

# Women bag all the big diplomatic jobs

The Foreign Office's male bastion has been smashed by a new wave of female ambassadors, writes **Catherine Philp**

Women hold all of Britain's most senior diplomatic posts for the first time after the appointment of the first female ambassador to Paris.

Menna Rawlings's new job means the ambassadors to the United Nations, Washington, Berlin, Tokyo, Canberra, Beijing, Moscow, Paris and Rome are all women.

Rawlings, 53, replaces Lord Llewellyn of Steep, who as Ed Llewellyn was chief of staff to David Cameron. Rawlings has been preceded by 43 male British ambassadors in Paris. The London School of Economics graduate joined the Foreign Office in 1989 and has served across the world, including as high commissioner to Australia.

The turn of the tide for women in the Foreign Office may date back to the appointment of Karen Pierce, 61, as political director. She was swiftly seconded as ambassador to the UN and then given the Washington appointment.

In an interview with *The Times* before her dispatch to the UN, Pierce, now Dame Karen Pierce, recalled how women were banned from the diplomatic service until 1946. Until 1973 they were required to resign if they married and could not continue to serve overseas if they had a child while posted.

When Pierce joined the Foreign Office in 1981, women had only recently been permitted to take on the "hard languages" such as Arabic, Japanese or Mandarin, requiring more than a year of learning.

Leaving her post in Tokyo early to get married, she feared she would be pun-



Caroline Wilson, Menna Rawlings, far left, and Karen Pierce have key Foreign Office posts

## Envoys of the world

### Dame Karen Pierce

The UK's first woman ambassador to the UN, closely followed by the same achievement in Washington.

Almost universally adored in the Foreign Office as a female pioneer, she came from a working-class background and as ambassador

to Afghanistan had a special step crafted so that she could get into a helicopter elegantly.

### Dame Caroline Wilson

Known to viewers of a BBC documentary as the civil servant who calmed Boris Johnson down from a proposed post-Brexit French language cake-themed speech in Paris, Wilson has become the diplomatic *bête noire*

of the Chinese Communist Party thanks to her defences on social media of press freedom.

### Deborah Bronnert

Bronnert has suffered multiple summons to the Russian foreign ministry since taking up her post in January last year during a period of heightened tensions between London and Moscow.

ished professionally. Not without reason: the first married female ambassador was posted in 1987. It had long been the assumption that the ambassador's spouse would not work at all.

Only one woman, Dame Margaret Beckett, has served as foreign secretary but the department has been on a long journey in the attempt to distance itself from its image as an old boys' club.

It is only in very recent years that effort has borne fruit with the highest level posts in key countries given to women. Dame Caroline Wilson, 50, Britain's ambassador to Beijing, took up her job in September last year and swiftly drew the ire of the Chinese Communist Party with her defence of the free press in questioning Beijing.

Pierce made her mark with her spirited, televised denouncement of Russia during the fallout of the Salisbury nerve agent attack before she was posted to Washington.

She was apparently hailed as "fab" by President Trump and has adeptly built bridges with the Biden administration, a more natural match for a diplomat who helmed much of Britain's engagement with implementing the Obama era nuclear agreement with Iran.

Dame Barbara Woodward, 59, replaced Pierce when she left the UN in New York for Washington.

In Europe, the UK is already represented in Berlin by Jill Gallard, 52, and in Rome by Jill Morris, 53. The British embassy in Tokyo, an important ally, is led by the ambassador, Julia Longbottom, 57. Deborah Bronnert, 54, has perhaps the more challenging role of ambassador to Moscow.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has been on a drive to change its image as a bastion of white male privilege and to make Britain's representation abroad more representative of the population.

A wall of individual mirrors in its headquarters in Whitehall's King Charles Street encourages employees to imagine they can represent Britain according to their talents, irrespective of their appearance.

The Foreign Office has previously sought to publicise the increased number of women heads of diplomatic missions. However, it is only over the past few years that senior posts have started to go to women. For years, the Foreign Office sought comfort in the prejudices of foreigners, insisting it was they who would reject a female representative.

Britain is yet to appoint a woman ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

## Line of Duty star hints at final farewell

Jack Malvern

After 36 episodes involving the deaths of 48 people and one dog, *Line of Duty* will come to an end. Probably.

Martin Compston, who plays the beleaguered central character of Detective Inspector Steve Arnott, has suggested that the finale of the sixth series on Sunday night will be the last.

Although he said the decision was up to Jed Mercurio, creator of the BBC drama, he noted that this series would tie up plot strands that have been hanging since the first series in 2012.

"Jed always takes months after [the series ends before deciding whether to do another]," Compston said in an interview for ITV's *The Jonathan Ross Show* to be broadcast tomorrow.

"There's stuff above our pay grade, analytics, figures and all that kind of thing that comes in. He always takes time off. But I think it is important to say, I think this natural story arc that

we've been on for the last six years ..." Ross suggested that he might finish his sentence: "That's coming to an end."

Compston said: "We won't come back just for the sake of it, that's for sure. We'll come back if there's a story to tell.



Martin Compston plays Steve Arnott in the hit TV series

If it ends well maybe sometimes it is best to leave it. But, so, genuinely we don't know." Of the climax to this season he said: "There's a few big answers coming."

The actor, 36, said that he still struggled to prevent his Scottish accent from intruding upon his character's English one. "That dialogue on its own would be hard anyway. Throw the accent in

there ... the scene we did the other night, a 30-pager, trying to juggle the accent at the same time. When I do that voice I can hear him, it's like a costume."

He gets an Englishman to record the lines for him so he can practise. "I'm not naturally good at accents. I need to work harder, which then makes me better because I'm not complacent with it."

He and Vicky McClure, who plays Detective Inspector Kate Fleming, scotched some of the wilder fan theories. Some have suggested the corrupt police officer nicknamed H, must be Anna Maxwell Martin's character Patricia Carmichael because of an anagram.

Fans claimed that an informant told Arnott: "Look beyond the race claim to find H." An anagram of "race claim" and H is Carmichael. Compston said: "Do you know what I love about that one? It's so spot on, but that line never got said ... blew my mind. Jed said: 'No, that line never happened.'"

## Why our favourite film choices are all in the mind

Sophie Freeman

Pessimists enjoy watching thrillers but people high in energy prefer musicals and comedy, a study suggests.

Psychologists who studied men and women of all ages found that natural disposition, or "temperamental traits", could predict taste in films. Temperamental traits are regarded as the "biological core" of personality; we are born with them and they remain stable throughout our lives, although they are fine-tuned through experience.

These "genetically conditioned styles of emotional reaction can predict film preferences", the researchers said.

"Individuals with high scores in the depressive temperament trait are pessimistic, feel inadequate and are guilt-prone," they said. Such people tended to prefer thrillers and disliked animations.

When the film choices of people with "irritable" temperament traits were analysed, they preferred horror films and disliked romantic ones.

And those with more "hyperthymic" traits — high-energy, sensation-seeking and extroverted — liked musicals and comedies. "Hyperthymic temperament was inversely associated with depressive symptoms and this could explain the association with more cheerful genre," the researchers said.

An anxious temperament predicted a liking for horror films and a dislike of documentaries.

Researchers from Messina University in Italy, Columbia University in New York, and Seton Hall University, New Jersey, asked 689 people to complete a survey. The findings were published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*.