

The role of women in logistics

Clare Bottle explains how things have changed during her lifetime and what the future might hold

IFW was first published in the early seventies at a time when the Equal Pay Act had just been introduced and the Chartered Institute of Transport admitted Jean Haslam as its first female Fellow. Many women yearned for equality.

At work, Jean was paid 75% of the agreed salary for her job-grade and at home, friends teased her husband Eric because he was “married to a fella” now.

Forty years later, only 6% of the Fellows of the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport are women.

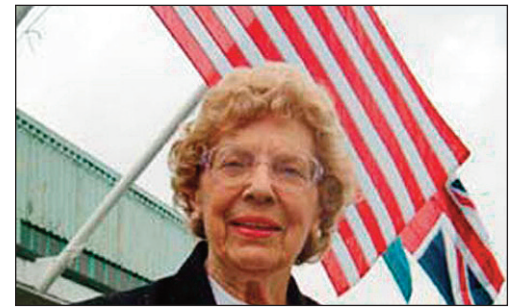
During the 1970s Margaret Thatcher became leader of the Conservative Party and then the first female Prime Minister of Britain: it felt as though we were poised on the brink of a new era.

In the North West of England, Jean Haslam won international recognition as the best Transport Manager in the US Army: the first Brit and the first woman to be honoured in this way. In the North-East, a young Annie Preston was bucking the trend in haulage, too: she had been running the family firm, Prestons of Potto, since 1965. Meanwhile, Beverley Bell was a pupil at Merchant Taylors’ School, later going on to study law at Liverpool University, while in Canada, Moya Greene was starting out on a legal career too, becoming an immigration adjudicator in 1979.

It wasn’t until 1986 that women were allowed to work night-shifts in factories. Anne Preston was the first woman on the board of the Road Haulage Association, recalling “it was good to be a trailblazer”. She was awarded the MBE in 1987.

In 1990 women in the Royal Navy were finally permitted to go to sea in the same year that Beverley Bell established her own law practice. Another ten years passed before

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Trailblazer Jean Haslam was the first female Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Transport

the Crown appointed her the first female Traffic Commissioner in 2000.

IFW launched its Awards for the first time in 1996, the same year that Hilary Devey sold her house and car to set up Pall-Ex; but it was to be 15 years before Hilary became the first woman to win the IFW Personality of the Year award, in 2010, having also become the first female recipient of CILT’s Robert Lawrence Award, in 2009.

As the Chief Executive of Pall-Ex, Devey has become a business-celebrity, featuring on television programmes such as *Secret Millionaire* and soon to appear on *Dragons’ Den*. Thus she gives our sector a human face and a feminine voice, raising public awareness of logistics.

But Pall-Ex remains exceptional. The UK’s top three logistics companies, DHL, Wincanton and Kuehne+Nagel, still feature all-male boards of directors and when they were challenged about the paucity of female role-models, during CILT’s 2010 Logistics Event panel discussion, their collective response suggested they are in denial.

Last year, Moya Greene became the most senior woman in the UK logistics sector when she was appointed Chief Executive designate of Royal Mail Holdings. In his government report this year, Lord Davies recognised that “diverse boards are better boards, delivering financial out-performance and stock market