



11 August 2009

## Yorkshire women shortlisted for national women of substance awards

Three Yorkshire women have been shortlisted for a national award to find Britain's real women of substance.

**Lisa Salmon** from Horsforth, Leeds; **Felicity Davis** from Wold Newton, Driffield; and **Nicola Slingsby** from Halifax have been chosen to be in the final shortlist of candidates for bestselling novelist Barbara Taylor Bradford's *Woman of Substance Awards*.

The awards have been launched to coincide with the 30th anniversary of Barbara Taylor Bradford's debut book, *A Woman of Substance*, first published in 1979. The book is one of the top 10 bestselling novels of all time with more than 31 million copies sold in over 40 languages and in 90 countries.

Conducted in association with Debenhams, P&O Cruises, and in support of the charity Target Ovarian Cancer, the awards encouraged females across Britain to nominate themselves and/or other women in their personal and professional lives. The three Yorkshire women shortlisted in no particular order are:

- **Nicola Slingsby**, 43, from Halifax. She was nominated by her friend Enid Jackson for being a dedicated mother, looking after her three sons – one of whom is physically disabled – and overcoming great adversity to ensure her sons achieve their dreams
- **Lisa Salmon**, 42, from Leeds. She was nominated by her mother and also her friend Gail Robinson for being an extraordinary human being who has gone through real pain, sadness and a number of tragedies which left her blind. Lisa has managed to raise a family, work and help support and campaign for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance service that saved her life
- **Felicity Davis**, 52, from Driffield nominated herself. After surviving a difficult childhood, two failed marriages with three sons to bring up by herself, her life was on the road to nowhere and Felicity knew she had to do something drastic to change it. She decided to turn her life around and went back to school to study. Now an assistant head teacher, Felicity is helping children to achieve their dreams

Barbara Taylor Bradford says: "The judges were inundated with entries featuring amazing stories about real life women of substance living and working in the UK today. Each of these three women's stories really stood out and truly deserve to be recognised. They are great examples of amazing women who have real substance. I'm particularly pleased we have not one but three shortlisted candidates from Yorkshire up for the award.

Barbara adds: "I'm really looking forward to meeting them at the awards event in London next month where we'll announce the overall winner and at the same time celebrate the publication of my latest book, *Breaking The Rules*."

The awards are being hosted by HarperCollins, Barbara's publisher, and will be announced by Kay Burley of Sky News, on the evening of 10 September 2009.

The overall winner will receive a prize package of a luxury cruise for two people and two children courtesy of P&O Cruises, a full makeover (hair, make-up and manicure) and styling session courtesy of Debenhams Westfield, a £250 Debenhams gift card, a copy of Barbara's latest book, *Breaking The Rules* (due out 3 September 2009), a newly released, luxury bound limited edition of *A Woman of Substance*, plus a DVD package of Barbara Taylor Bradford films.

### Ends

#### Shortlisted Yorkshire case studies (in no order of priority)

##### Lisa Salmon from Leeds



The nomination: Lisa Salmon is married mother of two and a journalist. Eight years ago, while travelling to work to cover a story her car was involved in a head-on collision with a lorry which crushed the car and resulted in her being cut out of the wreckage by fire services and being flown to hospital by air ambulance. Lisa had appalling injuries, including multiple skull fractures, a brain injury, broken legs, feet, arms, fingers, and vertebrae, as well as a crushed face. She also lost the only eye she could see properly with.

In the next months she had 12 operations, one of them lasting 12 hours, to save her life and rebuild her shattered face – she had both cheek bones, both jaw bones, both eye sockets and her nose and forehead rebuilt, and now has 40 plates and screws in her face and arms. The brain injury left her like a child initially, but it healed. Lisa has rheumatoid arthritis, which left her nearly blind in one eye as a child. The eye she lost in the crash was her good eye, which meant she was blinded. The accident also left her disfigured.

Lisa's mother was told she wasn't expected to live through the night - which she did - and was then told she would be in hospital for 18 months but she was out in less than three months. As Lisa was leaving the L.G.I. the head consultant Mr Dominic Bell came to see her, and when Lisa thanked him, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'No, it is I that must thank you, from you we learned that one must never give up, however hopeless the situation'.

Four months after the accident she fell pregnant and had a healthy baby boy called Conor. Conor sadly died two days after his birth after accidentally suffocating against his mother's breast in a Leeds hospital after she fell asleep while breastfeeding him and wasn't checked. An inquest ruled the hospital had failed Lisa and her baby. Lisa has undergone extensive reconstructive surgery on her face, but was not offered the surgery on the NHS after her initial operations. She found a top Harley Street reconstructive surgeon herself and has spent over £17,000 on surgery. Part of this money came from the damages she received from the hospital over Conor's death.

Lisa has gone on to have two beautiful sons now aged five and three years old and juggles her work bringing up her children and working as a features writer with the help of her husband Mark. When she has spare time, she rides her horse Oliver. She is a tireless advocate to raise awareness for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance service that saved her life and has appeared on tv to help its fundraising efforts. According to her friend Gail, Lisa is a remarkable person who is always cheerful and is an extraordinary human being.

Lisa's mum Sheila Salmon sums it up: "If we could bottle the Substance that is Lisa, what a wonderful place the world would become."

### **Nicola Slingsby from Halifax**



Nicky was nominated by her friend Enid Jackson because she admires the dedication she has towards her family, bringing up three children as a single mother. Enid says: "In the day and age of thugs and louts, Nicky has brought up three children to respect other people. They are decent kids and they do Nicky proud".

According to Enid, Nicky is an outstanding woman, dedicated to her children. She has been a single mum since her son Harry was a few weeks old. Harry contracted Meningitis when he was nearly three years old and ended up having to have both legs amputated from above the knee. Harry's body shut down and he was in intensive care for seven weeks and ended up in hospital for six months in total. According to Enid, Nicky survived all this and carried the burden of bringing Harry up by herself as single mum with the support of her own family.

Nicky had to be taught how to administer Harry drugs and how to change his bandages so he could come home from hospital at an earlier date. During this time, Harry, who was nearly three years old, had to have skin grafts because his arm was also affected by the Meningitis and narrowly avoided being amputated too.

Throughout this difficult period of Harry's journey back to health, Nicky was looking after Jack, her other son, and also had to move from the four-storey house she was living in to a home suitable for a wheelchair.

When it came to schooling, Nicky wanted Harry's life to be as normal as possible but faced a year-long battle with the local council to allow Harry to attend the mainstream school his elder brother went to rather than a special needs school. Through her determination and tenacity and strong belief in what was right for Harry, Nicky stayed strong and in the end, won her case.

Nicky has constantly boosted Harry's confidence throughout his childhood and supports him in his passion for wheelchair sports. At the age of 12, Harry was picked for the under 15 year old's Wheelchair Basketball Yorkshire Squad. Now aged 15, he is competing for the International Under 22s Great Britain Squad.

According to Enid, Harry has won numerous awards for himself and Nicky has always supported him while bringing up two other boys and working part-time at Asda. She has dedicated her life to her family, working hard to help Harry achieve his dreams, all on her own, and Enid feels Nicky herself now deserves some recognition.

### Felicity Davies from Driffield, East Yorkshire



Felicity tells her own story: Felicity grew up with a grandmother who was mentally ill. When left alone with her grandmother she would treat Felicity violently for no apparent reason. She suffered abuse on a daily basis. Through these tough times, Felicity developed her own coping mechanisms; optimism and a sense of humour, which she now believes helped prepare her for what lay ahead.

Damaged, she left school and home at 15 years of age. Moving into a one room bedsit with no qualifications and no hopes or expectations, Felicity rebelled against the traumas of childhood by throwing herself into a party lifestyle that helped her forget. At 36, she looked back at two failed marriages, three sons, and a realisation that she had to change the pattern of abuse.

Felicity returned back to school to pick up where she had left off at 15. Finally gaining a Degree in English Literature & Language, and with the support of her three wonderful sons she overcame many challenges. Money was tight but there was never a shortage of love and laughter.

Now aged 52, Felicity is an Assistant Head Teacher at George Pindar Community Sports College in Scarborough, with qualifications to take her to a headship if she chooses. She hopes she inspires all those she teaches to reach for the stars and achieve their dreams.

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#### About Barbara Taylor Bradford

1. Barbara Taylor Bradford was born and raised in Yorkshire. She left school at 15 for the typing pool at the Yorkshire Evening Post. At 18, she became the paper's first woman's editor and, at 20, moved to London and became a columnist and editor on Fleet Street. She published her first novel, *A Woman of Substance*, at the age of 42.
2. Barbara has had 24 books published, all worldwide bestsellers, especially in the UK and America. She is one of HarperCollins bestselling novelists with books sales of over 81 million copies worldwide.
3. Barbara's latest book, *Breaking The Rules*, (her 25<sup>th</sup>) will be published in the UK on 3 September 2009 (*Breaking The Rules*, HarperCollins, RRP £14.99). *A Woman of Substance* 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary paperback will also be published with a new foreword by the author (HarperCollins, RRP £7.99).



### About Target Ovarian Cancer

- **Target Ovarian Cancer** [www.targetovarian.org.uk](http://www.targetovarian.org.uk) – 020 7923 5470 - is a new, dynamic charity fighting to improve life chances and life quality for women with ovarian cancer, by raising money for campaigning, vital research and education. Change is long overdue – the UK has the lowest survival rate in Europe at 30%, unchanged for 30 years.
- “Too many women in the UK are dying from ovarian cancer – 12 a day – because of late diagnosis and a limited choice of effective treatments,” said **Target Ovarian Cancer Chief Executive, Annwen Jones**. “We can and must do much better for women with ovarian cancer and it’s wonderful that Barbara Taylor Bradford and the A Woman of Substance Awards are partnering with Target Ovarian Cancer to raise desperately-needed awareness and funds to help save lives. Women have amazing strengths whether they are battling cancer, holding communities together or striving against the odds to raise families and run careers at the same time. We would encourage everyone in the UK to nominate the women they admire most for the Woman of Substance Awards.”

**Barbara Taylor Bradford will be in the UK in early September and is available for interview. For more information, please call:**

**For more information, pictures, interview requests, please contact:**

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