# Dame Shirley Conran’s legacy of literary success and women’s empowerment endures beyond her estate



The legacy of Dame Shirley Conran, celebrated author of the iconic bestselling novels "Superwoman" and "Lace," resonates deeply in the cultural fabric of Britain. Having passed away at the age of 91 shortly after being awarded a damehood for her contributions to mathematics education, she left behind not just a literary legacy, but also a commitment to philanthropy and empowerment for women.

Conran's journey from a struggling divorcee to one of the wealthiest women in Britain is a story steeped in both ambition and resilience. Her literary career began in earnest with "Superwoman," a guide that not only topped bestseller lists for four months but also appealed to a generation of women seeking to balance personal and professional aspirations. This transformation enabled her to achieve a wealth that included properties such as a chateau near Cannes and multiple apartments in Monaco, as documented in her will published posthumously.

However, her will reveals a significant shift in fortunes. By 2022, Dame Shirley had dispensed much of her wealth to various women's causes and charitable institutions—including funding a new Collection of Modern Art at St Paul’s Girls' School, her alma mater. This highlights her philanthropic spirit and commitment to empowerment and education, particularly in mathematics through the Maths Anxiety Trust, a non-profit she founded to assist those struggling with numerical confidence.

In a poignant twist, her will shows that despite a ten-year estrangement from her son Jasper Conran, a celebrated designer in his own right, the two reconciled before her death. Their relationship, strained after a public falling out in 2002, was mended in 2015, showcasing Dame Shirley's enduring belief in family. She bequeathed half of her remaining fortune to Jasper, alongside leaving properties to her grandsons, Sam and Max, enhancing the narrative of familial love and redemption after years of discord.

Her former husband, Sir Terence Conran—whom she described as the love of her life despite their divorce—remains a significant figure in the backdrop of her story. Together, they had two sons, both of whom followed in the creative footsteps of their parents. This shared legacy extends beyond financial assets; it embodies a spirit of creativity and entrepreneurship that has marked the Conran family name.

Notably, Conran's influence transcends mere wealth or literary fame; she was a pioneer in addressing the often-overlooked subject of women’s issues and societal expectations, particularly through her contributions to the Daily Mail, where she launched the Femail section. Her advocacy for women’s rights, intertwined with her literary efforts, has left a lasting impact on generations of readers and writers alike.

In an era where the debate over cultural appropriation has gained momentum, other public figures like Thomasina Miers have echoed concerns over the limitations placed on creative expression. Miers, a co-founder of the restaurant chain Wahaca, reflected on the pressures surrounding her recent cookbook, illustrating the broader implications of political correctness in the culinary arts. Similarly, Dame Shirley's work, which boldly explored themes of female identity and desire, stands as a testament to the importance of reclaiming narratives that celebrate individual agency.

As we honour the life and achievements of Dame Shirley Conran, we are reminded not only of her literary prowess and financial success but also of her unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others, particularly women. Her legacy serves as a powerful reminder that the odyssey of self-empowerment continues long after one's passing, inspiring future generations to embrace their own journeys with the same tenacity and generosity that Conran exemplified throughout her illustrious life.

**Reference Map:**

1. Paragraphs 1-2: Source 1, Source 2
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5. Paragraph 7: Source 7, Source 5
6. Paragraph 8: Source 3, Source 2

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14713419/EDEN-CONFIDENTIAL-Lace-Superwoman-Shirley-Conran-fortune-Jasper.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/may/09/shirley-conran-bestselling-author-dies> - Dame Shirley Conran, renowned for her best-selling books 'Superwoman' and 'Lace', passed away at 91. She was also the founder of the Maths Anxiety Trust, a non-profit organization aimed at assisting individuals who experience anxiety when faced with mathematical problems. A week prior to her death, she was awarded a damehood in Charing Cross hospital for her contributions to mathematics education. Her son, designer Jasper Conran, announced her passing on Instagram, expressing gratitude to the medical staff and supporters who had been part of her journey.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98z2q1llg7o> - Dame Shirley Conran, the British author and journalist known for her best-selling books 'Superwoman' and 'Lace', died at 91, shortly after receiving a damehood for her services to mathematics education. Her son, designer Jasper Conran, paid tribute to her on Instagram, thanking the medical staff at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. Former Prime Minister Liz Truss also honored Dame Shirley, describing her as a 'life force' and expressing gratitude for her support.
4. <https://shirleyconran.com/about-shirley/> - Shirley Conran, born in 1932, was a British author, journalist, and social entrepreneur. She attended St Paul's Girls' School and later studied at a finishing school in Switzerland. Conran trained as a sculptor and painter before working in textile design. She joined the Daily Mail in 1968 as a design consultant and later became the women's editor, launching the Femail section. After being diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), she began writing best-selling books, including 'Superwoman' and 'Lace'.
5. <https://shirleyconran.com/bio/> - Shirley Conran, born in 1932, was a British author and designer. She married designer Sir Terence Conran in 1955, and they had two sons, Sebastian and Jasper Conran, both designers and authors. Conran worked as a textile designer and later became the women's editor of the Daily Mail, launching the Femail section. After contracting myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), she began writing books, including 'Superwoman' and 'Lace'. She was also involved in various consumer campaigns and founded the Maths Anxiety Trust.
6. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/terence-conran-life-british-author-lace-b2542534.html> - Dame Shirley Conran, known for her best-selling books 'Superwoman' and 'Lace', passed away at 91. She was also the founder of the Maths Anxiety Trust, a non-profit organization aimed at assisting individuals who experience anxiety when faced with mathematical problems. A week prior to her death, she was awarded a damehood in Charing Cross hospital for her contributions to mathematics education. Her son, designer Jasper Conran, announced her passing on Instagram, expressing gratitude to the medical staff and supporters who had been part of her journey.
7. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/lace-anxiety-liz-truss-maths-instagram-b2542529.html> - Dame Shirley Conran, the British author and journalist known for her best-selling books 'Superwoman' and 'Lace', died at 91, shortly after receiving a damehood for her services to mathematics education. Her son, designer Jasper Conran, paid tribute to her on Instagram, thanking the medical staff at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. Former Prime Minister Liz Truss also honored Dame Shirley, describing her as a 'life force' and expressing gratitude for her support.