

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra, and today I'm joined by engineering historian Nina Baker, who regular listeners may recall from our previous conversation about aeronautical engineer Beatrice Shilling. Nina has recently published a book called *Supposed Killed or Drowned by Enemy Action at Sea*, which is about Scottish Merchant Navy women who died as a result of enemy action in the First and Second World Wars. So that is a pretty specific topic. How many women are we talking about here?

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NB: Well, in terms of the Scottish women, about 17. in terms of the women Merchant Navy professionals who died due to enemy action during those two World Wars, it's the best part of 90 all up. So although women didn't get all that many opportunities to be seafaring professionals in those times, they made the ultimate sacrifice along with their brothers.

AT: Now, for those of us who are not maritime savvy, could you explain first what the Merchant Navy was and then the roles that these women were fulfilling?

NB: Okay, so the Merchant Navy, as we call it in Britain, the Mercantile Marine in American, is the cargo and passenger ships that are not military. So it might include troop ships carrying soldiers or indeed nurses from A to B, but they're run by civilians. All the staff, all the crew are civilians. And in wartime, they may carry some light armaments, a couple of guns maybe, but they're not military ships. And I was myself a Merchant Navy seafarer in my younger days, I was a deck officer on oil tankers and cargo ships. So I was interested in what these sorts of women might have done and how they came to lose their lives during the wars. Now, most of the women in this book, with one exception, these were all women who were stewardesses, because that was the work that was available to women in those times at sea. And a stewardess is several things, and they might be doing any or one of them. It might be the person who looks after your cabin. It might be the person who looks after your child. And some of the stewardesses were also nursing qualified, so they might have also assisted the doctor. But in the early days of commercial passenger liners, when women started traveling unaccompanied, without husbands in tow, there was some concern about their physical and social and indeed moral welfare by the shipping companies, which started to employ women to look after the female passengers. And these stewardesses usually would only be carried on ships which expected to carry female passengers. As it turns out, that was not always the case, but that was how the profession started. They were kind of like ladies' maids at sea. They would look after the women on quite a personal basis. We know, for instance, that on some of the grander passenger ships, their jobs included looking after the cabins and looking after the communal washrooms that women passengers shared – there were no en suite cabins in those days – to the extent of refilling powder bowls and putting out new powder puffs in the washrooms. So it was at that level of gentility, if you like. But at a lower level of non-gentility, there was the very lowest of the low, in this internal hierarchy of women at sea, were matrons. And we're not thinking about the matron of a hospital here. We're thinking about matrons almost in the sense of the old word that was used for women prison wardresses. So matrons were the women who were employed to look after the women passengers who were in steerage, the lowest of the low, very poor, often in multiple open plan bunk rooms with dozens of people all sharing one space. Matrons were unlikely to get tips from the passengers they looked after at the end of the cruise, whereas stewardesses, at least half their income was coming from passenger tips.

AT: Clearly these were not military vessels, and I'm wondering if that made women more or less likely to be serving on them, because something that's come up in previous conversations, like when I talked with Bianca Taubert about the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps or DeAnne Blanton on women in the U.S. Civil War, women are always participants, even if they are doing things like cooking and nursing and not necessarily fighting on the front lines, although they are often doing that as well. Women are always there, and it feels like that is mirrored in what you're talking about with the Merchant or Mercantile Navy as well. So we have this idea that

women don't go to war, but that is very rarely true.

[Listen to Bianca Taubert on the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps](#) or [read the transcript](#).

NB: Certainly in the period I'm talking about, I don't think any of the military navies in the world had women at sea in their ships at that time. The nearest you might get would be hospital ships. Sometimes they were run by the military, sometimes not, but hospital ships would have female nursing staff, and sometimes female stewardesses to look after the female nursing staff. But most military ships would not have any females on board whatsoever. But as you rightly say, not being in the military or not being in this part of the military does not exempt you from being exposed to the realities of war.

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And one of the principal purposes of the military Navy, the Royal Navy in Britain's case, was to protect civilian shipping to make sure that the necessary supplies of food and whatever got through. We're an island, we remain entirely reliant on everything that comes by sea. And so in both world wars, there were protection schemes, convoys with escorts provided by the Royal Navy to protect the civilian ships so that they did get through. And these were the ships that these Merchant Navy professional seafarers were working on. So when I talk about a professional seafarer, I'm talking about men and women whose livelihood is going to sea, ship after ship after ship. And they would, in the case of British merchant seafarers, then and now, the difference between somebody who was perhaps a nurse on a troop ship, and a professional seafarer on the same ship, is that the professional seafarer would have a document known as a discharge book. It's mainly a record of service, but it also serves as a kind of passport. And it's a personal book to you, with your picture in the front, and a record of every ship you've been on, and when you joined it, and when you left. And it's signed off by the captain to say that you've been of good behaviour while you've been on board. So these mark out the professional seafarer from everybody else. So one of the tasks was to identify these women, and try and track down their seafaring record. And I had a lot of help from somebody else called Ben Stock, who is the in-house historian for the Merchant Navy Association in Britain. And he had access to records that I don't have access to. So that was a huge help in pinning some of these women down.

AT: Of the women that you profile in the book, is there anyone in particular that you would like to tell us about?

NB: There's a couple. I would like to start with a woman called Lorraine Elizabeth Gleeson. So she was a Scots woman. And although she was born in Glasgow, she ended up in Australia at some point in her life. But at the point that she went to sea, she was living in Australia, her husband was away with the services, and she became a stewardess on a ship called the SS Nanking. Now the Nanking is notorious, there are several books written about it, because the people who were on the Nanking had a really horrendous experience. So what happened was that the ship was en route from Australia to India, when it was attacked by a German marauder called the Thor. Now the Thor was the Germans' most successful deep sea raider. This ship just roamed the oceans, shooting at Allied ships. It was very, very successful. So they were attacked in the middle of the Indian Ocean. And to begin with, it was believed that the Nanking had been sunk. And in the newspaper reports, it was believed that the Nanking had been lost with all hands, because some attack in the middle of the Indian Ocean, what possible help could there be for anybody? They weren't with a convoy escort or anything like that. So this was on the 10th of May 1942, in a very empty part of the Indian Ocean, not near any of the island groups. And they were attacked both by a plane and by the Thor. I'm quoting now, "believing the ship doomed and concerned for the safety of the women and children on board" – so there were quite a lot of families that were being taken to India from Australia to meet up with their husbands and so on – "the captain ordered everybody to take to the lifeboats. The crew disabled the engines, they thought, and tried to sink the ship by opening the seawater valves." However, the Germans quickly realised what was going on and put some of their own people on board and stopped that. They sailed the ship to Tokyo Bay, to the Japanese. And the Nanking remained there until some years later, it was sunk by an explosion that happened in the harbour.

But the people on board, the men, women and children, were passed from one German ship to another across the Indian Ocean, until they also eventually ended up in Japan at Yokohama in July. So this is like two whole months later. They'd been passed from one ship to another across the Indian Ocean. And the Germans wanted to have the Japanese take them on as prisoners of war. Now, the Japanese were not particularly keen to do this because these weren't the normal kinds of prisoners of war, your soldiers or whatever, that they could just put into a normal prison camp. But the Germans agreed to fund the feeding, the costs of this exercise. And they were taken to a former monastery in a place called Fukushima, where the women and children were segregated in one part and the men in another part. And they remained there. So this is 1942. They remained there until 1945, after the victory in Japan.

Elizabeth Gleeson was not the only stewardess who was captured. A Dutch stewardess from a Greek-owned ship, a woman called Caroline Dimitrakopouloy, was also in the camp. Neither of them survived their captivity. Now, you've probably read about the prisoners of war in the more normal types of Japanese prisoners of war camp. This was pretty similar, even though it was civilians, and even though the women and children were involved, this was pretty tough living. In 1944, Elizabeth Gleeson got an infected finger. Her whole arm became infected. And although amputation was attempted, and she seemed to be recovering, eventually she died in April 1945, after three years in captivity. But she never stopped being a stewardess during that time, and feeling that it was her continuing responsibility to look after the passengers, even though they were now in this camp. Only three months after she died were they rescued, 1945. And she's buried in Japan, in the Yokohama Allied Cemetery there. So this was a woman who took her stewardessing responsibilities very seriously, even though she hadn't been a lifelong stewardess like some of the others.

And a completely different sort of story I want to tell you is about a woman who was Glaswegian to her absolute toenails. And this was a woman called Catherine McWatt Armstrong, an older woman born in Govan. And for those of you who don't know Glasgow, Govan was and remains a very working class area with a lot of the people in the area linked to the shipyards on the Clyde building ships. And to this day, the only active major shipyard building ships on the Clyde is at Govan, where they build warships. And Govan remains a very working class area, lots of underprivileged households in the area. Her father worked in the shipyards, the house that she lived in, that area has now been rebuilt, but it would have been a tenement, probably a three or four storey block of flats, probably with shops on the ground floor. So she was born in 1885, but she started her sea going career in 1922. And she joined Anchor-Donaldson Line, a ship called the Royal Mail Ship Assyria. She sailed on older ships, she moved from ship to ship. And eventually, in 1927, she joined a ship called the Elysia, as in Elysian Fields. And that was the ship she eventually was on when it was sunk and she died. And she would have been going on multiple trips backwards and forwards through the interwar period until in June 1942, when the ship, also in the Indian Ocean, a few hundred miles to the northeast of Durban in South Africa. And they were attacked by two Japanese surface raiders while on passage from India to South Africa.

Now, I was just about to send this book to the printers, to the publishers, when my friend Jo Stanley, who is the expert on the history of women at sea, both in the Merchant and the Royal Navies, has written several books about this. She discovered a wonderful newspaper clipping, which was actually published in Australia, which, of course, was where Gleeson had been living at the time we've just heard about. So for some reason, this wonderful story was never published in the British newspapers, even though Armstrong was a Scot. But it was just it was just such a fantastic story of a woman who, she was the only woman on board this ship at the time. And this article was written by the radio officer who survived. And she sadly didn't.

So she was described, "the only stewardess, the only woman on board. She was middle aged and plump, dumpy with little fat legs. And she wore thick-lensed, steel-rimmed spectacles. Mashie," as her Scottish nickname was, "was a Scotswoman, not dour by any means, but she was blunt of speech, and she saw no reason to smile if there was no purpose. But then, when there was a reason for her to smile, her smile was good to see." And she was held in great affection by her shipmates. They thought her very courageous. "She was quietly scornful of all the preparations for any emergency. Foolish, you may well say. But that was Mashie. After all, she had been in some tough blitzes with us, and when Glasgow had its worst air raid. And she would

then sit in her beloved little flat in Govan, high up in a tenement. And when everyone else in Glasgow who had any sense at all was at an air raid shelter, she was sitting there, knitting in the dark. She told us so without any suspicion of boastfulness. It wasn't the sort of thing one boasts about anymore in Britain. It was just plain stupidity, really. But not in Mashie's case. It was faith with Mashie, faith that she could not be harmed unless it was God's will."

So very sadly, and it was due to her sense of duty towards the people on the ship, she was one of the last to leave. Now, this was typical of stewardesses, and indeed stewards. They are disproportionately represented in the lists of Merchant Navy people who died, because stewards and stewardesses, their duty in an emergency – so that the alarms are sounding, everybody else has their emergency stations to go to, most people would have been heading to the lifeboats. The stewards and stewardesses, their duty was to go down rather than up, to go down into the ship, to the deck on which the passengers that they were responsible for, the group of cabins they were responsible for, to check that all those passengers were leaving their cabins, got their life jackets and their outdoor clothing, and were making their way to the lifeboats. So they put themselves in harm's way when the ship was in the most dire straits.

So another newspaper article reported, "nurse vanished after tending wounded." So this is Mashie again. She did nursing duties as well as stewardessing. She stayed behind in a sinking ship to help the surgeon tend to the wounded. They were the last to leave the torpedoed ship as it made its final plunge. The lifeboat into which they leaped was never seen again, and the nurse has now been posthumously commended for bravery. So she was awarded what is called the Merchant Navy Commendation for Bravery at Sea, which is the equivalent of mentioned in dispatches for the armed forces. But it was posthumous. And like so many of the women in this book, she has no grave but the sea. And the radio officer who wrote the article, "The Passing of Mashie, a tribute to a stewardess," he said that "the last anybody saw of her was sitting up to her armpits in water, but still smiling." And it's just... My friend, Jo Stanley, who recommended this article to me, said, "oh, you won't want this sort of emotional stuff. But I thought, "this is the only full sort of pen portrait we have of any of these women. Only a couple of them do we even have photos of them," because these were working class women. Photos were not something working class people could afford or ever have. So we have very few photos of these women, but we have this pen portrait of Mashie, which I think is just so sweet.

AT: So I'm curious, because based on the history that I was taught in school, the Lusitania, which was a commercial vessel that carried a lot of passengers, including Americans, and was sunk by the Germans during World War One. "Remember the Lusitania" was a rallying cry that was used to incentivize public support for the entry of the U.S. into World War One. And so I'm just curious, both from a, I guess, political standpoint, but also from a practical standpoint, because you mentioned, that this ship was sunk in part because it wasn't part of a convoy. It didn't have those protections. And I assume that they had fewer defenses, if any defenses, than a military ship would. So I'm just kind of curious, bringing those factors together, was a merchant or just generally commercial ship safer or less safe compared to a military ship at sea?

NB: That's a really good question. And I don't have the statistics of the comparable numbers of people who died. So something like 35,000, across the two World Wars, merchant seafarers died. And I don't know what the Royal Navy numbers would have been. What I would say is that a Royal Navy ship then and now has far more people on board for its size than a merchant ship would do. So if a Royal Navy ship goes down and is lost with all hands, you're losing hundreds. But if we think about, let's say, an oil tanker, no passengers, you're losing a few dozen. So it's hard to say in terms of them. I don't know the Royal Navy numbers, I'm afraid. Certainly the current, well, actually, the Royal Navy really admired the Merchant Navy for going to sea without any kind of defenses, often in real old rust buckets that couldn't go very fast at all. For the Second World War, where the U-boat menace was much more effective than in the first war, and far more people died at sea in the second war than the first war, even though the merchant fleet was bigger in the First World War. There's a really interesting story regarding the Women's Royal Naval Service, the WRNS ("wrens"), as we call

them, who ran the training scheme for Royal Navy captains to train them how to catch and defeat the U-boat menace in the Atlantic. So there's, "Western approaches" was the term used for the part of the Atlantic on the west side of the British Isles, where people coming across the Atlantic were approaching Britain. And Western approaches was where there is now a museum explaining how the WRN officers started to understand what the U-boats were doing before the actual destroyer captains understood it tactically, and then taught the destroyer captains how to do it. So the U-boats were really successful for quite a while in taking out the merchant fleet. So it was certainly risky. Convoys were only available to Allied ships registered in Allied nations, so Britain, France, Belgium, America.

So another famous woman seafarer who fortunately did not lose her life in the war, Victoria Drummond, she was Britain's first ever marine engineer, and she was sailing on a Panama registered ship that was not entitled to convoy protection and was attacked by the Germans. They managed to limp back to America for repairs because she was able to keep the engines going. And that's an example of, not every merchant ship that was servicing Britain's requirements was necessarily British flagged and entitled to British escort protection.

AT: Well, I assume that, from what you've described, it sounds like these ships are transporting people and supplies and equipment and that sort of thing. They're not actively engaged, like we're not talking about privateers, for example, that are actively harassing the enemy.

NB: No, no, no, there's nothing like that. No. A particular example of the loss of a ship which has made a big impact in Britain to this day, in a way comparable to "remember the Lusitania" for the Americans, was a ship called the Athenia. So the SS Athenia was another ship owned by the Anchor-Donaldson Line. It was doing transatlantic routes backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards for years. And it was sunk just a few hours after the outbreak of war, long before there was any convoy system. So the war broke out on the 3rd of September 1939. And just a few hours later, the Athenia was attacked. And it was a huge shock to the British public because there were 1,700 passengers on board. And actually the number that survived was quite high, but four stewardesses from the Athenia were lost. So Hannah Baird, Alison Harrower, Jessie Lawler, and Margaret Johnston were four women who sailed on the Athenia and never came back. These were all Scottish women, all from Glasgow.

Hannah Baird was born in the north of Glasgow, another working class area called Milton, but she had been living in Canada. So she's not on the British National Merchant Navy War Memorial at Tower Hill. She's remembered instead on the only war memorial I'm aware of in the world that is specific to women merchant seafarers and that is one in Canada. Alison Harrower, she was born in Dundee, but later on she moved to Govan and her last known address was in Govan, this working class shipbuilding area. And I only learnt yesterday, literally, so this isn't in the book and I'm going to have to do something about that. I discovered that there is a war memorial in Govan Parish Church to the seafarers of Govan who died on the Athenia. And I'm going to go and have a look at this on Saturday and I might have to do another edition of this book in order to put this this extra bit in. So, you know, great story. Jessie Lawler, she was born in Kinning Park, which is just along from Govan, again, a very working class area. Her tenement is still there. It looks really run down and not in great condition. The fourth one was the doctor's stewardess. So this was a woman who's slightly socially a class up and she was from Springburn, also in the north of Glasgow. We don't know a great deal about her, but we do have photos of her and Jessie Lawler, but not of Hannah Baird or Alison Harrower. And the last known address for doctor's stewardess Margaret Johnston was in a tenement over some shops, five minutes walk from where I live in the south of Glasgow, which was really lovely. So all of these women are on the Scottish National War Memorial Roll of Honour. Most of them are on the National Merchant Navy War Memorial at Tower Hill.

But in the book as a whole, there are quite a lot of women who are in neither of those. And this book is partly to record their service because they're not recorded in other places. The Athenia, as I said, she sank on the 3rd of September, it made a massive impression on the British public in the press, even though quite a lot

of the people were saved, because it was so soon after war broke out and it was felt to be almost unfair. In fact, the Germans were a bit embarrassed. They tried to say it was a mistake, but what's done is done. And to this day, the 3rd of September is National Merchant Navy War Memorial Day. Town halls fly the Merchant Navy Red Ensign. There are remembrance events all around the country. We have one each year in Glasgow, which all the cadets from the local nautical college parade for. And all around the country, on or around that date, we remember the Merchant Navy people who died in the line of duty from whatever cause, because we're an island nation and we rely on the Merchant Navy of every nation to bring us our food and drink.

AT: So it sounds like most of these women were working class. And I'm curious how much, well, as far as we know, how much of their decision to take on these dangerous assignments, because I have to assume that these women knew that they were going to be in additional danger, even compared to something like, if you're in London during the Blitz, obviously that's also very dangerous. But I assume that these women theoretically could have gotten other jobs probably if they had wanted them. And this wasn't just, "okay, well, it's this or starve." So do we know much about their mindsets and why they chose to continue doing these roles in wartime that I assumed that they had been doing before the wars broke out? And then they chose to continue on those paths, or maybe they weren't doing it before. And they deliberately chose that path when war broke out. And they said, "you know what, this is a great time to be on a ship." You tell me.

NB: Well, okay, so in terms of their decisions, Lorraine Gleeson, Elizabeth Gleeson, she's an example of somebody who didn't have a lifetime career at sea. Her husband was away with the Australian army, and she thought, "what can I do to help the war?" and ended up as a stewardess. But I would say for all the other women in the book, these were mostly career seafarers. Ironically, actually, the outbreak of both the World Wars, because passenger travel for recreational reasons stopped dead entirely, the number of stewardesses that companies required also massively reduced almost instantly. And a lot of stewardesses actually lost their jobs and had to find other work. On the plus side, in wartime, there is always work, and actually quite well-paid work often. But a lot of the stewardesses really wanted to stay at sea and made a big effort to get back to sea as quickly and as often as possible. They saw it as their duty. They saw it as doing their bit for the country, for the war effort. They wanted to be doing this. And we know this because surviving stewardesses said so, and the families of dead stewardesses also said so. In some cases, the families had argued with the women because all of these women were married with children, grandchildren even. And so their families were urging them, "this isn't safe. You'd be safer at home." But the women said, "no, this is my duty. I want to continue doing it." So it was absolutely a positive decision. And they must have known the dangers.

As well as the women who died, all of whom would have been entitled to the war medals that all Merchant Navy people would get, there were a number of honours that were awarded to women who survived and possibly to others. So for instance, Elizabeth May Owen, who was stewardess on the SS St. Patrick in 1941, she was awarded the George Cross and the Lloyds War Medal. Now the George Cross is the highest award for courage available to civilians in Britain. It's the equivalent of the military Victoria Cross. And very few have been awarded to women ever. The Lloyds War Medal, again, very few awarded to women. So that was for courage above and beyond. Victoria Drummond, who I mentioned, the engineer, she got the Member of the Order of the British Empire and the Lloyds Medal for bravery as well. A woman who was escorting evacuee children on the city of Benares in 1941, Mary Cornish. She got the British Empire Medal, as did Elizabeth Plumb, stewardess on the Rangitane, and a number of other women who were stewardesses on a variety of ships. The Merchant Navy commendation was awarded to a total of eight women. So women were being publicly recognised in this role of stewardesses.

So speaking of the city of Benares, I should mention that nurse stewardess Agnes Wallace was lost when the City of Benares was sunk in September 1940. She was from the Highlands of Scotland, and it's unusual in the women that I've discussed in that she was absolutely a middle-class woman who chose to go to sea. So she was born in Ullapool, and her father was a doctor, the local doctor. She had worked in the local primary school,

but she was clearly an adventurous girl because she was the Scottish girl guide, **the** Scottish girl guide who was picked to be a representative of Scotland when a chalet was opened by the World Association of Girl Guides in Switzerland. So that must have been a remarkable adventure for even a middle-class girl to go all the way to Switzerland with a few other girl guides from the rest of Britain for that. She joined Ellerman City Line as an assistant stewardess in 1936, and first joined the City of Benares in 1937. She, having worked in a primary school, must have been an exceptionally well-trained sort of person to take on running the children's room on the ship, and indeed the brochure for the ship makes a special point of emphasizing how the company was taking a special interest in its child passengers by having a well-equipped children's room. By no means every ship would have had one, even if they were carrying plenty of children passengers. And although this job was not normally a high-status one, with Ellerman City it was because Ellerman decided that they were going to promote this provision as part of their selling effort. So it was a very nice room, very well equipped. But then when the ship was lost in 1940, the loss of Agnes Wallace was widely reported because she was so well known in her hometown in Ullapool. "There is deep sympathy with Doctor and Mrs Wallace, and the sad news they have received of their daughter, who is missing, believed drowned, as a result of the sinking of the evacuee ship, City of Benares." So this was another one that made huge headlines because it was an evacuee ship. Everybody put their children on the ship thinking they were going to somewhere safe, and they weren't. So "the loss of such an active and useful young life is deeply regretted."

Now, unlike all the other women I mentioned in this ship, apart from Elizabeth Gleeson, who's buried in Yokohama, there is a war memorial for Agnes in Ullapool. I'm not sure there's actually a body there, but there is a Commonwealth war grave standard slab there in her memory. And unfortunately, the graveyard that is associated with a former church, now the local museum, but it's closed for the winter, so I haven't been there. But there were other women, so Christian Cook, who was chief stewardess on the City of Benares, she was lost as well. She was for Montrose on the northeast coast. It was a major disaster, particularly for the evacuee program and the loss of the children.

AT: As I mentioned at the very start of this conversation, you are primarily, as far as I know, a historian of engineering, and particularly women in engineering. So given that that's not the function that most of these women were serving, what was it about these women that made you say, "oh yes, I need to write a book about them?"

NB: Well, I was a Merchant Navy seafarer myself. I was a deck officer in cargo and ships and tankers for seven years in the 1970s. And today in Glasgow, I'm a member of the local Merchant Navy Association, which is for serving and retired Merchant Navy people. But a number of years ago, I was a city councillor in Glasgow. When you go into the city chambers, there is a glass cabinet in the entrance hall with two thick leather-bound books, which are the Merchant Navy roll of honour books with everybody's names and dates that they died and the ships that they were on. But there's no actual physical Merchant Navy war memorial in Glasgow. The Scottish one is in the port of Leith on the east coast. And I thought, well, we don't have a war memorial as such, but we have these books which are on permanent display. And we have a lot of Merchant Navy people past and present in the city. Could we get some kind of event going? And so on National Merchant Navy Memorial Day, which I mentioned, which is the anniversary of the loss of the Athenia on the 3rd of September, I persuaded the Lord Provost, which is what we call our Lord Mayor, that we should have some kind of an event. So that first event in 2012, I think there were only about 15 people there. But very quickly, it grew in numbers. And today, we have it every year around that time. And there are 400 trainees, cadets that come up from the Nautical College. They march up from the college with the Red Ensign and parade on George Square. Former Merchant Navy people, families of people who have ancestors who were in the Merchant Navy, people who are in the Merchant Navy now, we all parade on George Square. We have a commemoration day. Two cadets from the Nautical College are picked to read out a handful of names from these books. And I had always thought that these books were the role of honor for the men and women associated in some

way with Glasgow. Either they were on ships that were registered in Glasgow or they were from Glasgow themselves. I later discovered when I was writing the book that this is actually the book version of the names that are inscribed on the National Merchant Navy War Memorial at Tower Hill in London. So it includes people from all over Britain and the Commonwealth. There are lots of non-British sounding names in it. So each year that we'd read out a selection of names, including a few women. And I thought, I need to know who these people were. So I started to put the book together. And now I'm hoping that in future years, our memorial event and the other ones in Scotland will be better informed because the local groups will have access to information about women who were from their areas and they will have a clear idea of what the women were doing, how they died and what their sacrifice was for.

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women Podcast. And remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.