identify motivated female athletes in communities who could go on to win medals. Lizzy is the current Olympic, World and European Champion and the first British Slider and only the second woman ever to do so. She said:

'After I won the Olympics (last year) my mind switched to this race, I wanted to win the World Championships to complete the set - it was the last one left. And now I am the World Champion - it is so cool just saying it!'

Lizzy kindly took some time out of her busy schedule to tell Her Edit a bit more about this terrifying and fascinating sport.

IMAGES

Courtesy Lizzie Yarnold



@LizzyYarnold

What attracted you to this sport and how helpful was the Girls4Gold scheme to your sporting career?

The main attraction for me was to see if I could be as good at this new sport as I thought I could be. I was mad about sport and hoped that my experience trying lots of different sports growing up would stand me in good stead – I knew I was able to pick new things up quickly and I felt incredibly lucky that I was given an opportunity through Girls4Gold to challenge myself at the age of 19 when I thought any hope of having a sports career might be over.

What is the thrill of speed which made the Skeleton so appealing?

Skeleton was frightening at first! I was so glad when the two weeks of talent testing on ice in Norway was over and my bruises could heal, but the knowledge that I could get better every time made it addictive. The challenge that others might question whether I had what it takes drove me on and I wanted to show them that I wasn't going to give up when it got tough.

Stereotypically women are assumed to be more risk-averse than men. Is there a gender divide in the sport?

From my experience no I don't think so. In our sport of skeleton it is very fair between males and females – we race the same

courses and have mutual respect for all athletes.

Do you think women approach competition differently?

When I moved up to the World Cup level of competition I finally felt able to treat my competition as a competition in the moment - I didn't have to be nice and chatty when I am trying to win. At the track I am in competition with my fellow athletes, and yet away from the track we can be friends as normal.

In my view I think it is more difficult for women to accept that position than for men because for women there is an expectation to be less outwardly competitive.

What advice would you give to women with the ambition to compete in sports at a high level?

My advice would be - be prepared for the tough times. Going into the gym day after day is difficult and can be boring, you have to make training and competition purposeful. I realised very early on the benefit of working with the other female athletes to push each other and be better. I was able to share the difficulties with the others as well as sharing the successes.

'I had to learn to tell myself that all I can do is my best, whatever happens with the result.'

What obstacles have you overcome to reach the top of your game?

There are always injuries that catch you along the way and the physiotherapists are always very particular about rehab, which is exhausting!

Prior to the Sochi 2014 Olympics, I often questioned whether my performance there would somehow justify my existence and my worth. I had to learn to tell myself that all I can do is my best, whatever happens with the result, I have learnt a lot of lessons along the way.

You have a reputation for being very focussed. Is that something you have developed or is it innate?

Unfortunately for my parents it was an innate skill. I trained five days a week from the age of 13 throughout my teens so driving me around was exhausting for them to say the least! I can now see that results come from being committed, and that encourages me to maintain a high level of effort in everything I do.

Other people notice my focussed attitude towards a meeting, or a race or training, and they respect me for it and that means a lot to me.

Being an ambassador for women in sport seems to come naturally to you. Did you always know that you would enjoy the 'celebrity' status that accompanies international success and public speaking?

Ahhh celebrity is a funny old term and one that I wouldn't feel comfortable using for myself. However I enjoy being a role model. The other day a young boy asked me for a photo with him before a big Under-12 tennis tournament. I said to him to never give up; it's not over until it's over.

Later he came and found me over lunch and told me he'd won his first national competition match ever, and he didn't give up! That's what I really enjoy now, I'm not sure I could be a TV celebrity who has to plan everything they wear everyday...that would be exhausting!

Do you have female role models who have inspired you?

In all honesty I have about a million role models that are relevant to whatever I am doing at the time. So if I need a sporting role model it might be Serena Williams or if I am trying to cook up a storm at home my role model might be Nigella Lawson - you can never have enough people to look up to in life.

Find out what's next for Lizzy at <http://lizzyarnold.com> and on twitter [@TheYarnold](https://twitter.com/TheYarnold)



Learning to fly

Only around six per cent of pilots in the UK are women. Marion Wooldridge has been flying for over two decades and shared her thoughts on why that should be so and the thrill of being in the air.

While the Royal Air Force nears its centenary since its formation in 1918 during the First World War, many of the women who served as pilots during the Second World War remain unsung for their service and lives lost.

Women were not allowed to fly in combat, but played a significant role in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), delivering aircraft across the UK either to squadrons for service, for fitting out or repairs. They were often required to fly planes of types for which they may have had no experience, with just the help of the ATA Pilot's Notes; most of the aircraft didn't have radios, nor were the women given training to fly in poor weather. Of the 1,318 ATA pilots who served during the war, 166 were women and, of these, fifteen lost their lives including the pioneer Amy Johnson.

While many men who had served in the RAF and ATA were later able to use their training and experience to follow careers in aviation, ATA women found it difficult to find flying work after the war. One result was the formation in 1955 of the British Women's Pilot's Association (BWPA) with the ambition of encouraging women to fly and develop careers in aviation. The first Chair of the BWPA was Freydis

Sharland, an ex-ATA pilot, as were many of the founding members.

Today the organisation offers a variety of scholarships and bursaries for girls and women who want to learn to fly. This year in May celebrates its Diamond (60th) anniversary at White Waltham Airfield where it was originally founded. Nevertheless, aviation is heavily male dominated - in the UK only around six per cent of pilots are women, a figure which has changed little over the years.

Her Edit went to meet the BWPA's Deputy Chair, Marion Wooldridge, for a fabulous breakfast in the club house and to find out more about how women can learn to fly. As a naturally rather nervous airline passenger, my first observation about the aircraft lined up at the airfield in Berkshire was how small and fragile they looked, and I wondered how risky flying in them actually is.

Of course, there is a level of risk associated with any activity, and Marion Wooldridge knows a lot about risk. Originally training as a veterinary surgeon, she went on to become a professor of epidemiology, setting up a unit to assess the risk and impact of the global spread of disease for the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the early



IMAGES

PREVIOUS PAGE: Photo of Sydney harbour taken by pilot Marion Wooldridge

ABOVE: Marion's Piper Cherokee



IMAGES

LEFT: Marion in the cockpit of her plane

CENTRE: An ATA flag in the air field's clubhouse

RIGHT: Her Edit's Ann Clark meets Marion at
White Waltham Airfield

1990s. This led on to risk analysis consultancy for organisations including the World Health Organisation, the World Trade Organisation and the World Organisation for Animal Health. A major role was the drafting and reviewing of international risk analysis guidelines concerning the global spread of disease, as well as those for food safety. Marion also set up, and for many years led, Defra's Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Analysis, based at the then Veterinary Laboratories Agency.

Marion's fascination with flying however goes back much further. When she was very young, for a short time Marion's father was an administrator at Northolt airfield and as her mother also worked, he would sometimes take the infant Marion to his office in her carrycot. While not only blazing a trail for 'new men' in the 1950s, the sound of aircraft taking off and landing may well have subliminally played a part in Marion's subsequent fascination with flying.

'By the age of five or six I would be happy just looking at planes in the sky, and I was soon pestering my father to take me to air shows. For as long as I can remember, I'd wanted to learn to fly.'

However, it wasn't until Marion was in her 40s that it became a reality. The training, tuition and flying hours required for a private pilot's license (PPL) can often take 18 months or more to complete in the UK, due mostly to the weather, but the investment isn't just in time and commitment. With lessons priced up to around £200 an hour, getting a PPL can easily cost eight to nine thousand pounds, although other forms of flying (e.g. microlights, gliding) can be considerably cheaper.

As soon as she'd qualified, Marion bought a share in an aircraft. She is part of a syndicate which owns a Piper Cherokee - in which, despite having flown in the meantime many types of aircraft in many countries and continents, she has had a share for almost 20 years now.

It's a common practice which makes the considerable maintenance costs more viable. All aircraft are subject to regular engineering checks, and for Marion's aircraft these include, for example, a check after every 50 hours of flying, and a much more comprehensive 'annual' check. The recent engine rebuild on Marion's aircraft cost around £22,000.

Marion's investment went further; when she and her partner (a non-aviator) decided to move house around 15 years ago, the two main criteria were convenience for access to London, and close proximity to the airfield where her aeroplane is based!

Marion suspects that time and money may both appear to be barriers to women considering learning to fly, and there is a time during pregnancy when you're not allowed to fly which may also have an impact. And if expense is a factor in more women not learning to fly, then it may be because of ongoing costs rather than just the initial training. But is perceived danger a particular factor? There is no evidence on that, either way.

'Every activity carries risk; crossing the road; getting out of bed; everything. When flying, a sensible pilot is aware of the specific risks, and then take steps to reduce them. You have to accept this if you want the wonderful magic of being in the air.'

Economics aside, it does seem difficult to identify specific barriers. Prior specialisation or expertise are not needed.

'It can be helpful to be good with numbers, but for most people a reasonable level of school maths is all you need to calculate fuel required or the allowance needed for wind direction.'

For commercial flying though the economic scale is quite different. Training for a commercial pilot's licence can easily cost over £100,000.

Traditionally, many commercial pilots got jobs with airlines after service with the RAF and some airlines had their own flying schools, but that is much less the case now. However as Marion points out, once qualified, commercial flying is a reasonably well paid job although usually a very different experience to private aviation.

Flying modern large aircraft is highly computerised now, and people doing this work are possibly more motivated by developing a financially rewarding career, than driven by a love of aircraft.

Apart from the economic disadvantage women may be under, it seems likely that the main reason such a small percentage of pilots in the UK are female is the lack of visible role models available.

While the captain (still usually male) commands the cockpit, the female flight attendant distributes the duty free. The term 'air hostess' might seem slightly risible today, but is nevertheless an ironic truism.

Are things changing? They may be, slowly. The Honourable Company of Air Pilots, a Livery Company formed in the 1920s, and where Marion has just become an Assistant to the Court, elected their first female Master, Dorothy Saul-Pooley, last year.

As Marion describes how she 'flew to the Isle of Wight on Tuesday for lunch' it's hard not to become captivated by the notion of freedom and self-determination which flying implies.

'I absolutely love being in the air. Apart from the fact that I'm quite nosy and you can see a lot from the air, it's beautiful looking down on the world. There's also the satisfaction of being able to handle the aircraft and to navigate to where you want to go.'

The British Women Pilots' Association is marking its 60th anniversary with a weekend of events celebrating women in aviation, past, present and future at White Waltham Airfield 30 and 31 May 2015 with talks, flying displays, exhibitions and book signings. Visit <http://bwpa.co.uk> for information and tickets.

'...you can see a lot from the air, it's beautiful looking down on the world.'

The long campaign trail



Local councillor, walking and cycling campaigner and Green Party candidate in the general election, Caroline Russell talks slow speeds and being in it for the long haul.

When the Her Edit team were considering speed as the theme for our May issue, Caroline Russell immediately came to mind. Not only because she has successfully led the campaign for 20mph traffic speeds in the Borough of Islington where she lives, but because as an experienced campaigner she recognises the need for a longer view and that change can be a slow process.

Caroline is currently the only Green Party councillor amongst 47 Labour Party representatives in Islington's council chamber and is standing as a parliamentary candidate in the general election this month. She says:

'Activists have to know what success looks like. We (the Green Party) have trebled our membership, we're bigger than the Liberal Democrats, bigger than UKIP, but the challenge of rapid expansion is being able to communicate and engage with our supporters and enable them to contribute. We're held together by dedicated volunteers, but we're punching above our weight.'

Caroline clearly relishes the opportunity to have a positive impact on people's lives and recognises that representation at a local level can actually allow you more power to make change. Her priority is being a decent ward councillor and making a difference for those she represents.

The announcement last year that Islington Borough council was 'going 20' was hailed as a victory by supporters of the 20's Plenty campaign and other road campaign groups and charities such as Brake, Roadpeace and Living Streets. Critics said it would be unenforceable, but the police are now on board and giving out tickets.

Caroline says:

'It's about re-engineering the grammar of the road so people understand they are driving on residential roads. You need to frame an issue in the right way to achieve a widespread consensus. People need to understand that traffic flow is controlled by signals and accelerating between them does not get you there any quicker. A 20mph limit actually regularises the traffic flow.'

Her arguments are well-rehearsed, as well they might be after a campaign lasting almost 14 years, but Caroline has never lost sight of her motivation - a four-year-old in her buggy killed in a road collision on a local road.

'People who live in London are recognising how alienating and brutalising it can be to move in heavy traffic as a pedestrian or a cyclist.'

The success of the campaign in Islington seems to have rested on not only making a coherent case, but by galvanising the neighbours and literally knocking on doors, talking about the advantages



@LivingStreets

IMAGES

PREVIOUS PAGE: Caroline leading Islington Living Streets in a demonstration calling for a pedestrian crossing

ABOVE: Getting the message out!

of introducing 20mph and asking people to put a poster in their window. By the time the council were persuaded to lead a consultation on the issue, there were few people against it.

At the heart of the campaign is not just the compelling argument that slower traffic speeds reduce fatalities and serious injuries, and improve quality of life for those living in the proximity of busy roads, but the social and economic division they cause in our towns and cities.

Our roads are 'corridors for traffic' and consequently cut through communities, pollute the environment, impact on health and typically affect those on low incomes and the most vulnerable.

Caroline Russell knows her brief well which reflects her natural inclination to research and thoroughly understand her subject.

As a young conceptual artist in the first wave of the Young British Artists which emerged from Goldsmiths art college in the 1980s, Russell worked on a large scale making 'interventions' and structures and exhibiting at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the Hayward.

So involved was she in her subject matter that in order to gain a better understanding, she studied for another degree in civil engineering, describing it as 'medicine for the built environment'.

It's been said that if women designed our towns

and city centres, they would look and function quite differently and as mum to three children, Caroline recognised how the design of our streets meant that a slight misjudgement could easily lead to injury or worse.

As a community activist one of her first campaigns was against the 'turkey Twizzler school dinner' culture. She joined the campaigning charity the Pedestrians' Association (now called Living Streets) becoming one of its most active members, successful campaigners and chair of her local group.

Now 52, a career in politics seems a natural next step for Caroline Russell. Not surprisingly she is the Green Party's spokesperson on local transport and while she is realistic about what

she can achieve in the Islington North seat, she is ambitious.

'This is an opportunity to grow the Green vote and build our capacity in Islington. Last time we came fourth, so this time I want to do better. It's a safe labour seat, but I'm optimistic we could come second and secure a significant percentage of the vote.'

The cycling lobby has been successful in raising the profile of their campaign, particularly in London where deaths have been marked by vigils, so called 'ghost bikes' and flowers at the sites of collisions, but Russell sees it as just part of a holistic approach to transport.

'Activists need to know what success looks like.'



'We need transport to service our lives, so we can get to work or the shops or the local surgery. It requires affordable, efficient networks that connect rural areas with the city via the bus which meets the train or has safe walking and cycling routes to get to the station. A car shouldn't be a necessity. Fewer cars reduces road danger, air pollution and inequality.'

Caroline Russell's passion for her cause and the desire to champion those she represents is in no doubt. She demonstrated her articulacy and knowledge of her subject in a recent interview on Radio 4's World at One recently. In her capacity as the Green Party's Local Transport spokesperson she

challenged the government's record on pollution levels when air quality in the south east of the country was so poor, members of the public with lung conditions were urged to stay at home.

While Russell may campaign for slower speeds and have the patience and dogged determination to pursue that campaign for a long time, her political career may be much faster paced.

Follow Caroline at [@highburyonfoot](https://twitter.com/highburyonfoot)

With thanks to Living Streets for images. Learn about their campaigns at www.livingstreets.org.uk



Pleasure is found first in anticipation, later in memory

Julian Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*

Long before the Stanford marshmallow experiment in the 1970s, Winnie-the-Pooh had famously observed, 'although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were.'

In the digital age which puts everything we might want or need to know at our fingertips, the concept of deferred gratification seems like a luxury rather than a self-censoring virtue.

The quarterly magazine *Delayed Gratification* is published by The Slow Journalism Company as an antidote to 'throwaway media'.

Loes Witschge is a Dutch journalist who has written for Harvard's Nieman Journalism Lab and Al Jazeera before joining The Slow Journalism Company two years ago, as Assistant Editor at *Delayed Gratification*.

Here she gives some insight into the ideas behind the magazine and the value of accuracy and depth over immediacy and getting 'the big splash'.



IMAGES

PREVIOUS PAGES: Courtesy *Delayed Gratification*

ABOVE: Loes Witschge

What do you see as being the pitfalls of the 'sound bite and speed' communication culture which prevail now?

In the media, the drive to hit 'publish' on a story before any other outlet has put a strain on journalists, and unfortunately this tends to be reflected in the quality of the coverage.

The main problem is that too often, speed is valued over accuracy. Whoever runs the story first owns it. And with online writing, you can edit later anyway. So why go through a process of meticulous fact-checking and risk another media outlet being first to break the story?

This issue is most visible when big stories like the Boston Marathon bombing break. Media speculation led to several innocent people being blamed publicly in the direct aftermath. That should never have happened.

If not flat out wrong, speedy reporting almost invariably leads to a skewed representation of reality. Rushed reporters don't always have time to track down expert sources, and sometimes turn to unverified claims online or – worse still – to press releases. The pressure journalists are under is often immense. We try to provide a haven for more relaxed and reflective reporting.

What does Slow Journalism have to offer as an alternative and why is that important? Is it becoming more popular?

Slow Journalism is essentially good journalism: it's well-researched and fact-checked, the stories add context to news events and the storytelling is engaging.

Delayed Gratification's brand of Slow Journalism is quite specific in the sense that we report on news events three months after they happen. This means that our journalists go in (or return) after the rest of the media have abandoned a story and moved on.

While most media outlets focus on how stories begin, we examine what happens after the dust has settled. Whose lives have been changed and how? What are the knock-on or long-term effects of seemingly isolated incidents? What happens when the media spotlight moves on, political interest wanes and people are left trying to pick up the pieces?

Reflecting on the news three months down the line also allows us to identify more clearly which stories were a storm in a tea cup, and which important issues got insufficient coverage.

We're very pleased to see the Slow Journalism movement growing. National Geographic's Paul Salopek – who is walking around the Earth for seven years – is one incredible example. Retro Report, distributed by the New York Times, makes excellent short documentaries about media hypes from the '80s and '90s.

As the only print publication which is dedicated strictly to Slow Journalism, we have been getting more and more media interest ourselves, and have seen our subscriber numbers soar in the past year.

'What happens when the media spotlight moves on, political interest wanes and people are left trying to pick up the pieces?'

Do consumers have the time and patience to read and assimilate more in depth reporting?

It's not for everyone, and that's fine. Not everyone is equally interested in current affairs. Not everyone has time to get stuck into proper long-form journalism – or they might not consider it a very relaxing activity.

We cater to the people who crave a deeper understanding of the world and to those for whom sitting down with a glass of wine and a carefully curated and beautifully produced magazine is the epitome of relaxation. There are plenty of them too.

Do you think there is a gender aspect to the need for detail and evidence?

Stories without detail tend to be boring, and journalism without evidence isn't really journalism – I don't really see a gender aspect to that.

It's so personal too. I've always ascribed my desire to put stories into context to my academic background (I studied International Relations before I got into journalism). It's impossible to say whether it's related in any way to the fact that I'm a woman.

Do women report things differently?

Again, I can't really speak for my entire gender. I have female journalist friends who are excellent at producing to-the-point, accurate news copy and female journalist friends who flourish when they

get an opportunity to go a bit more Gonzo in their writing.

The only thing I can think of right now is that in some cases, women might get a different kind of access, which is then reflected in their reporting.

Male correspondents in Muslim countries might struggle with finding female voices or stories about family life. On the flipside, women are not always taken as seriously in high-testosterone environments.

How did you get into slow journalism?

Ironically, I found out about Delayed Gratification through Twitter. It was while I was studying journalism and I had been frustrated at times that I couldn't really dive into stories as much as I wanted, or give the level of context I wanted to give.

Learning about how news is produced made me uncomfortably aware of some of the flaws. I just couldn't see myself skimming the surface for a high-speed media outlet on a daily basis.

Realising there was an entire magazine dedicated to taking a stand against the ultra-fast news cycle came with a massive sense of relief for me. It wasn't long until I jumped on the phone to ask if I could do some work experience. That worked out well.

Read Loes work at <http://www.slow-journalism.com/the-world-is-not-enough> and follow her on twitter [@loeswitschge](https://twitter.com/loeswitschge) and [Delayed Gratification @dgquarterly](https://twitter.com/dgquarterly)

Her Agenda

Slow Food Week

The movement's network of local groups, traditional, local and artisan producers and chefs present a wide range of events around the UK, including farm and tasting tours, lectures, dinner, celebrations and fund-raisers.

1 - 7 June
Visit <http://www.slowfood.org.uk>

Grace and Speed: The Birds of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska

This exhibition, explores Gaudier-Brzeska's changing drawing styles through a selection of his bird sketches, reflecting the Vorticist group's attempt to capture movement within a static image.

Until 21 June at <http://www.kettleyard.co.uk>

Walk this May

The magic bullet for health and well-being and a cheap, easy and environmentally way to get around.

May is National Walking Month so put your comfy shoes on.

If you need motivation visit Living Streets website <http://www.livingstreets.org.uk>

Race for Life

Get your trainers out, get fit and raise money for charity.

Runs and events for women of all ages and fitness levels at <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org>

Women drivers?

Have a taste for speed? Anyone can keen to try racing, rallying or karting can get started with the British Women Racing Drivers Club.

For more details visit the <http://www.bwrdc.co.uk>

Learning to fly

If our female pilot has inspired you to take to the skies, visit the [British Women Pilots' Association](http://www.britishwomenpilots.org.uk) website for details of membership and learning to fly.

The organisation celebrates its the weekend of the 30 May at White Waltham Air Field. <http://bwpa.co.uk/event/diamond-jubilee-celebration/>

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