

Dawn Bonfield, WES President December 2014 Blog

Happy New Year everyone, and thanks to everyone who read and commented on my first blog last month.

Most months involve me visiting companies – either those who are company members of WES or those who I am hoping will become members. This month I visited ABB Ltd at Daresbury, which is the latter of the two. Like many companies ABB have realised that they would like more women to apply for the jobs that they advertise, but are left scratching their heads when they don't. Often companies outsource their recruitment, and without giving their external recruiters any definite targets about getting more women shortlisted for jobs, then there is really not that much incentive for them to do so, so they understandably go for the easiest option and continue in the same way that they have always recruited. This – like every repeated behaviour – inevitably gets the same results. In order to **get** something different then you've got to **do** something different, and in the case of recruiting more women there are a number of important things that can be done. The recent excellent report by Professor Averil Macdonald gives some insight into the psyche of men versus women, and discusses the idea that women define themselves by *who they are* whereas men define themselves by *what they do*. Job adverts invariably set out what is required to be done as opposed to the type of person that is going to be doing it, so this is already biased towards men. There is much that can be done practically to attract more women to jobs, and even the language that is used in the advert will determine who is attracted to them. For anyone interested I have a list of words that women associate more with and those that will attract more men. So like everything, if you want a different outcome then it's time to try a different approach.

I followed my trip to ABB with a visit to Bath University to attend the first Whorrod Annual Christmas Lecture organised by the amazing new WES Bath Student group. This is a group that was set up in 2014 thanks to the foresight of the University and the generosity of the philanthropists Roger and Sue Whorrod. Jenny Cane – a Bath University alumna - gave the lecture and captivated the audience with her fascinating career in the wind energy sector and more recently at Joint European Taurus as an engineer. A great first event for this group and I was very proud to be a VIP guest on the day, as I am also a Bath University Alumna.

['Engineer your Future'](#) is a new careers exhibition at the Science Museum, and on 16 December I attended the opening of this gallery by HRH Prince Charles. Despite a rather long wait for his arrival (not that he was late, it was just that we were there very early), it was nevertheless worth the wait as he practically repeated the speech he gave in 1979 about getting more young people to consider careers in engineering. Again, this reinforces my point that if we want a different result then we need to adopt a different approach. Whilst I am very much in favour of an exhibition to encourage youngsters to take engineering - and I also know that this exhibition is not aimed at me – I am not convinced that this is the exhibition that is going to do the trick, especially for young girls. For me, we need to stop emphasising that maths and science are key to engineering (which I think students already know – and that's in fact what puts some girls off) and start emphasising the creative and world changing side of engineering. I was pleased, however, to be credited as one of the contributors, though, which was very kind. I wish it success.

The wait at the Science Museum however was not in vain, as I met the Secretary Nigel Williams of the [Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851](#) whose mission is to “increase the means of industrial education and extend the influence of science and art upon productive industry”. As a result of this meeting we have since been awarded a grant to launch our [Sparks initiative](#) which is intended to be the 'nudge' factor that keeps girls who have expressed an interest in careers in engineering interested in the longer term. We are setting up a steering group at [Alton Convent School](#) in Hampshire in January to scope this project and then we will be ready to go with this in the Spring, if all goes to plan. Very exciting.

Since the WES AGM our [Memorandum and Articles](#) have changed slightly, and on editing this document I noticed the list of the WES founders in 1919, and amongst the list was Lady Shelley-Rolls of Monmouth. As I was in the area I did some investigating and found that she was part of the Rolls family of Rolls-Royce fame,

and that she was the sister of Charles Rolls. There are some great stories to be uncovered in the WES archive, and these historic links will be exploited in our 2015 Magnificent Women project and outreach activity.

Talking of our historic links, we are making progress with the redesign and print of our WES teatowels, produced in association with the [Electrical Association for Women](#) to promote "a scheme popularising the domestic use of electricity". In addition to the teatowels there are also dusters and pinnies showing how to wire a plug, which fuse to use for which appliance, the electrical circuits in a house and how much electricity each appliance will use. These will go on sale at the [Somerset House](#) Civic Shop in January and will be able to be purchased through WES at a later date, if all goes to plan.

Thanks for reading this, and as always, if you have any comments or suggestions please contact me at president@wes.org.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn". The letter 'D' is large and stylized, with a loop at the bottom. The rest of the name is written in a cursive, flowing script.