

“ AS WE CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FEMALE GEOSCIENTISTS, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THERE IS STILL SOME WAY TO GO ”

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

Make your voice heard

Although founded in 1807, it wasn't until 1919 that women could be elected as Fellows of the Geological Society of London. Women were making important contributions in geological science, yet they weren't allowed to attend Society meetings—even to read their own papers or receive their awards. So, to mark the centenary of this major turning point for the Society, this issue is devoted to women in geoscience.

Fronted by an arresting cover painted by Elizabeth Pickett, the winner of our cover competition (see page 7), this issue is packed full of interesting science, analysis, reviews and advice, largely authored by brilliant female scientists. But, you'll notice that Soapbox (page 9)—our main outlet for opinion—is not authored by a woman. Not that author gender has any bearing on the significance of the message. In his piece, Phil Heron makes the important argument that we should broaden our views of outreach and impact, in the process highlighting a disadvantaged minority group in society—an apt point for an issue that celebrates the contributions of the under-represented.

I approached several women to ask if they might want to contribute to our Soapbox section, but they declined due to over-commitments elsewhere, or a lack of time to really delve into the details that they felt would be required to make a compelling argument. This got me thinking about the scarcity of women's voices in the opinion pages of our magazine and I decided to dig into the stats.

It turns out that since 2007 (the limit of our digital archives), women have authored just 6.7% of Soapbox articles in

Geoscientist magazine (compared to a male-to-female split of 71% to 29% for the Fellowship). The statistic for Letters is similarly depressing at just 6%. There are several years where no female voices have featured on the opinion pages in any issue (see the raw data online).

This lack of female voices is disappointing, but not surprising. The dearth of female-authored opinion pieces published in major newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*, is widely documented (see further reading online). Reasons often cited for this disparity are that women are overloaded with 'soft' work, such as childcare, teaching or mentoring and so don't have time to write, or that many women remove themselves from the discussion because they discount their knowledge, essentially due to a crisis of confidence that stems from ingrained and implicit societal bias. These reasons resonate with some of the responses I received from the women I approached, at least anecdotally.

To remedy these disparities in our pages, I work hard to commission content and publish diverse views, but I need your help: we cannot publish what we do not receive, so I encourage all members of our community to get in touch. Our opinion pages provide an opportunity to make your voice heard, as well as an additional avenue for outreach—please feel free to use them.

Historically, women's contributions have been undervalued and it was a long wait before women could participate in Geological Society debates. In line with the Society's policy on diversity, equality and inclusion, it's important to see their voices, and those of other under-represented groups, reflected in the pages of this magazine.

