Women's History Today

The journal of the Women's History Network

Spring 2023

Articles by:
Maroula Joannou
Lisa R. Lindell
Susan Pares

Spotlight on Research
Five Book Reviews
In Profile
Doing History
From the Archives

women's HISTORY NETWORK

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Women's History Network Annual Conference:

'Women and Migration', 1 - 2 September 2023

Call for Papers:

This year's conference will be online, via Zoom. The theme is the history of migration, especially the detrimental impact its gendered nature has had on women. The conference will seek to bring women's voices to the forefront, to examine and highlight their migratory experiences, both nationally and internationally, and across all time periods.

Female Emigration
TO
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

COMMITTEE:

EDWARD FORSTER, Esq. F. R. S. Chairman.

J. DENHAM PINNOCK, Esq. His Majesty's Agent-General for Emigration.

The Committee for promoting the Emigration
OF
Single Women

His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies,

The superior First Class Ship "CHARLES KERR," of 500 Tons,

GRAVESEND
On Thursday, the 9th of July next,

Van Diemen's Land
A FREE PASSAGE

JOHN MARSHALL, Agent to the Committee, 26, Birchin Lane, Cornhill, London.
EDWARD FORSTER, Chairman.

By Authority:

(Image courtesy of State Library of NSW)

Papers can be on any aspect of women and migration but topics may include:

- Labour migration
- The lived experience of migration
- Diasporas
- Slavery and forced migration
- Race, ethnicity and migration
- Refugees
- Pogroms
- The politics of migration/immigration
- Emotion and migration
- Migration in the archives and heritage sector
- Migration and local communities

We are seeking proposals for individual 15 minute papers, or for panels of up to 4 papers, on any of these themes, or other topics broadly connected to women's experiences of migration. We particularly encourage papers which focus on the pre-modern period and/or outside the Western world. To submit a proposal, please visit the WHN webpage https://womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-network-annual-conference-women-and-migration-1-and-2-september-2023/ where you will find a submission form and details of how to submit. The closing date is 22 May 2023.

Proposals for other forms of panels, such as roundtable discussions on the conference themes, are also welcome. We would very much like to hear from those working in the heritage sector or community history groups working on gender and migration. In addition, we will be running a Lightning Talks Open Strand for postgraduate students and ECRs. Lightning Talks should be no more than ten minutes but can be on any aspect of women's/gender history.

Scholars from outside the UK are particularly encouraged to submit proposals.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring 2023 issue of *Women's History Today*.

In this open issue we are excited to bring you two peer-reviewed articles by Mary Joannou and Lisa Lindell. Maroula Joannou's contribution, 'A Summer School of Her Own', discusses the significance and impact of summer schools for working-class women at Newnham College, Cambridge from the 1920s to the 1950s. Using organisational records, advertisements, and personal testimonies of the women who attended, Joannou argues that the summer schools were 'inclusive, inter-generational and non-hierarchical'. Lisa Lindell explores the lives of Ruth Matilda Rowell and Minerva Ursula Cobb, two evangelical preachers in nineteenth-century Minnesota. In the context of many stories of women's ministry being overlooked in the historical record, Lindell argues that 'a tension of the radical and traditional allowed them to achieve what they did'.

In the first of an occasional series of memoir pieces, we are delighted to include an article by Susan Pares about her grandmother Margaret Pares. The article traces Margaret's life alongside her wide-ranging activism in local, national and international women's organisations from the suffrage movement until the late 1950s. Biographers, family historians and those interested in the intersections of individual lives and feminist and social movements are sure to find this fascinating.

Our 'In Profile' section introduces journal editorial team member Samantha Hughes-Johnson, who discusses how she became interested in her research specialisms and some of her advice for historians starting out. Anna Muggeridge shares details of her new project *Madam Mayor: Women in local government in England and Wales, 1918-1939*. Funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant Scheme, the research seeks to uncover the lives and work of women mayors in the interwar years and to illuminate what their experiences can tell us about gender, local politics and political cultures. In our 'Doing History' section, Anne Logan discusses the research she and three fellow historians of women have undertaken with the Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells, and offers a view of the benefits of the participatory research model. We are always happy to hear from network members who are interested in contributing to 'Spotlight on Funded Research', 'From the Archives' or 'Doing History' so please get in touch if you have something that would fit in one of these features.

Cover Image Composite:

Clough Hall and Gardens / Newmham College Summer School 1934. Images courtesy of Newnham College

Contents

Elsewhere, we have our usual features, including book reviews (do get in touch if you see something you'd like to review), committee news and details of our prizes and annual conference. There are plenty of opportunities to be involved in the Women's History Network activities.

We would like to extend our many thanks to Laurel Forster, whose term on the journal editorial team has ended. We are grateful for all of her hard work, ideas and energy. In turn, we are excited to welcome Catia Rodrigues to the journal team.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

Helen Glew, Samantha Hughes-Johnson, Kate Murphy, Angela Platt, Catia Rodrigues, Kate Terkanian

'A Summer School of Her Own': The Newnham College Summer Schools for Working Women 1922-1950.

Maroula Joannou

Emeritus Professor, Anglia Ruskin University

> I unpacked my case and went along to the bathroom. It was a luxury to bathe there, so spotless, white, all central heated, with chromium fittings, warm rails for the towels with plenty of hot water in the spotless bath, while the clothes as well as the towels were kept warm while l was bathing. How quiet after all the noise of London. I don't think the Queen of Sheba ever enjoyed a bath more, for the water was so soft it soon made a bubbling mass of lather.[1]

These are the first impressions formed by Raie Stanton from Stoke Newington, London, who attended a summer school for working women in Cambridge in 1936. Newnham College's fortnight-long summer schools were timed to coincide with the factory holidays in July and August and ran every other year, with some war-related disruption, between 1922 and 1950. Their aim was to enable up to thirty working women to experience the benefits of a 'liberal' (non-vocational) adult education in a supportive residential environment away from the demands and distractions of family and workplace. This article analyses the summer schools in the context of the massive growth of adult educational provision following the recommendations of the 1919 Ministry of Reconstruction Final Report of Adult Education Committee (hereafter the Final Report).[2] This ground-breaking report set out its authors' vision of a vastly expanded educated democracy which they saw as essential for the recovery and wellbeing of a war-shattered nation, including its newly enfranchised women.

What follows is a case study of the fourteen summer schools set up, financed, and taught by women for other women. The summer schools for working women were inclusive, inter-generational and non-hierarchical with a remarkable co-mingling of privileged, highly-educated middle-class tutors, young college students, and working women from different regions and occupational backgrounds in a historic collaboration between Newnham College, University of Cambridge and the Eastern District of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA). The schools belong to the wider feminist histories of the key, but frequently neglected, part played by individual women, women's institutions, and women's organisations in workers' educational initiatives.[3] The records deposited in the Newnham College Archives include the ages and occupations of successful applicants, the audited accounts, balance sheets, application forms, minute book, notes on pedagogy, correspondence between individuals and organisations, administrative documents, press cuttings and a full report of every summer school published in the Newnham College Roll Letter (NCRL). Tutors encouraged adult learners to write to them with reflections of their college experience and news of their progress on their return home, and the discussion on the affective and cognitive aspects of the schools presented below, draws extensively on these student letters and reports.

The First Summer School, 1922. Image courtesy of Newnham College

The suggestion that Newnham College students become involved with initiatives to further working women's education was made in an article in the Roll Letter by Edith Neville, founder of the St Pancras Housing Association and the St Pancras People's Theatre, welcoming the establishment of a College for Working Women at the Holt, Beckenham by the YWCA:

> The success of this College needs to be assured and other Colleges started on similar lines, while all who have known life in Cambridge must long to share this privilege with those who have had little that is inspiring or of beauty in their lives.

Neville proposed that a women's college be set up in Cambridge along lines laid down by the WEA, 'an educational movement controlled by the working class, working in close co-operation with the best minds and best educational institutions of our time.'[4]

The driving presence behind the pioneering summer schools was Clara Dorothea Rackham (née Tabor), a community activist and alumna of Newnham College. Rackham taught intermittently on the summer schools, chaired the Organising Committee and organised the garden parties at Christ's College where her husband, Harris, was Senior Tutor. She had come to national prominence before the war as Chair of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, was the first Labour Party woman councillor elected in Cambridge, and among the first to be appointed a magistrate. A founder of the WEA Eastern District, Clara Rackham was elected Chair of the District in 1920, to the WEA National Executive in 1934 and was appointed a member of the WEA National Education Advisory Committee in 1936, alongside Cambridge alumnae, Shena Simon and Barbara Wootton.[5]

The Adult Education Committee set up by Lloyd George's Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917 was chaired by A. L. Smith, Master of Balliol College, a towering figure in the adult education movement. It consisted *inter alia* of Albert Mansbridge, co-founder of the WEA, Ernest Bevin, a future Labour Foreign Secretary, and Clara Rackham's mentor and friend, the socialist economic historian, R.H.Tawney, who wrote much of the final report. This committee had been tasked with examining the provision for, and possibilities of, education which directly induced thought and reasoning thus enshrining the ubiquitous interwar distinction between vocational and non-vocational adult education.[6] Adult education, according to the authors of the report, 'must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons' but 'should be both universal and lifelong'.[7] It was, moreover, the responsibility of government, local authorities, universities and voluntary organisations, working together wherever possible, to make appropriate provision to meet the legitimate aspirations of ordinary working people and satisfy their demands for an emancipatory education. To facilitate such collaboration, the Adult Education Regulations of 1924 introduced by the first Labour government created 'Responsible Bodies' entitled to state funding for adult education provision and the universities and WEA districts became 'Responsible Bodies.'[8]

The Organising Committee

The organising committee of the Newnham College Summer Schools consisted of Annie Robertson (known as Nan), who had read Modern Languages and Edith Chrystal, a theologian, who 'wore her white hair in a band with a velvet bow, reminding Americans of George Washington', both of whom were representatives of the Newnham College Staff.[9] Clara Rackham and George Pateman represented the WEA while Helen Palmer (née Lamb), a historian and Newnham contemporary of Clara Rackham's, represented the Newnham College Roll. Another regular attender at planning meetings was Sophie Green, Tutor Organiser for Northamptonshire, the first woman appointed to a paid position in the WEA Eastern District. Green had worked in the Co-operative Society's clothing factory as a machinist and had an outstanding record of teaching short courses in Industrial History and English Literature, mainly in the Kettering area, to factory women like herself.[10] Madeleine Symons represented the trade union educational movement, and two students described simply as Miss Maud and Miss Green, the current student body.[11] Symons, a senior trade union negotiator, had worked for the National Federation of Women Workers as Assistant to Mary Macarthur until her death in 1921 and then as Assistant to Margaret Bondfield, Minister of Labour in the Labour government of 1929. Pateman, a pacifist, began his working life in Manchester as a skilled carpenter returning to England after his work with the War Victims Relief Committee in France, to become the first full-time salaried District Secretary of the WEA Eastern District.[12]

Between them the organisers were able to ensure adherence to the core WEA principles of inclusivity, democracy, openness and understanding of the needs of working people while maintaining as little distance as possible between the teacher, while teaching was based on the principle that they had much to learn from one another. They were also able to combine WEA values with Newnham College's expertise in women's education, the university supervision system, and Newnham's history of recognising and responding to any woman student who could demonstrate intellectual curiosity, commitment to her chosen subject and the potential to develop as an autonomous learning subject.

Admissions Policy

Newnham's enlightened admission policy reflected its own institutional history of marginalisation which underpinned the organisers' awareness of the ways in which structural barriers of social class, age, gender and place of origin adversely affected the life-chances of women. In the case of factory women, the reasons were often related to poverty, chronic ill-health, family trauma, poor nutrition and interrupted attendance at school. Some of the women admitted were very young indeed. One, who was 'forced to leave school at thirteen for cruelly long hours of work in a factory, had at length begun to fulfil her ambition – to take up her education again where she had been forced to abandon it'.[13]

The organisers set out to attract a diverse intake in

terms of geographical region recruiting from Yorkshire, London and Birmingham, the north and north-west and the 'distressed areas' in the 1920s and 1930s. There were applicants from the United States, Scandinavia and Australia. Enthusiasm for study was always the primary criterion for acceptance. By 1928 the organising principles had been established giving priority to manual workers rather than lower middle-class (and some working-class women) in white collar jobs:

> It is our definite policy to make this summer school a starting place for those who have had little or no other opportunity of continuing their education. Those whom we admit are chiefly manual workers, and they cannot be taught successfully in small classes together with elementary school teachers, clerks and typists who had more education to begin with and for whom other summer schools are more suitable.[14]

This policy was not rigidly enforced and over the years some office workers were admitted at the organisers' discretion. But four women who had attended previous schools were rejected in 1928 and redirected to the WEA summer school at Cheshunt College, a mile from Newnham, organised annually by George Pateman. The WEA summer school and the Newnham School worked harmoniously together sharing lectures, sporting events and excursions whenever the dates coincided.

The organisers made no discrimination on the grounds of age and no distinction between married and unmarried women, welcoming married women as students at a time when feminists were fighting the marriage bars which forced many to give up jobs in education, local government and other professions. Newnham's policy was to admit the daughters, wives, mothers and sisters of working men employed in the houses of their relations, thus acknowledging domestic labour to be work, albeit unwaged. 'Housewife' was the occupational classification of the majority of entrants in 1944 and the summer school was sometimes colloquially (and inaccurately) referred to as 'the mothers' course' or the 'housewives' course.' Nor were married women admitted on sufferance. On the contrary, there was fulsome admiration and respect for the juggling acts that, to give one example, a mother of eight with one adopted child had performed:

> It is hard to imagine the amount of family reorganisation required to make it possible for these wives and mothers to leave all their responsibilities behind them for a fortnight. Relations and neighbours play a very generous part in taking charge of orphaned husbands and children.[15]

The working women themselves testified to the personal advantages of living in a small community with their own room, mutual support and strong inter-generational awareness.

Recruitment

A strong factor in recruitment was personal recommendation. Applicants were required to provide references, perhaps from a university settlement, a trade union secretary or a WEA tutor, and the organisers were in regular contact with businesses in broad sympathy with their general objectives.[16] In addition to local authorities such as Warrington and District Council and Quaker-run firms and voluntary groups including Clarks' Shoe Factory in Street, where Annie Robertson had worked in the Personnel Department, and the Cumberland Friends (Quakers) Unemployment Committee, the mailing list included some large well-known firms: Pye Radio (Cambridge), ICI (Buxton), the Dewhurst Mill (Skipton) and Turner Brothers (Manchester), which Clara Rackham had known as a Factory Inspector. Among the women's organisations circulated were the Townswomen's Guilds, the Electrical Association for Women, in which Ellen Wilkinson was prominent, and the Women's Co-operative Guild, in which Clara Rackham was active.

Apart from Ancoats in Manchester, where she had volunteered in the war, and Toynbee Hall, in which Harris Rackham was the Cambridge University Representative, university settlements on the mailing list included

Tennis Whites. Image courtesy of Newnham College

Pontypool, the Presbyterian Settlement at the East India Docks and the Mary Ward Settlement. Among the adult education centres were Fircroft in Birmingham, Battle Abbey College in Midlothian, the Adult School Union and Morley College. Sympathetic trade unions were, in the main, the smaller unions with which the WEA already had established contacts, for example, the Landworkers' Union. The Tailor and Garment Workers' Union and the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives were both active in Northamptonshire and the Union of Draughtsmen, the Railway Clerks Union, the NUR and ASLEF were all firmly established in the Romsey area of Cambridge.

Newnham College was situated in the hamlet of Newnham on the edge of Cambridge and surrounded by footpaths, open fields and countryside. It was founded in 1871 by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Henry Sidgwick and their circle of intellectual friends to organise special 'Lectures for Ladies' in Cambridge. The college was committed to measuring women's achievement on its own terms. A significant proportion of early applicants had not attended anything approximating a school and Newnham took the view that women should do as much academic work as they could in the time frame best suited to their needs. From 1881 women sat the Tripos examination papers but had their results recorded on a separate women's class list. Women were granted titular degrees from 1921 but Cambridge University did not award women full degrees until 1948, the last of the ancient English universities to do so.

In her novel *Still Life*, A. S. Byatt described Newnham College as being 'outside, but not far outside, Cambridge University proper' and having the 'proportions and atmosphere, with its Dutch red-brick gables, its corridors, landings, solid bannisters, and mansarded attics, of a comfortable country house.'[17] Clumps of daffodils and irises were ubiquitous in the grounds and in the summer, women students would sit under the trees reading individually or in small groups while enjoying the scented roses, herbaceous borders, shrubberies and the sunken pond in the beautifully laid-out college gardens.

In *Life Changing Things Happen*, Sharon Clancy and John Holcroft utilize theoretical insights drawn from Bourdieu's notion of Habitus to identify the importance of the built environment and spaces in creating a sense of self-esteem as crucial to the learner's experience of residential adult education. They emphasize the learner's need for quiet spaces such as libraries, communal areas where discussion and social interactions can take place outside classes, and individual private rooms for adults to whom privacy was unknown.[18]

Many working women expressed their appreciation of the buildings designed by the architect, Basil Champneys, in the Queen Anne domestic style with their individually furnished study bedrooms. As E. N. Mellor reflected in *Women's Outlook*, the journal of the Women's Co-operative Guild, on 19 December 1936:

> I was given a room which looked out on to beautiful lawns, flower gardens and tennis courts. The room was most comfortably furnished with a low bed, easy chairs, soft cushions, an oak desk, and a table. Large cut glass vases held bunches of sweet peas, and soon l felt at home.

Virginia Woolf's visit to Newnham College (fictionalised as Fernham) on 20 October 1928, to read the paper published in 1929 as the feminist polemic *A Room of One's Own*, took place a matter of weeks after the School for Working Women had its summer run, from 18 July to 11 August 1928. Woolf's treatise opens with recognition of the prodigious energy that women had put into fundraising to build the college in the face of indifference or hostility from men. Cambridge women did not initially have equal access to all university facilities but as Cambridge University made progress towards gender equality, so women's opportunities grew with their admission to university lectures, laboratories and libraries. However, women's memories of their own historical exclusion were still strong. 'I thought of the shut doors of the library; and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in…' remarks the narrator of *A Room of One's Own*.[19]

What made Newnham exceptional was the college's determination that the Summer School's working women should share everything (except their written assignments) with Newnham's own students in residence in the Long Vacation and unexpected friendships sometimes developed between the two. The working women enjoyed access to places of tranquillity, to gardens and historic buildings they had come to think of as belonging to the privileged few and never for working people like themselves, and to the same corridors, libraries, study bedrooms, communal, social and recreational areas and activities. They were invited to join in student society meetings, student parties, and student discussions out of class. 'l had noticed nothing of the 'old school tie' spirit at Newnham. This was an aristocracy of intellect and kindness', wrote an unnamed student. 'There had been real comradeship between us and everyone else. There were no conventions, no restrictions, absolute freedom of thought…'[20]

Working-class women luxuriated in running hot

By the Pond (no date).
Image courtesy of Newnham College

water, modern plumbing and clean towels and enjoyed the freshly prepared meals. Vegetarians were well-catered for with soups, salads and iced desserts. 'The refrigeration was effective' and the 'knotty problem of serving hot food *hot*' had been solved, M. Pearson reported to Annie Robertson in 1936. But what really moved them was the close interest their tutors took in them as individuals and the trouble taken to make them feel welcome. As A. Kingham, a yarn-checker from Keighley, wrote to Helen Palmer in 1928:

> The largest part of my debt is really yours. Yorkshire people are famous for their homely welcome but your welcome outshone them all. You opened the door for me in a new world and under your kindly guidance l felt at home. I stepped into a little niche which had been warmed and prepared for me.[21]

A Short History of the Newnham College Summer Schools

The first experimental summer school took place in 1922 with four of the initial twenty-seven students from the Rowntrees 'model' factory in York describing their occupations as 'forewomen in cocoa works'. The college charged two guineas per week for board and tuition was provided free. A non-hierarchical teaching style was adopted which relied extensively on small group discussions. Formal lectures took place in the main college.

All classes were in the morning with afternoons free for private study, sport, social activity, excursions and the ever popular punting expeditions to Grantchester for tea, gliding past the pollarded willows and buttercup meadows. Students were offered a choice of classes in English literature, with a focus on the Romantic Revival and lectures on Shakespeare, or History with Modern History since 1814. Fifteen students took Economics studying Wages, Unemployment and Trade Unions. Economic Theory was considered too detached from ordinary life to be taught to women with only a basic education but Economics was always a core subject and popular with factory workers from the Rowntree and Bourneville works.[22] There was an evening lecture from Clara Rackham's friend, Geraldine Jebb of Armstrong College, Newcastle, a former Director of Studies in Economics at Newnham. Other lecturers were part of Rackham's extensive friendship circle including Alice Barbara Dale, a social psychologist and distant relation by marriage.

The first summer school received the personal endorsement of Albert Mansbridge, President of the WEA, who presided over a one-day conference on Adult Working Women's Education in the college organised by the women's societies in Cambridge which had all sent delegates in jubilant mood after the election of women to the city council and the first batch of women magistrates in 1921. Several working women spoke. This conference was also attended by women from Beckenham College for Working Women, the Quaker-influenced Adult School Union, Ruskin College, Oxford, the WEA, and the Women's Co-operative Guild.[23]

Buoyed up by the positive feedback, the committee offered a second school in 1924. There was a contingent of seven from Scotland and the North and seven from the Midlands, with nine from London, two from the West of England, one from Kent and two from Cambridge. Three courses of study were offered: English Literature, European History and Economics (retitled Social Questions) with most signing up for Social Questions, seven for Literature and one for History. Guest lecturers were offered by Madeleine Symons on industrial conditions in China after the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 and by M. Gwladys Jones of Girton College on William Wilberforce.

The summer school coincided with the twenty-first birthday of the WEA on the August Bank Holiday. Trinity College lent their Fellows' Garden to the WEA for a celebratory party and a contingent of working women heard speeches from Frances Mansbridge, co-founder of the WEA, and the Vice Chancellor. This school had its moment of high drama when a Miss Nation on a punting expedition to Grantchester, dived into the river to rescue a man clinging to an upturned canoe. The limelight-averse student did not wait to be thanked and the man in question wrote to the local paper to express his gratitude.[24] One of Sophie Green's students, Kate Marlow, a boot and shoe operative from Desborough, spent so much time telling the women in her factory about Newnham College that 'I've been in great danger of getting my notice.'[25]

Recruitment in 1926 was slow due to the General Strike in May, some women at the Bourneville factory in Birmingham, run by the Quaker Cadbury family, having come out in support.[26] The Cadburys were generally regarded as enlightened, albeit paternalistic, employers and one student was paid for by the Bournville Men's and Women's Joint Work Council.[27] The reputation of the school had reached the Duchess of Atholl, Scotland's first woman MP at a conference for elementary teachers of History. The Duchess, appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education by Stanley Baldwin in 1924, made an impromptu visit to Newnham to meet the students. One hundred and twenty five members of the Roll, doubtless mindful of their own hard-fought struggles to gain an education, generously responded to an appeal in the Roll Letter of 1925, enabling twenty working women to receive bursaries in 1926. Another bursary was funded by Cambridge women in the International Labour Office in Geneva where Clara Rackham and Madeleine Symons had personal contacts.

In 1926, the organising committee felt able to recommend that henceforth all lecturers should be paid at a flat rate of ten shillings per hour. Payment to eight teachers amounted to fifty-nine pounds and five shillings, plus ten pounds and ten shillings for the board of two lecturers who resided in College and worked on the summer school full time. Of the tutors paid, four generously returned their money to the fund. This amounted to twenty-six pounds and ten shillings, enabling a healthy balance to be shown in the audited accounts.[28]

The five students accepted in 1928 were recommended by Sophie Green who had sent a contingent to the three previous schools accompanying them herself.

Green, a brilliant woman of working-class origins, whose own school education had been sadly curtailed, led by example and was awarded a scholarship to the Bryn Mawr College Summer School in the United States. An advertisement in *The Daily Herald* produced two students. The Co-operative Society in York sent one; the Frances Martin College for Working Women in London, one; Rowntrees three; Bourneville two; seven were recommended by members of the Newnham College Roll and five by students on earlier schools. Notices placed in *The Highway*, the 'permanent shop window' of the WEA, *Labour Woman*, *The Co-operative Monthly, Home and County*, and, on occasion, provincial newspapers such as *The Darwen Weaver*, read by textile workers in Lancashire, were used for recruiting purposes.[29]

Pedagogy and the Centrality of English Literature and Language to the Curriculum

The teaching methods were those needed to make difficult ideas and concepts accessible to women with a rudimentary education. Pedagogy was self-reflexive and imaginative use was made of audio visual aids. Clancy and Holcroft pinpoint the influence of the Danish Folk High School movement on British adult educators which relied on the concept of *Enlivenment* (animation in Danish), a pedagogical approach in which teachers spoke directly from the heart on matters that they found inspiring and measured their success by their ability to communicate their own love of their subject.[30]

A love of English Literature came high on the list of private (and not so private) passions although English Literature was a relative newcomer to Cambridge University. The English Tripos was established in 1917 and the English Faculty in 1926. That the study of literature was a transformative, life-enhancing activity was an article of faith for tutors who believed that working class women with, as Edith Neville put it, 'little that is inspiring or of beauty in their lives', had as much to benefit from drama, poetry and fiction as their more privileged counterparts.[31] Literature was always a bedrock of the curriculum with students taught practical criticism and the close reading of literary texts developed by I. A. Richards in the 1920s which is still associated with 'Cambridge English' today. Compulsory tuition in written and spoken English to develop their confidence as speakers and writers was added from 1932.

The literature strand in 1928 was based on writers who had attended Cambridge University. Students vividly remembered exploring a beautiful city crammed with literary associations, tracing the footsteps of Marlowe, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Tennyson and exciting visits to Corpus Christi, Christ's, St John's, Jesus, Trinity and the Fitzwilliam Museum to see their portraits and manuscripts.[32] The literature students in 1932 had a particularly rigorous course on the reading of poetry, the critical lexicon and 'New Criticism'. The poems of T. S. Eliot were on the syllabus in 1934.

In keeping with the spirit of the Final Report which emphasised the intrinsic benefits of learning for its own sake — as opposed to acquisition of skills to fit the labour market — the Newnham schools did not teach to any recognised academic or vocational qualifications. The tutors were, however, committed to taking any participant's desire to satisfy her intellectual curiosity with the utmost seriousness. If a woman expressed an interest in a subject not on the curriculum, individual supervisions would, wherever possible, be provided. Coaching in physiology was arranged for an attendee who hoped one day to train as a nurse and in Latin for a domestic servant from Lancashire who wanted to learn Roman history. Special teaching in architecture and in anatomy was organised at the request of two other students.[33]

The teaching staff showed exceptional commitment and some found the response of the students 'so immediate, so genuine and so sustained as to make all work with them a pleasure' that they chose to come back year-after-year.[34] The working women had no direct representation on the organising committee but the curriculum was continually amended in terms of their needs and feedback. Music was introduced in 1932 with evening lectures on the basic elements (timbre, pitch, melody, harmony, rhythm) by Miss Lawes, illustrated by singers she had assembled. She was much in demand as a leader of community singing organised by the students themselves. Geography underwent a number of metamorphoses, 'We had been warned that to propose a course called 'Geography' would be to deter anyone from taking it!', so this was next advertised as 'The World We Lived In'.[35] 'The World and its Trade' was taught in 1932 and illustrated with large maps, photographs and produce from different countries.[36] Physiology was first taught in 1934. Dr Alex Wood, a physicist, gave a well-received talk on colour at the Cavendish Laboratory, and George Pateman a lantern lecture of the history of Cambridge. The opening and farewell parties were often 'triumphs of ingenuity and organisation' with short, improvised skits by the students such as the comic sketch written by Mrs Wenham, of the Plumstead Literary Institute, on the final day.[37]

The WEA school at Cheshunt in 1936 invited the working women to their evening lectures including a talk on *Hamlet* by Professor John Dover Wilson which they appreciated as they had seen the Marlowe Society's production of the play in Regency dress at the Arts Theatre and the English class had been expertly prepared. One afternoon was spent admiring the treasures in the Fitzwilliam Museum especially the pottery. They were asked to a discussion organised by the Newnham undergraduates on the ethics of birth control with hardly anyone present speaking against. The working women themselves held a debate on the proposition that 'dictatorship is the best method of promoting progress at the present time' which was overwhelmingly defeated. A visit was organised to the Co-operative Society's 'state of the art' Creamery in Cambridge, where they were impressed with machines which separated milk, weighed eggs, washed bottles and made pats of butter, 'I was pleased to notice that all the workers seemed very happy and that they worked under good conditions and in light and airy rooms'.

Small groups were taken to the interior of the

imposing new University Library, with its 157 foot, seventeen storey tower designed in 1934 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott who had also designed the Battersea Power Station and the red telephone box:

> I revelled in all the modern beauty and freshness of this building… Then there are wonderful gates … the architect's idea of the 'Gates of Heaven'. It is a marvellous place and it should be, for it cost £3,000,000.[38]

There was the usual party at Christ's College where the students were shown the Roman Baths, the 300 year-old mulberry tree planted by John Milton, and treated to a 'dainty tea' with lemonade and ices served on the college plate.

In her report of 1938 published in *Woman's Outlook*, Margaret Robertson, the only Scot, and one of two members of the Women's Co-operative Guild present, remembered an inspiring address from Lionel Elvin of Trinity Hall on 'The Working Class in Literature'. The NCRL also includes many examples of lively debate about lectures and discussions on, for example, the paucity of novels of working-class life and the difficulties confronting would-be writers. There was a lecture on the history of the Jews in England by a Jewish doctor at Trinity College who addressed the persecution of the Jews in Germany and Austria. There was also a tour of Linton Village College built in 1937, the third of Henry Morris's village Colleges in Cambridgeshire. Morris was the Chief Education Officer of Cambridgeshire, whose ambition was to regenerate the decaying local economy by bringing new opportunities for lifelong learning to rural communities. Annie Robertson noted that the students, 'were delightful people to teach, eager and full of lively curiosity, and the majority derived great intellectual satisfaction from their work'. The committee was able to make a grant of twenty-five pounds towards Miss Hyett's expenses to attend Hillcroft College, the National Residential College for Women. Miss Hyett had shown a particular appreciation of English literature in 1936. She also took an active part in public affairs, in politics, in Co-operative Society work and in local government administration. The committee felt she would derive great benefit from a year at Hillcroft to help her public work.[39]

On the roof, [no date] Image courtesy of Newnham College

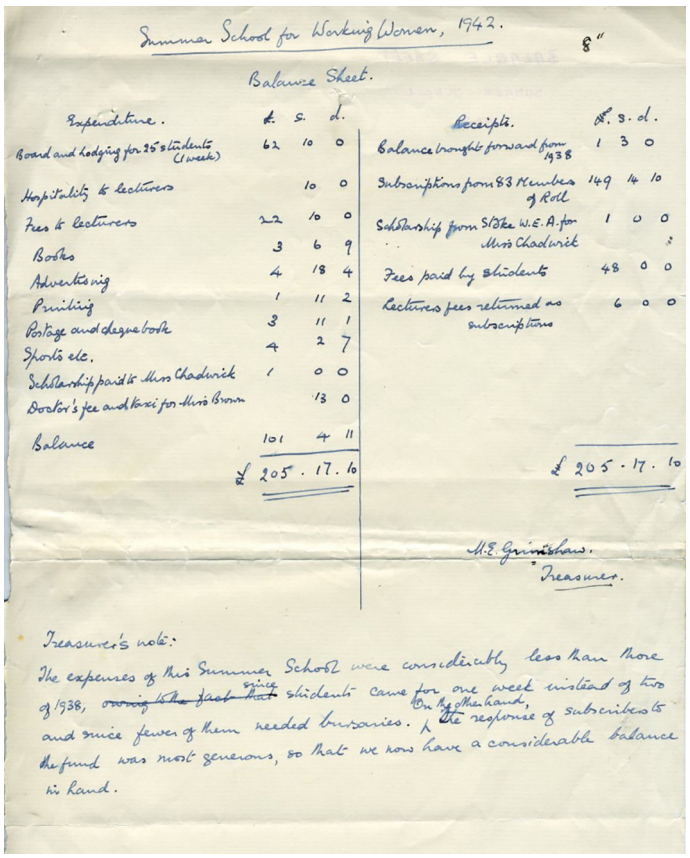
The uncertainties of war meant that the summer school planned for 1940 had to be abandoned. As Philippa Fawcett observed in April 1941, in a response to Helen Palmer's appeal for financial support:

> Your letter happened to be put in my box together with the P.M's exhortation to STAND FIRM in case of invasion. It would be very difficult both for the College & the Summer School students if the invasion occurred while the school was going on.[40]

But at the Annual Meeting of the Roll in April 1941, members from London spoke of the keen desire among working women to continue their education. In 1942 few women could be spared from factory or home for a fortnight so it was agreed that this should be reduced to one week. The eleventh summer school, advertised in the popular periodical *Woman's Own*, was held in 1944 with twenty-seven students whose occupations ranged from housekeeper, railway clerk, garage hand, charge hand in boot and shoe factory, land girl, and inspector of precision parts for aircraft, chosen from the 700 who made initial enquires. This interest was prompted by an article in *The Daily Mirror* captioned 'Working Girls as Undergrads.'[41] The demand was overwhelming, postage costs high and extra clerical assistance was needed to deal with the correspondence. However, most applicants were in a position to meet their own costs and only eight pounds was needed to help pay for student board.

Given a choice between limiting numbers to make individual attention and full participation in college life possible or a larger school run on more impersonal lines, the organising committee decided to restrict numbers while approaching Girton College with the suggestion that they run a school in alternate years. The first school at Girton was held in 1945 and was widely reported in the press, including an illustrated article in *Picture Post* entitled 'What Mother Looks Like When She's Learning.'[42] A second course on very similar lines to Newnham's ran in 1947.

Because of the war, the 1944 school was drawn from a narrower catchment area with the majority in their twenties and from London and the South East and they got on exceptionally well with the college students. The organisers were 'only too thankful that those who had been sleeping in the shelters for weeks past had at least a fortnight free, not only for study, but from flying bombs.'[43] The summer school was graced with perfect weather; very hot days with cloudless blue skies and little groups were once again to be seen strolling in the garden, listening attentively while one student read aloud, or under a shady tree deep in discussion. 'To these people education is still an ideal to be fought for.' The fact that most had read few books was atoned for by their enthusiasm and responsiveness to new ideas. 'They were delightful people to teach, and well worth knowing as individuals.' 'Many of them did not wholly regret the unsettlements of wartime, since they had come to lead more adventurous lives as a result, to think, and to gain wider interests.' They 'were continually providing us with surprises; we found among them a garage hand with a passion for Chaucer, whose works she had explored entirely on her own initiative; a youthful novelist, whose first book had been written mainly in a London air-raid



Summer School for Working Women, 1942.

Balance Sheet.

Expenditure.	£.	s.	d.
Board and lodging for 25 students (1 week)	62	10	0
Hospitality to lecturers		10	0
Fees to lecturers	22	10	0
Books	3	6	9
Advertising	4	18	4
Printing	1	11	2
Postage and cheque book	3	11	1
Sports etc.	4	2	7
Scholarship paid to Miss Chadwick	1	0	0
Doctor's fee and taxi for Miss Brown		13	0
Balance	101	4	11
	£205	17	10

Receipts.	£.	s.	d.
Balance brought forward from 1938	1	3	0
Subscriptions from 83 Members of Roll	149	4	10
Scholarship from S/Sec W.E.A. for Miss Chadwick	1	0	0
Fees paid by students	48	0	0
Lectures fees returned on subscriptions	6	0	0
	£205	17	10

M.E. Grimshaw.
Treasurer.

Treasurer's note:
The expenses of this Summer School were considerably less than those of 1938, owing to the fact that since students came for one week instead of two and since fewer of them needed bursaries. On the other hand, the response of subscribers to the fund was most generous, so that we now have a considerable balance in hand.

Summer School Accounts, 1942.
Image courtesy of Newnham College

shelter, was published when she was fifteen.'[44]

The college's history of support for international relief efforts, for example, the Save the Children Fund and Basque refugee children evacuated to Cambridge, was reflected in the summer schools' emphasis on current affairs and global citizenship. There were four evening lectures on European Reconstruction in 1944 by Francesca Wilson, a Quaker and distinguished humanitarian, who had helped Polish refugees in Hungary as well as Czechs to join the French army with false identity papers.[45] The Labour Party had announced its intention to take the coal mining industry into public ownership and there was a lively outdoor debate on the topic, 'should the mines be nationalised?' with some women who had felt out of their depth emerging as unexpectedly persuasive public speakers. 'It is difficult to convey the pleasure with which the teachers saw how some of the members of the school had grown in confidence and power of self-expression even in a fortnight.'[46]

Thirty students attended in 1946, the youngest demobbed from the ATS at twenty-one and the oldest who had travelled from Norway at fifty-five.[47] Whatever this cohort lacked in formal education they made up in enthusiasm and curiosity. Five courses were offered: Music, Natural Resources, How the Empire Grew and How it Works, How the Body Works, and English Literature. All attended classes in written and spoken English. Georgina Bacchus illustrated her popular lectures on classical music with gramophone records and gave students practice in following scores, identifying instruments and analysing musical forms. Five began to learn the violin and three the recorder, two of whom played at the closing party. The BBC visited and devised a programme about the school broadcasting in French for the European service. The main outings were a trip to the cathedral city of Ely and to the Arts Theatre to the Marlowe Society's production of *The Tempest*. Smaller parties visited the Botanic Gardens. Fifty pounds from the balance in the books was used to provide a bursary at Hillcroft for a Miss Tredwell who had attended in 1944.

Five courses were offered in 1948: How to Enjoy and Understand Music, Great Britain and the Empire; How it Grew and How it Works, the Economics of our Food and Clothing, Physiology, English Literature and compulsory Written and Spoken English. The whole school was carefully prepared to appreciate the Marlowe Society's production of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and a special trip to see Webster's *The White Devil* was arranged for the literature group. Torrential rain was not allowed to dampen the spirits or to end the punting expeditions on the Backs. Gazing at the lawns of St John's College, beautifully green in this rainy summer, a member of the literature group, unexpectedly observed, 'Not a daisy anywhere, not even to please Chaucer.'

Visits were made to the Newnham Library during wet afternoons with students scrutinising the mathematical shelves, taking down Darwin or dipping into the Doomsday book. 'These women were avid to learn', wrote Elizabeth Mackenzie approvingly:

> In lectures they let no unknown word or phrase slip by unquestioned. They took notes, often in expert shorthand, but never slavishly, or sacrificing their attention. In discussion, all the lecturers remarked that the members of their groups spoke clearly and to the point.[48]

The acceptance letter sent to successful applicants in May 1950 asked them to bring their ration book with rations to cover the two weeks of tuition and their National Registration identity card.[49] Twenty-eight students attended of whom fourteen were over forty. The average age was thirty-eight and the majority were housewives, a statistic that reflected the desire to return to 'normality' as war time nurseries were closed, service men came back and women left the factories.[50] This summer school was to be the last. Their existence had been largely dependent on the fund to which members of the Roll had contributed generously but six years of war privations had eroded savings and charitable giving. The fund was now exhausted and the final school was solvent only through an unusually large donation from the Agnes Ramsey Fund. An appeal for support in the 1951 Roll Letter yielded a disappointing eighteen pounds and it was with great regret that the college decided that a summer school could not be held in 1952.

Conclusions

This discussion of the pedagogy and changing curriculum of the Newnham College Summer schools links the history of one specific educational institution to wider educational debates and broader considerations about the resourcing and contents of women's education

and the meaning of 'adult education for a social purpose'. The working women's feedback show the college buildings, gardens and excellent facilities as crucial to the processes of accelerated learning. The students affirmed their indebtedness to individual staff for making them 'feel at home' (a recurring phrase). In the main, tutors warmed to their students' desire to learn and tried within their own horizons of experience and expectations, to avoid condescension, though the odd reference to 'low intelligence' grates on modern sensibilities.[51] In turn, women expressed their determination to continue reading, to set up study groups where they lived, or to join the WEA and adult education classes they had hitherto considered too difficult. They also voiced their desire to see that their daughters received the educational opportunities that they had never had themselves.[52]

There is no evidence to suggest that working-class women's study at an elite institution produced unrealistic aspirations or upwardly mobile attitudes at the expense of their own working-class loyalties and identifications. However, the summer school did give these students the confidence to make important changes at crucial junctures in their personal and working lives inspired by the support and example of other women. Violet Shorney, a shorthand typist from Newport, Monmouthshire, was accepted at Coventry Training College and gave up her office work to become a teacher, 'I would like you to know that the course l am taking now is entirely due to the influence of the Newnham Summer School last year.'[53]

Eliza McKiernan from South Shields described going to her public library in 1942 and submitting her book list, 'Imagine to my surprise, to find they didn't have one!' Nevertheless, she and her husband became regulars in the non-fiction section when, previously, 'we used to avoid [it] like the plague'.[54] Such testimonies recall the school experience as a momentary, horizon-expanding respite from workaday lives of drudgery—a blissful, never-to-be forgotten break in routines of unrelenting toil, incessant money worries, recurrent bouts of illness and responsibility for loved but needy dependants. 'I am afraid our WEA came to an abrupt end when our baby daughter was born', added Mrs McKiernan, who developed pernicious anaemia after the birth, 'all my real troubles started then.'[55] Mrs Routledge wrote in April 1938 to say that she had organised a small WEA class on Economics and Industrial History in the shipbuilding town of Jarrow from which the Jarrow March of the unemployed had set out in 1936 led by their MP, Ellen Wilkinson. 'Jarrow is prospering a bit now through the armament programme but there are still four thousand unemployed', she explained, adding that, 'Mr Routledge is working just now but he only works a week or two as he is on repair shipbuilding and that never lasts long.'[56]

When visits were arranged, often at the students' behest, to observe working conditions on the shop floor (for example, the Chivers Jam factory in Histon and the Co-operative Creamery), the students reported that these were good, well-run, workplaces. However, trade union membership and organisation appear to have been of little significance to them, although union officials, such as Arthur Allen of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, were active in the leadership of the WEA Eastern District. In contrast, the summer schools at the Bryn Mawr Liberal Arts College for women in Pennsylvania had a rigid policy that half their students should be trade union members.[57] Ruskin College, Oxford, which voted to admit women in 1919, educated thousands of working women at its summer courses many of whom were to occupy key trade union positions. One working woman at Newnham College in 1928 described herself as a Labour Organiser and one young Communist brought in *The Daily Worker* regularly in 1936 but they were exceptional.

The organisers were acutely aware that a fortnight's study, however intense and stimulating, was very short. Students were therefore encouraged to continue their studies through the WEA with its extensive nationwide connections or at Hillcroft College. Because the Newnham schools were so closely linked to the WEA and Hillcroft, rather than the Labour Party, the trade unions or leftist groups agitating for independent working-class education, (such as the National Council of Labour Colleges set up in 1927), there was never any suggestion that they were too closely connected to militant socialism, although the political proclivities of Clara Rackham and key members of her educational networks were well known. Virtually every woman who reflected upon her experience valued the opportunity to concentrate solely on her own needs, desires and aspirations hitherto subordinated to the needs of others and they looked back warmly on a precious or unique opportunity to enjoy a 'proper' holiday before statutory paid holiday entitlements were introduced in 1937. The final word goes to three satisfied students, Doris Sindrey of Sheerness, Cecilia Rands of Hull and Olive Roberts of Plymouth. It was 'an oasis of happiness in my life that l shall never forget'; 'The happiest fortnight l have ever spent in all my life'; Thank you all very much indeed for giving me such a glorious time. l have never enjoyed myself as much before'.[58]

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Frieda Midgely, Newnham College Archivist and the Principal and Fellows of Newnham College for kind permission to reproduce materials in the college archive. I thank Lucy Bland, Sharon Clancy, Peter Cunningham, and Gillian Sutherland for reading and commenting on this article.

Notes

1. Report submitted by Raie Stanton, 1936. All reports, letters and documents relating to the summer schools are in the Archives of Newnham College Cambridge, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DF, henceforward NCA.

2. Final Report of Committee on Adult Education, 1919, [cmd.321].

3. See for example, Ruth Cohen, *Margaret Llewelyn Davies: With Women for a New World* (London: Merlin, 2020).

4. NCA, Edith Neville, Newnham College Roll Letter (henceforth NCRL), Jan. 1921, 43-4, 44.

5. Maroula Joannou, *The Life and Turbulent Times of Clara, Dorothea Rackham: Suffragist, Socialist, Social Reformer*

(Routledge: Basingstoke, 2022), 117.
6. Final Report 1919, 1. [cmd.321.]
7. Ibid., 5.
8. Mark Freeman, 'Adult Education History, in Britain: Past, Present and Future (part 1)', *Paedagogica Historia, International Journal of the History of Education*, 56/3 (2020), 384-95, 385.
9. NCA Booklet on Whitstead (n.d).
10. Vivian Williams and Graeme White, *Adult and Education and Social Purpose: A History of the WEA Eastern District 1913-1988* (Cambridge: Graham Cameron, 1988), 34-5.
11. I have adopted the practice of using Miss or Mrs when this appears in the Newnham College Archives and no first name is used. Both the teaching staff and the students would have been formally addressed as Mrs or Miss followed by their family name in spoken and written communications. The students referred to each other as Miss or Mrs and not usually by their given names while at the summer school.
12. Williams and White, *Adult and Education and Social Purpose*, 24.
13. NCA E.M. and H.R. D., NCRL, Jan. 1945, 26-29, 28.
14. NCA Helen Palmer, NCRL, Jan. 1929, 35-43, 36, 37.
15. Ibid., 37.
16. See circular letters sent out to organisations between 29 Jul and 12 Aug 1950 and mailing list of recipients. NCA
17. A. S. Byatt, *Still Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), 110.
18. Sharon L. Clancy and John Holcroft, 'Life-changing Things Happen': The Role of Residential Education in the Transformation of Adults' Learning and Lives' *Education and Training*, 60/6 (2018), 620-36, 627.
19. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), 24.
20. NCA Report submitted by unnamed student (Student A), 1936, 1-12,11.
21. NCA, A. Kingham to Helen Palmer, 23 Aug. 1928.
22. The core syllabus of English, History and Economics was the same as that offered by Ruskin College, Oxford at this time.
23. NCA, Edith M. Chrystal, NCRL, Jan. 1923, 38-42, 39.
24. NCA, Helen Palmer, NCRL, Jan. 1925, 49-54, 53.
25. NCA, Kate Marlow to Helen Palmer 17 Aug. 1926.
26. NCA, Edith M. Chrystal, NCRL, Jan. 1927, 29-34, 29.
27. Dennis Smith, 'Paternalism, Craft and Organizational Rationality 1830-1930: an Exploratory Model', *Urban History*, 19/2 (1992), 211-28.
28. NCA, Edith M. Chrystal, NCRL, Jan. 1927, 29-34, 34.
29. Stephen K. Roberts (ed), intro, *A Ministry of Enthusiasm: Centenary Essays on the Workers' Educational Association* (London: Pluto, 2003), 2.
30. Clancy and Holcroft, 'Life-changing Things Happen', 622.
31. NCA, Edith Neville, NCRL, Jan. 1921, 43-4, 44.
32. NCA, Helen Palmer, NCRL, Jan. 1929, 35-43, 39.
33. NCA, Enid Mary Dance, NCRL, Jan. 1935, 29-31, 30.
34. NCA, Elizabeth Mackenzie, NCRL, Jan. 1949, 30-4, 32.
35. NCA, Helen E. Palmer, NCRL, Jan. 1929, 35-43,39.
36. NCA, S. G. Fay, NCRL, Jan. 1933, 32-6, 34.
37. NCA, Enid M, Dance, 1935, 31.
38. NCA, Report, Student A, 1936, 7.
39. NCA, A. Robertson, NCRL, Jan. 1939, 42-44, 43, 44.
40. NCA, Philippa Fawcett to Helen Palmer, 24 Apr1941.
41. NCA, E. M. and H.R. D, NCRL, Jan 1945, 26-29, 26.
42. *Picture Post*, 29 Sep 1945.
43. NCA, NCRL, Jan 1945, 26-9, 26.
44. Ibid., 28.
45. Francesca Wilson, *In the Margin of Chaos* (London: John Murray, 1944); Sibyl Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians: a Biographical Dictionary of British Women Active Between 1900 and 1959: 'doers of the Word'* (London: Continuum, 2001), 279-81.
46. Ibid., 27.
47. NCA, Elizabeth Sarah Graham, NCRL, Jan 1947, 31-33, 31.
48. NCA, Quoted, Elizabeth Mackenzie, NCLR, Jan 1949, 30-34, 32.
49. NCA, Letter to successful candidates, May 1950.
50. NCA, I.I.M, NCRL, Jan 1951, 26-28, 26.
51. 'Miss Jones has the typical spontaneous Welsh musical feeling, but with very little intelligence behind it'. NCA Report, G. Roy and A. Jones on students in the 1950 Music class.
52. NCA, Enid M. Dance, NCRL, Jan 1935, 29-31, 31.
53. NCA Violet Shorney to Sheila Edmonds, 9 Jul 1951.
54. NCA Eliza McKiernan to Annie Robertson, 1 Apr 1942.
55. Ibid.
56. NCA Mrs Routledge to Annie Robertson, 3 Apr 1938.
57. Karyn L. Hollis, *Liberating Voices: Writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 16.
58. NCA, Doris Sindrey to Margaret Kennedy, 16 Aug (no year); Cecilia Rands to Helen Palmer, 15 Aug 1928; Olive Roberts to Helen Palmer, 13 Aug 1924.

'The Harvest is So Great and the Laborers are So Few': The Public Ministry of Two Evangelical Women Preachers in Nineteenth-Century Minnesota

Lisa R. Lindell

South Dakota State University

On a Sunday morning in July 1873, worshippers gathered for church in Brother Cheatham's grove in Utica, Winona County, Minnesota, in the heart of America's western frontier. Conducting the service was Ruth Matilda Rowell, an Advent Christian pastor. Assisting her was Minerva Ursula Cobb, an ordained minister in the Freewill Baptist church. The participation of two female ministers that day rendered the occasion notable. Both women were experienced preachers, with Rowell's ministry in Minnesota dating back to the mid-1850s and Cobb's to her arrival in 1864, with prior ministry in the state of Wisconsin. By exploring the vocational paths of these two women as they followed an urgent sense of call, we deepen our perspective on women's public ministry in America, particularly the often overlooked roles of women in the westward spread of evangelicalism in the nineteenth century.[1]

The ministries of Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb have been largely forgotten to history, but they deserve to be remembered. Their respective stories are distinctive—Rowell's for the longevity of her ministry, her extensive written output and her role as the daughter and sister of women preachers, and Cobb's for the very fact of her ordination. Their experiences are also representative; illustrative of the small number of women who entered public ministry in a time when women's work was often relegated to domestic duties and the private sphere. As they pursued their inner calls, Rowell and Cobb faced difficulties, yet their geographical setting and factors shaping their denominations enabled them to forge careers and mould spiritual lives. The women made use of newly- opened opportunities. They had access to the Bible and embraced and promoted the idea that all could preach. Their developing denominations needed labourers, with multitudes perceived in need of salvation and time seen as short. Through their knowledge of scripture and spirited preaching, their ability to lead and organise churches and their bringing in of many converts, these women demonstrated an effectiveness in disseminating the Gospel and pastoring their flocks that equalled or surpassed that of their male counterparts.

The Rise of Evangelicalism and Women's Preaching

Rowell and Cobb belonged to a long, though discontinuous, tradition of female preachers in America. The first church body to sanction women religious leaders to any degree was the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, originating in mid seventeenth-century England and soon reaching colonial America. In the 1730s, the spiritual movement of evangelicalism sparked the revolutionary revivalist phenomenon known in America as the Great Awakening, setting the stage for more female involvement. Three prime instigators of the transatlantic evangelical movement were the Anglican (and subsequent founder of Methodism), John Wesley, the New England Congregationalist minister and theologian Jonathan Edwards and the charismatic Anglican orator George Whitefield, whose tours of the American colonies drew spellbound crowds. Over the next decades, the personal, emotional and experiential religion promulgated by

Minerva Cobb and her daughter, Amelia Allen. The photo was taken in the spring of 1888 at the Allen homestead near Colman, South Dakota. Minerva is in the middle row, second from the left and Amelia Allen is on her left.

Photo courtesy of Susan Lohr, the great-great-great-granddaughter of Minerva Cobb.

Whitefield and other evangelicals would spread through America and into its western frontiers.[2] The discarding of established church structures and prescribed clerical education opened the way for American revivalism to flourish. As Mark A. Noll observes, 'It required only an earnest preacher and an audience of individuals who were concerned about their souls before God'.[3] He further suggests that 'democratically read, preached, and distributed', the Bible occupied a central role in American cultural life and fuelled the spread of rapidly expanding Protestant movements.[4]

In 1780, self-taught New England preacher Benjamin Randall organised the Freewill Baptist church, the denomination with which Minerva Cobb would unite. A sailmaker and tailor, Randall heard George Whitefield preach in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in the fall of 1770. Initially disdainful of the orator's emotional and unorthodox methods, he underwent a conversion experience when he learnt of Whitefield's death a few days after the sermon.[5] 'An arrow from the quiver of the Almighty struck through my heart,' he wrote in his journal. 'Whitefield … was a man of God, and I have … spoken reproachfully of him. … My former religion appeared altogether worthless'.[6] Randall based his new theology on his own personal interpretation of scripture and divine revelation. In contrast to the Calvinistic views of many other Baptists, who held that God chose only the elect to be saved, Randall and the Freewill Baptists believed in the free will of each individual to choose or deny God's offer of salvation. Church membership was open to all who experienced a conversion and adhered to standards of piety and morality. Freewill Baptists strongly opposed slavery and took an outspoken abolitionist position. With their revivalist roots and message of freedom and individual responsibility, they were well positioned to spread their ministry westward.[7]

The Freewill Baptists were at the forefront of a larger surge of revivalism. The forging of a new nation, following American independence and the disestablishment of state churches, brought political, economic and religious change, which fanned the flames of a period of evangelical fervour and revival known as the 'Second Great Awakening'. A central focus was conversion through an experience of spiritual rebirth. Revivals or 'camp meetings' held on the American frontier became a key means of bringing in large numbers of converts. The Reverend Charles Grandison Finney was the leading voice of the revival movement in the 1820s and 1830s and later moved westward to Ohio to serve as president of Oberlin College, the nation's first coeducational college. Finney preached that all were free to choose salvation. Finney also engaged in social reform, supporting abolition and expanded roles for women in society and the church.[8]

The evangelical conviction that people could have a direct and emotional connection with God and the opportunity to read and interpret the Bible encouraged a number of women to make their voices heard. As revivalism swept the country and diverging sects emerged, women commenced to preach, though their vocational continuity was often short-lived. In a cycle that would repeat itself in the history of American churches, support within church leadership for women's preaching faded as churches grew from small sects to established denominations. The brief flourishing of women who experienced 'an extraordinary call' and then a forced retreat as denominations matured and cast off their radical origins was also a documented phenomenon in Britain and Canada. In America, Freewill Baptists exhibited relative openness to women's participation in ministry. The Christian Connection, formed as a fellowship of churches in New England in the first decade of the nineteenth century and who resembled the Freewill Baptists in their beliefs and governance, also allowed women to preach. In addition to the belief that all Christians could receive spiritual revelation regardless of gender, class, race or education, other factors contributing to the accepted presence of female preaching in evangelical circles included: the unconstrained and spontaneous religious atmosphere; the sense of urgency to spread the gospel and save souls; the severe shortage of male ministers within the rapidly growing bodies and the majority status of women in church membership. In *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845*, Catherine A. Brekus explores the paths of more than one hundred early women preachers in light of such factors. These women, however, were not ordained and served as itinerant evangelists.[9]

The emerging churches that permitted women to preach in late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century America shared common characteristics. Their church government was nonhierarchical, giving authority to individual congregations. They found inspiration from the practices of the early Christian church and valued personal religious experience above adherence to formal creeds. They tended to emphasise free will over Calvinist doctrines of predestination. And, to a certain degree, they set themselves apart from secular culture. As these churches inevitably became more established within society, expectations began to take root for an educated male clergy, and acceptance of female preaching waned. In the prevailing model of separate spheres for men and women, women's allotted space included the church, along with the home and family, but church leadership positions were generally deemed off limits.[10]

The Advent Christian church, with which Ruth Rowell was affiliated, arose in the mid-nineteenth century, at a time when other evangelical denominations were withdrawing support for women's preaching. The church traced its roots to the Millerite movement, named for New England farmer and biblical interpreter William Miller, who calculated the impending end of the world and the second coming of Christ, with the date ultimately fixed as 22 October 1844. The Christian Connection minister and prolific publicist Joshua Vaughan Himes became the central figure in broadcasting Miller's message nationwide, attracting many evangelicals of other denominations to the movement. In the wake of the 'Great Disappointment', when the 1844 date passed without event, several new offshoots arose from the disarray, including the Seventh-day Adventists and Advent Christians, with Himes as a leading voice and promoter of the latter group. Himes moved west to Buchanan, Michigan, and started the weekly *Voice of the West* in 1864, succeeded by the *Advent Christian Times* in 1869. Remaining central to Advent

Christian theology was belief in the approaching arrival of Christ, although predicated on no set date.[11]

While some Adventists rejected the right of women to preach, the movement was relatively receptive to women due to the reform-minded tendencies of church leaders, the emphasis on individual autonomy and, with regards to the imminent Second Coming, the imperative to spread the word. The Advent Christian Conference recognised women preachers as 'co-laborers in the gospel'. In 1867, Advent Christian women ministers attending an Adventist camp meeting organised the Union Female Missionary Association and briefly published a periodical, *Woman and Her Work*. As Adventism moved westward, so, too, did small numbers of women with a vocation to preach.[12]

The extent to which evangelical women were able to enter public ministry in the nineteenth century ran in marked contrast to the pervasive inequality that they regularly faced in society. In any time or place in which evangelical churches countenanced women's preaching, the women possessed a public voice otherwise unavailable to them. This is echoed in Timothy Larsen's research on nineteenth-century evangelicalism. 'If you wanted to hear a woman speak in public, you would not go to the universities or the courts or to the House of Parliament but rather to an evangelical church. If a woman wanted to vote, she could do so as a member of a Baptist church, but not as a citizen of the nation'.[13]

Such was the environment into which Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb ventured, as they each heeded their inner call to take up the task of preaching in the 1850s. For Advent Christians like Rowell and Freewill Baptists like Cobb, their churches remained moderately supportive of women in the pulpit. Working in their favour was their decision to settle in the West, where ministers were in extremely short supply. The autonomous authority of local congregations and regional church associations to call pastors and the fact that their religious message followed evangelical traditions and tenets would aid them as well. Though formal theological instruction was an increasing expectation in American churches and would become a significant obstacle for women, Rowell and Cobb were among the many evangelical preachers who carried out their ministry without official training.

The Parallel Paths of Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb

Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb evidenced similarities of motivation and experience in the pursuit of their callings. Common to both were family paths of ministry and westward migration. Ruth Matilda Cogswell was, remarkably, the daughter of two ministers. Her father, Frederick Cogswell, was ordained in the Christian Connection church, and her mother, Hannah Rogers Peavey Cogswell, was a preacher in the same denomination. Ruth, born 3 March 1821 in Pike, New York, the second of seven children, moved with her family to New Hampshire when she was two years old. She was first educated in Portsmouth and then at the academy in Rochester, New Hampshire, where she lived with her widowed aunt, Judith Upham, a deeply valued mentor.[14] In their ministry, Ruth's father and mother often travelled together preaching and holding revivals. 'We have seen a rising among the brethren, and some new conversions in these places', Frederick Cogswell reported in 1839 after a tour through several New Hampshire towns.[15] Hannah Peavey Cogswell was raised in Farmington, New Hampshire, where her family home served as a place of worship and refuge for travelling evangelists. 'The old preachers and pioneers of the Free Will Baptist denomination, and of the Christian Connection, used to come and preach a full and free salvation', Rowell later wrote, 'unmoved by the flatteries and frowns of older sects and denominations, or the vile scoffing of rowdies'. Under such influences, Rowell reflected, her mother 'imbibed an ardent love for the plain teaching of the Word of God and a fearless advocacy of its precious truths'.[16] Two of Hannah Cogswell's brothers, John Langdon Peavey and Edward H. Peavey, also became preachers, as did her brother-in-law Joseph Badger, editor of the *Christian Palladium* newspaper. Ruth aspired to follow the path of her parents and at the age of nine 'gave her heart to Christ' in a meeting led by her father in Portsmouth, where he was pastor.[17]

On 9 June 1844 in New Hampshire, Ruth married Warren Rowell, and in 1853 moved west with him to Homer township in Winona County, Minnesota Territory. There, Warren farmed and Ruth soon began preaching. Other family members, including Warren's brother Franklin and Ruth's sister Elizabeth, and, for a time, sister Hannah, followed suit and settled in Winona County. After the death of Ruth's mother in 1853, Reverend Frederick Cogswell visited Minnesota and then Tennessee, where two of Ruth's brothers resided, preaching periodically until his death in 1857. Ruth's youngest sister, Judith Frances (Fannie) Upham Cogswell Roberts, also entered the ministry, presiding over the Universalist church in Kittery, Maine. She came to live in Winona shortly before her death from tuberculosis in 1875. Ruth and Warren Rowell had five children, born between 1848 to 1863, one of whom died in infancy.[18]

In her vocational choice, Minerva Cobb followed in the tradition of male family members while breaking new ground as the first woman in her family to enter the ministry. Migration westward was also in the family pattern. The oldest of ten children, she was born on 2 September 1817 in Chenango County, New York to William Greenleaf, a minister in the Methodist Episcopal church who subsequently joined the Methodist Protestant church, and to Bethia Cole Greenleaf. When Minerva was a young girl, the family moved to Chautauqua County, New York, where, on 7 July 1833, 'she gave her heart to God'. The next year, on 30 December 1834, at the age of seventeen, Minerva married Laban Clark Cobb, who had been converted and guided in his Christian faith by Rev. Eli Hannibal, a Freewill Baptist minister. The Cobbs had two children, Manville and Amelia. In 1849, they moved to Trenton, Wisconsin, where several of Minerva's family members had settled, including her parents and her youngest siblings. Her father, William Greenleaf, died in Trenton in 1850. While in Wisconsin, Minerva and Laban Cobb affiliated with the Methodist Protestant church until the formation of a Freewill Baptist church. Feeling the

call, they took up the work of ministry and were licensed to preach by their church conference. In July 1863, the ravages of the Civil War struck the family when Minerva's brother David died after battle in Vicksburg, Mississippi. In 1864, the Cobbs moved to Minnesota, where their adult children were living and other family members also relocated, including Cobb's mother Bethia and sisters Mary, Helen and Delia.[19]

Winona County in southeast Minnesota formed the primary landscape for Rowell and Cobb as they carried out their ministry. The county seat was Winona, situated on the Mississippi River and planted squarely in the developing West. Established as a territory in 1849, Minnesota gained statehood in 1858. The coerced cession of historical lands from the Dakota, Ojibwe and Winnebago tribes opened the floodgates for white settlement in Minnesota in the 1850s. Home mission societies aided the expansion of Protestantism to the West. The geographically dispersed nature of developing churches and the pressing demand for pastors in rapidly growing western settlements led to greater local autonomy and a certain openness to women preachers. As noted by Lisa Dawn Zimmerelli, women might sometimes be the only qualified and interested persons available to preach in the West.[20]

Rowell began her pastoral work in 1856 in the village of Homer, six miles southeast of Winona. 'This is the first desk [pulpit] I ever preached in', she later recalled, 'and I love to come from time to time to this place and ponder over God's dealings with me'.[21] During the course of her ministry, Rowell also helped develop and serve churches in Winona and Utica (twenty miles southwest of Winona). Minerva Cobb, alongside her husband Laban, was based in turn in Hamilton (fifty miles from Winona in Fillmore County), Utica and Warren (ten miles southwest of Winona), while presiding over services and revivals in numerous other churches in Winona, Houston, Fillmore and Mower counties.[22]

The Common Mission of Rowell and Cobb

The message Cobb and Rowell focused on was the repentance of sins and the promise of mercy and salvation. At the heart of their pastoral efforts was the work of bringing about conversions and reclaiming 'backsliders'. They preached in accordance with the central emphases of evangelicalism later categorised by David W. Bebbington's 'quadrilateral'—the Bible, the cross, conversion and activism. As evangelical ministers they shared the belief that, through their committed efforts and preaching of the gospel, they could transform individuals' lives by leading them to experience God's saving grace.[23]

Rowell and Cobb held a common conviction of the urgency of their mission, with so many souls to be won in the fast-growing region. Rowell left a record of her activities and zeal in her frequent contributions to church publications, including Joshua V. Himes' *Voice of the West* and *Advent Christian Times*. A prolific writer and scholar, Rowell published articles delving into topics such as 'Law' and 'Forgiveness', backed with biblical analysis, as well as reports on her ministry. Her core tasks were to lead unbelievers to Christ, to reclaim backsliders and to '[build] up the saints in the most holy faith'.[24] In the *Advent Christian Times*, she declared:

> My life is one of arduous labor in the cause of Christ. The harvest is so great in this western country and laborers are so few we cannot find it in our hearts to dally with the pleasures of life or settle down in quiet rest while the masses in this Mississippi Valley are rushing on the broad road to death'.[25]

Fig 2: County Map of Minnesota: Plate 42 in ***Mitchell's New General Atlas*** *(Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell, 1864)*

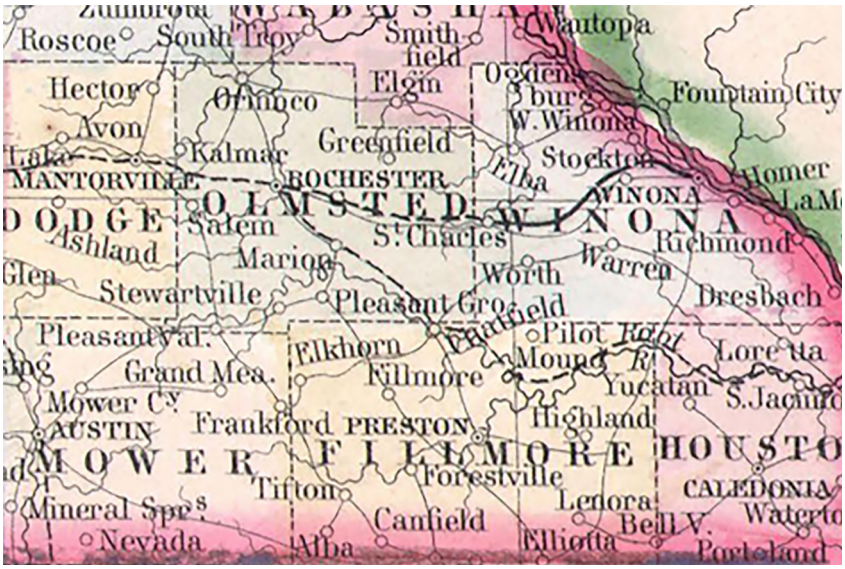


Fig 3: Close-up view of the region where Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb ministered in southeastern Minnesota

Rowell viewed sermons as 'words of holy fire breathed into the ears of our congregations that shall quicken them to a higher life'.[26] In the 25 December 1866 issue of *Voice of the West*, Rowell described a recent experience preaching in Winona to a full house:

> As I looked over the faces of earnest men and women that filled the hall, how my heart yearned for their soul's salvation, and I [pleaded] with them to leave all for Christ as a man pleads with his friend. … At the close I gave an invitation to seekers, when two arose, after which two more signified their desire to unite with the Church, and were received, making in all nine members who had been added to the Church this day.

Rowell rejoiced in the growth of the Winona congregation, recalling its humble beginnings in 1862 with only herself, her husband and four other members. 'Let other brethren and sisters who are isolated and few in number go and do as we have done, and take courage from our increase and prosperity. In union there is strength'.[27]

While Minerva Cobb left no public reflections, denominational papers provided numerous references to the Cobbs' zealous labour in Minnesota. The Freewill Baptists' leading newspaper, the *Morning Star*, regularly printed reports of church activities and revivals. The Cobbs served churches in the Root River Quarterly Meeting (QM), organised in 1863 as part of the Northern Iowa Yearly Meeting (YM). Quarterly meetings were geographical associations of churches that met every three months to conduct church business, handle matters of dispute and discipline, make reports and examine and ordain clergy. Churches in the Root River QM were located in Winona, Fillmore and Mower counties and included Beaver, Fillmore, Frankford, Freesoil (later Wykoff) and Hamilton, where the Cobbs ministered. The Cobbs also served in the neighbouring Winona and Houston QM, organised in 1857 as part of the Minnesota YM. The churches in this association included Money Creek (in Houston County) and Centerville, Pickwick [named after Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*] and St. Charles, as well as Utica and Warren, where the Cobbs served in the 1870s, all in Winona County.[28]

Cobb ministered both alongside her husband and independently. The pair were regarded as equals in their shared ministry and were recognised for their strong commitment to their mission. 'Bro[ther] and Sister Cobb are laboring to good acceptance … among the churches', the Root River QM reported in 1864.[29] A fellow evangelist described Minerva and Laban Cobb as 'earnest and zealous laborers who … feel the importance of the work they have undertaken'.[30] The Winona & Houston QM also praised the Cobbs, calling their work instrumental and well received. In 1868, the couple's work included 'a precious revival' in Warren, with some sixty persons converted or reclaimed, and a series of meetings held in Money Creek leading to large numbers of conversions and expectations for more.[31]

Minerva Cobb was clearly an effective preacher on her own merits. There were reports of her impressive results. In February 1867, the *Morning Star* noted that the Freesoil church had 'enjoyed a good revival of religious interest … under the labors of sister M.U. Cobb assisted by Bro[ther] Felt'.[32] An April 1868 account described revival activities in Utica: 'The skeptic and the strong-hearted, husbands and wives, parents and children, are bowing around the altar together. There have been about 100 souls brought to Christ during the winter under the labors of Sister Cobb'.[33]

The Labourers Were Few

Though the breadth of their outreach and the perceived urgency of their mission were large, Freewill Baptist and Advent Christian bodies in Minnesota were small and their clergy few. The 1870 *Freewill Baptist Register* recorded five preachers in the Root River QM and six in the Winona and Houston QM, with most not ordained. In 1871, the Advent Christian Conference, covering the whole state of Minnesota, reported a total of twenty-five ministers, seventeen of them ordained and the rest licenced.[34]

The acute scarcity of clergy and resources in the expanding West led preachers into an itinerant and labour-intensive life, including financial sacrifice. Much of Rowell's itinerant ministry, which was undertaken in addition to her regular parish responsibilities, occurred in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In both states, she preached at numerous camp meetings and many outdoor and indoor services. On a trip to Wisconsin in early 1869, Rowell reported preaching twenty-five times in twenty-six days. In August 1869, a notice in the *Voice of the West* invited families to a camp meeting in Sparta, Wisconsin with Ruth Rowell and Elder Oel Ray Fassett to preach and all to labour to 'build up the precious cause of God among the people'. Participants were instructed to bring a small tent (forty yards of cloth was deemed sufficient), bedding and provisions. Supporters had raised money to purchase a large forty-one-foot tent for worship and meetings.[35] In the summer of 1870, Rowell went on a preaching tour accompanied part of the way by Lauretta Fassett, who ministered for several years alongside her husband. In 1872, Rowell spent half of her time preaching in West Salem and Burns, Wisconsin, and the other half within a few miles of her Minnesota home.[36] 'I often get released from this near field to carry the news of the gospel of his kingdom to other points', she wrote, 'thus in my weak way trying to scatter the seed far and near, at home and abroad, as God commissions me'.[37]

Continuous work and domestic cares led to health issues for Rowell, obliging her to rest in the fall and winter of 1872 and preside only over funerals. After resuming her pastoral engagements, Rowell was advised in the summer of 1873 that her health demanded a change of scene and air, which occasioned an extended trip to New England. Before embarking on her travels, Rowell preached farewell sermons to her Minnesota parishioners. It was on her last Sunday in Utica that Minerva Cobb joined her as one of the presiding ministers. 'We had a good congregation and a deep interest', Rowell recorded. In the afternoon, the preachers proceeded to the Vowels school house, 'The house was packed with people, and those who could not find standing room inside the door gathered upon the

outside, while we spoke to them out of God's Word'.[38]

On her trip east, Rowell was able to meet with many Adventists whom she had long wished to know, including pastor Anna Smith, founder of a medical mission in New York. Rowell attended the national camp meeting of the Advent Christians in Springfield, Massachusetts, and a camp meeting at Alton Bay, New Hampshire, relishing and drawing renewed energy from the company of Smith and several other women preachers at both events. She also spent time in Maine with her youngest sister, Universalist pastor Fannie Roberts.[39] By October 1873, Rowell reported improved health and pronounced, 'I feel that whether east or west I have the same precious message to the sons and daughters of men, and expect to proclaim it until death lays me low, or the Saviour comes'.[40]

The Reaction to Women Preachers

Serving as a woman minister added unique difficulties to the challenges common to all clergy of the time and locale. Both male and female preachers shouldered heavy pastoral responsibilities with much travel and little compensation. Specific to women were charges that they were flouting their prescribed roles and that they should not speak publicly, but rather share their religious influence and teaching privately with husbands and children. A letter published in the October 1866 issue of *Voice of the West* provides an example of the hostility toward women preachers. The letter quoted a newspaper correspondent who, having heard a woman preach at an Adventist camp meeting, found her manners too masculine, her positions 'an outrage on female propriety' and her delivery 'better [becoming] a stump orator'.[41] In her writing, Rowell addressed the topic of opposition to female ministry. During her travels to the eastern United States, she had met James Herman Whitmore, author of an 1872 essay titled 'Woman in the Church'. 'He is of pleasant address and an able speaker', Rowell noted, 'but I hope he will not write any more Essays on Woman unless he take the other side of the question, which we trust he will when he has given it more thought'.[42] Common biblical arguments used against women in the pulpit included 1 Corinthians 14:34, ('Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak') and 1 Timothy 2:11-12, ('Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence').

'Ah, it is a hard thing to be a woman preacher', Rowell lamented. 'God only knows what they have to suffer and endure and how often those who ought to obey the injunction of St. Paul, "Help those women who labor with us in the Gospel" [Philippians 4:3], instead … put hindrances and trials in their way'.[43] Rowell found motivation to carry on by viewing her hardships as a means to a deeper faith. 'Through the help of Christ, I have been enabled to rise from these stern conflicts and dark hours of trial to a closer walk with God', she wrote.[44]

> I commenced preaching in this country when a woman preacher was a thing to be despised. But my heart was so full of love for God and his cause and poor sinners, I forgot myself in my great earnestness to do good. The result was, God blessed me and set before me an open door, and suffered no man to shut it.[45]

A few men of the era offered public support for women's ministry. Rowell reported one such instance from a ministerial meeting in Minnesota where the question arose of women's right to preach. The presiding elder delivered his opinion of the proper roles for a Christian woman, which might include, like Priscilla in the New Testament, inviting the minister to her home and instructing him in 'the way of God more perfectly'[Acts 18:26]. After the elder concluded his remarks, Edward Eggleston, a Methodist minister in Winona, rose and proffered his response. 'What an idea', said he, 'our presiding elder presents to us, when he says, a woman can instruct a preacher how to preach, and yet not preach herself. I should think if she could teach the preacher, she would be the one to preach!'[46]

The editor of the *Advent Christian Times,* Himes also exhibited an open-minded attitude toward women's preaching. 'A woman who is called a preacher stands on precisely the same ground that a man with the same call occupies', he wrote in 1871:

> If you *can* preach, and God has called you to do so, go about your work, and *make no apologies*! Even when you feel the spirit of opposition in your audience … do not yield to it. … Forget that you are a woman. Lose yourself in your subject. Determine that your audience shall see not man or woman, but the *ambassador of Christ*![47]

In response to Himes' editorial, Rowell expressed her agreement, observing that apologies of any sort were usually undesirable in the pulpit:

> People don't come to the place of worship to learn whether we are tired, and overworked, or have a cold, or did not think of speaking just then, or any of that sort of thing. They come to hear the gospel; and we, if we have any strength at all to speak, we had better be pointing poor sinners to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, than drawing attention to ourselves.

Yet, she granted, there were times 'when a woman without any thought of alluding to herself or women's preaching … feels *impressed* to speak a few words on this subject. If so, speak right out, and say all you feel'. Generally, she found the best approach was to attend to the work at hand:

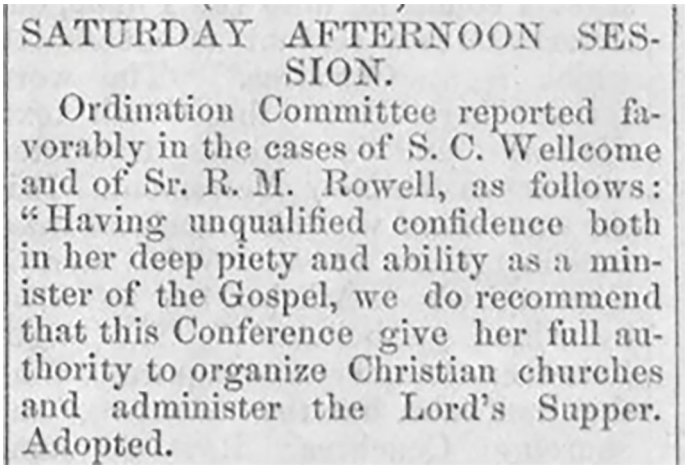
> If you come to preach the gospel, preach it, and if you feel an opposition against you because of your sex, announce that you will speak to them on this subject at a certain time and place, when you can take up the subject in a clear, concise, methodical manner that will leave an impression upon the public which half a dozen apologies would fail to accomplish.[48]

For Minerva Cobb, becoming a preacher entailed the necessity to overcome a sense of her own unworthiness. She internalised the societal message that women's speaking in public was immodest and even against biblical teaching. She struggled with severe conflict of mind about following her desire to enter the ministry, but then, 'the blessing of the Lord upon her labors alone confirmed her in continuing the work'. Writing about 'our beloved [Sister] Cobb', Rowell described her as abounding in good works.[49]

The Matter of Women's Ordination

Among women preachers in the nineteenth century, few received actual ordination. That status conveyed an authority that churches were reluctant to extend to women. In the 7 March 1871 edition of *Advent Christian Times*, Rowell wrote a lengthy essay arguing for women's ordination. Operating from the standpoint of her denomination's agreed-upon beliefs, she strove to build her case by showing that she was simply following it to its logical conclusion. Despite not having attended seminary, she displayed theological and historical knowledge and familiarity with scholarly works and Greek. In her biblically-based argument, Rowell cited the figure of Phebe, called *diakonos* in Romans 16, there translated as servant and often, in the New Testament, as minister, and she highlighted ancient and modern sources that substantiated the presence of ordained deaconesses in the early church. Rowell asserted the equal standing of *all*, 'A, double l, ALL', in the church in ministry. She lifted up biblical passages that made no distinction between men and women, including Galatians 3:28, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus', and Joel 2:28-29, 'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit'.

Rowell traced the source of ordination to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost recorded in the book of Acts. The Spirit descended on all who were gathered, and 'Divine inspiration breathed forth from the lips of women as well as men. … After such an example of ordaining by fire of the women by the finger of God, what Biblical scholar can ask or query, Is it right to ordain women? … Must not every candid mind admit the premises and say, Yes?' Rowell contended that when God ordained a man or woman for a specific work, 'that individual is fitted for the work, though all the Conferences, Presbyters or Synods in Christendom may refuse their sanction. And unless appointed to that work by God, no ordaining by man can fit one for it'. She agreed that church sanction was valuable as a safeguard and means of instilling confidence, and maintained that 'the moment a Conference gives a letter to an individual as a licensed minister in that Conference, he is by that conference appointed minister, or, if you prefer the term, ordained minister, to work for that Conference and Christ'.[50]



SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION.

Ordination Committee reported favorably in the cases of S. C. Wellcome and of Sr. R. M. Rowell, as follows: "Having unqualified confidence both in her deep piety and ability as a minister of the Gospel, we do recommend that this Conference give her full authority to organize Christian churches and administer the Lord's Supper. Adopted.

Fig 4: On 21 January 1871 at the Annual Conference of the Advent Christian Church of Minnesota, Ruth Rowell received full authority to organise churches and administer communion.
Advent Christian Times, 7 Mar. 1871 supplement

Rowell most likely applied this understanding of 'ordained minister' to her own case. In January 1871, she was granted additional pastoral authority at the annual session of the Advent Christian Conference of Minnesota, when the Winona church applied for Rowell to be 'empowered by the Conference to organize churches and administer the Lord's Supper, as she labored much in new fields'. At the Saturday afternoon session, the Ordination Committee expressed unqualified confidence 'in her deep piety and ability as a minister of the Gospel', and the conference adopted their recommendation to give Rowell full authority to establish churches and distribute communion. The 1872 *Advent Christian Almanac and Year Book* listed Rowell's status as licensed preacher. At the same session in which Rowell was granted her expanded authority, minister Solomon Cummings Wellcome obtained full ordination.[51]

In contrast to Rowell, Minerva Cobb received official ordination and may have been the first Freewill Baptist woman to be ordained. Several Freewill Baptist women preceded Cobb as preachers, including New Englanders Mary Savage and Sally Parsons, who evangelised in the 1790s; Clarissa Danforth, whose powerful preaching abilities earned her a wide following in the 1810s; Susan Humes and Martha Spaulding, who served as itinerant preachers in the 1820s and Ruby Knapp Bixby, who was licensed as a preacher in the mid-1840s and ministered for three decades with her husband Newell Willard Bixby in Iowa. Some recent sources state that Clarissa Danforth was ordained but present no documentation. Sources more contemporary with Danforth do not suggest she was ordained.[52]

On Sunday, 27 June 1869, Cobb and her husband Laban were ordained together in Hamilton, Fillmore County, Minnesota by a council of the Root River QM. The denominational papers reported the ordination without special remark or fanfare. The event was far from commonplace, however, and was, in fact, remarkable. Its occurrence attests to the significance of Minerva Cobb's work. The Cobbs' daughter, Amelia, later wrote that her parents' ordination 'seemed to have become a necessity'

with congregations in the Quarterly Meeting having nearly doubled under the couple's united labours.[53]

Women Preachers: Contemporary and Into the Future

Concurrent with Cobb and Rowell, a few other Freewill Baptist and Advent Christian women ministered in Winona County, Minnesota and the surrounding region. The historical record for these women is meagre, yet their roles were significant in the spread of evangelicalism in the West. Freewill Baptist A. Gerry was recorded as serving in the Winona and Houston QM in the late 1860s. Little definitive biographical information on her is known. Identified only as 'Mrs. Gerry' and 'A. Gerry', respectively, in the 1869 and 1870 *Freewill Baptist Registers*, she was listed as pastor at Centerville in Winona County.[54] In July 1868, the *Morning Star* printed a letter submitted by A. Gerry advocating votes for women: 'Was [a man] born free more than his sister; and who gave him authority to set bounds to her civil liberty?' she queried. Women would like to vote in the approaching election, 'Give your sister a voice. Remember she has the same order of faculties and feelings that you have'. The *Morning Star* attested, '[She] has the … free and fearless thinking which is likely to thrive on the prairie. … We publish her plea without a protest; and if the civil authorities of Minnesota are willing, we shall not object to her trying the ballot, and shall look on candidly to see what she can accomplish with it'.[55] It would take fifty-one years before Minnesota women received the vote.

Another Freewill Baptist woman preaching in the Winona and Houston QM in the 1860s was Mary Tolman Jackson, married to Rev. Isaac Jackson. The itinerant couple hailed from New Hampshire and preached for many years in the West, including in Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin, before returning to New England.[56]

Hannah M. Dubey, an Advent Christian, began preaching in southeastern Minnesota in 1868. Rowell welcomed her as a valued 'help-meet' in the toils and joys of ministry after 'having labored so long alone with the brethren'.[57] In 1870, Dubey's ministry was sidelined by the death of her husband Nicholas and the necessity to care for her young children. By 1873, she had resumed her work, serving in Castle Rock, Minnesota, while also conducting itinerant ministry. In May 1874, Dubey married widower Philip Ramer, formerly a Dunkard preacher, who had affiliated with the Advent Christians in the late 1850s. He served as pastor of the Winona church and president of the Advent Christian Conference of Minnesota.[58]

After retiring from regular preaching, Rowell and Cobb continued active lives of service. At the time of her retirement, Rowell had served longer than any other Adventist in the area. Subsequently, she made several mission trips in the West and South. She held leadership offices in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Minnesota and travelled the state organising unions and lecturing on temperance. In 1891, she transferred her membership to the Freewill Baptist Church of Winona and served as president of the Quarterly Mission Board. Her husband Warren died in July 1896, and Rowell died on 8 September 1905 at age eight-four in Sylvania, Arkansas, where her son Frederick resided.[59]

In 1879, Minerva Cobb, now sixty-one, and her husband Laban, ten years her senior, moved to Moody County, Dakota Territory, hoping for improvement of Laban's asthma. There they homesteaded, living near their daughter Amelia and her husband Arthur Perry Allen, who helped found the town of Colman in Moody County in 1881. On 30 December 1884, the Cobbs celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. After Laban's death on 29 January 1885, Minerva carried on, described as 'unwavering' in faith and zeal and known in the community as 'Grandma'. She died from pneumonia on 6 March 1890 at age seventy-two.[60]

The public ministries of Ruth Rowell and Minerva Cobb and their female colleagues did not prefigure a rapid or consistent advance of women in the profession. Small numbers of evangelical women, including Freewill Baptists and Advent Christians, continued in, or entered into, ministry and a few received ordination. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, women in more liberal denominations such as Unitarianism and Universalism began to be ordained in modest numbers, followed by a period of retrenchment. Not until the late twentieth century would significant proportions of women ministers serve in liberal and mainline denominations. Evangelical women preachers (including Pentecostal and Fundamentalist women) gained a foothold in the early twentieth century but were increasingly excluded from church leadership roles as the century advanced. The assertion of male authority, cultural pressures to restrict women's public leadership positions, the backlash against 'feminism', narrow scriptural interpretation and emphasis on a professional, seminary-grounded ministry all worked to deter women from preaching in evangelical churches.[61]

The evangelical women who followed their callings in the nineteenth century have often been forgotten in history or discounted by later generations as 'too radical to be accepted by evangelicals and too conservative to be accepted by women's rights activists'.[62] Recovering the experiences of Rowell and Cobb brings to light their important legacy. A tension between the radical and the traditional allowed them to achieve what they did. Their own distinctive qualities and the circumstances of their time and place coalesced to let them take the bold step of entering ministry and the public sphere. Through the heartfelt, Bible-based evangelical message they brought to scattered and newly forming congregations and the receptivity of their congregants and denominations to that message and to their gender, they pursued a countercultural course that granted them a measure of equality seldom attained by women in the nineteenth century. Propelled by their pressing inner call, these labourers carried forth, with resolution, the work of gathering the harvest they so greatly desired.

Notes

1. *Advent Christian Times*, 26 Aug. 1873, 22. The grove belonged to Utica church member Demetrius Cheatham and was equipped for church meetings with permanent stands and seats.

2. In Britain, ferment in the mid-seventeenth century gave rise to female visionaries, primarily Quakers, as Phyllis Mack details in *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophesy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

4. Mark A. Noll, *America's Book: The Rise and Decline of a Bible Civilization, 1794-1911* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 5.

6. Quoted in John Buzzell, *The Life of Elder Benjamin Randal, Principally Taken from Documents Written by Himself* (Limerick, ME: Hobbs, Woodman and Co., 1827), 13-14.

7. Bryant, *The Awakening of the Freewill* Baptists, 83, 138-41. The *Morning Star* espoused the Freewill Baptists' staunch abolitionist stance, and the *Christian Freeman* newspaper, published by the Western Freewill Baptist Publishing Association, reflected the westward movement of the denomination.

9. Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 66, 133-4. Studies following women's experiences in Britain and Canada include Jennifer Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-1907* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists, 1825-75* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 206; Elizabeth Gillan Muir, 'Beyond the Bounds of Acceptable Behaviour: Methodist Women Preachers in the Early Nineteenth Century', in *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada*, ed. Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 178.

10. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 11, 29, 66, 123-4, 132, 137-46, 287, 307-35.

11. For further information on Adventist history, see Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

12. Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, ME: I. C. Wellcome, 1874), 624-5; Albert C. Johnson, *Advent Christian History: A Concise Narrative of the Origin and Progress, Doctrine and Work of this Body of Believers* (Boston: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1918), 327-8; Dean, 'The Role of Women in the Early Adventist Movement', 17-19; *World's Crisis*, 30/14 (22 Dec. 1869): 53, cited in Dean.

13. Timothy Larsen, 'Women in Public Ministry: A Historic Evangelical Distinctive', in *Women, Ministry and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms*, ed. Mark Husbands and Timothy Larsen (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 230.

14. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Winona County, Minnesota* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1895), 341-3; *History of Winona County, 1883* (Chicago: H. H. Hill and Company, 1883), 627-8; *Advent Christian Times*, 2 Dec. 1873, 134.

15. *Christian Palladium*, 15 Apr. 1839, 372.

16. *Advent Christian Times*, 2 Dec. 1873, 134.

17. *Ibid.*; E. O. Jameson, *The Cogswells in America* (Boston: A. Mudge & Son, 1884), 190; E. W. Humphreys, *Memoirs of Deceased Christian Ministers* (Dayton, OH: Christian Publishing Association, 1880), 92; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Winona County, Minnesota*, 343.

18. Jameson, *The Cogswells in America*, 190; E. R. Hanson, *Our Woman Workers*: *Biographical Sketches of Women Eminent in the Universalist Church for Literary, Philanthropic and Christian Work* (Chicago: Star and Covenant Office, 1882), 483; Phebe A. Hanaford, *Women of the Century* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1877), 400-4. Ruth and Warren Rowell's surviving children were Mary Adeline (1848-90), Frederick Charles (1852-1923), Anna Mathilda (1855-77) and Warren Cogswell Rowell (1863-1941).

19. *Morning Star*, 27 Aug. 1885, 274, 17 Apr. 1890, 123; G. A. Burgess and J. T. Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopaedia: Historical and Biographical* (Chicago: Free Baptist Cyclopaedia Co., 1889), 125; Jonathan Greenleaf, *A Genealogy of the Greenleaf Family* (New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1854), 80-1; James Edward Greenleaf, *Genealogy of the Greenleaf Family* (Boston: F. Wood, 1896), 172, 259-60.

20. Linda M. Clemmons, *Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014); Lisa Dawn Zimmerelli, 'A Genre of Defense: Hybridity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Defenses of Women's Preaching' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2009), 34. No records have been found on how Rowell or Cobb felt about occupying Native lands or their relations with indigenous people.

21. *Voice of the West*, 6 Apr. 1869, 140.

22. The locations of Rowell's ministry, which also included St. Charles and Centerville, Minnesota, are found in Advent Christian Conference of Minnesota reports, *Voice of the West* and *Advent Christian Times*. The sites of Cobb's ministry have been gleaned from annual *Freewill Baptist Registers* and *Morning Star* reports.

23. Bebbington provides his definition of evangelicalism, referred to as the Bebbington quadrilateral, in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2-3.

24. *Voice of the West*, 21 Jul. 1868, 200.

25. *Advent Christian Times*, 16 Jul. 1872, 390.

26. *Voice of the West*, 6 Apr. 1869, 140.

27. *Ibid.*, 25 Dec. 1866, 46.

28. Burgess and Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopaedia*, 303, 412-14, 536-7; *Freewill Baptist Registers*. The Root River Quarterly Meeting was part of the Northern Iowa Yearly Meeting until 1879 and then of the Iowa Yearly Meeting following the merger of the two Iowa meetings. It joined the Southern Minnesota Yearly Meeting in 1880.

29. *Morning Star*, 14 Sep. 1864, 99.

30. *Ibid.*, 24 Oct. 1866, 123.

31. *Ibid.*, 12 Feb. 1868, 187; 4 Mar. 1868, 199; 22 Apr. 1868, 37.

32. *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1867, 191.

33. *Ibid.*, 15 Apr. 1868, 29.

34. *Freewill Baptist Register, 1870* (Dover, NH: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1870), 64, 67; *Advent Christian Times*, 7 Mar. 1871 supplement, 2; *Advent Christian Almanac and Year Book, for 1872* (Buchanan, MI: Western Advent Publishing Association, 1871). Minnesota's Advent Christian Conference comprised four districts: Winona, St. Paul, Hutchinson and Ottawa.
35. *Voice of the West*, 6 Apr. 1869, 140; 31 Aug. 1869, 19.
36. *Advent Christian Times*, 19 Jul. 1870, 195.
37. *Ibid.*, 16 Jul. 1872, 390.
38. *Ibid.*, 26 Aug. 1873, 22.
39. *Ibid.*, 26 Aug. 1873, 22-3; 14 Oct. 1873, 78-9.
40. *Ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1873, 94.
41. Quoted in *Voice of the West*, 9 Oct. 1866, 8. The woman preacher, Mrs. Mansfield, was likely the same Mrs. Mansfield who preached a series of sermons in the 1860s at the Winona Advent Christian church. *History of Winona County, 1883*, 485.
42. *Advent Christian Times*, 26 Aug. 1873, 22.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, 16 Jul. 1872, 390.
45. *Ibid.*, 10 Oct. 1871, 82.
46. *Ibid.* After Edward Eggleston's ministry in Winona (1864-6), he gained recognition as a novelist, particularly for *The Hoosier Schoolmaster.* See John T. Flanagan, 'The Hoosier Schoolmaster in Minnesota', *Minnesota History* 18/4 (Dec. 1937), 347-70.
47. *Advent Christian Times*, 19 Sep. 1871, 60. Joshua V. Himes' son Edwin Thompson Himes briefly ministered in Winona before his death in January 1872 at age thirty. Rowell wrote his obituary. *Advent Christian Times*, 30 Jan. 1872, 216.
48. *Advent Christian Times*, 10 Oct. 1871, 82.
49. Burgess and Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopaedia*, 126; *Advent Christian Times*, 26 Aug. 1873, 22.
50. *Advent Christian Times*, 7 Mar. 1871, 219; 7 Mar. 1871 supplement, 1. New Testament instances where *diakonos* was translated as minister include 1 Corinthians 3:5, 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 11:23, Ephesians 3:7 and 6:21 and Colossians 1:7 and 1:23.
51. *Advent Christian Times*, 7 Mar. 1871 supplement, 2; *Advent Christian Almanac and Year Book, for 1872*.
52. For references to early Freewill Baptist women ministers, including Clarissa Danforth, see James R. Lynch, 'Baptist Women in Ministry Through 1920', *American Baptist Quarterly* 13/4 (1994), 304-18; Lynch, 'A Preliminary Check List of Baptist Women in Ministry Through 1920', *American Baptist Quarterly* 13/4 (1994), 319-71; *The Centennial Record of Freewill Baptists, 1780-1880* (Dover, NH: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1881), 46-7; Burgess and Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopaedia*, including 16, 56-7, 148-9, 363, 669; I. D. Stewart, *The History of the Freewill Baptists: For Half a Century*, vol. 1 (Dover: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1862), including 191-2, 306-10, 318, 338, 377, 386, 389-91, 394.
53. For documentation of Minerva Cobb's ordination, see *Morning Star*, 28 Jul. 1869, 237; *Christian Freeman*, 29 Jul. 1869, 5. One reason that Cobb's status as an ordained woman minister may have been overlooked is that her first name appeared in initialised form (M. U. Cobb and M. Cobb) in the annual *Freewill Baptist Registers* and elsewhere. Amelia Cobb's comment is from *Morning Star*, 27 Aug. 1885, 274.
54. *Freewill Baptist Register, 1869* (Dover, NH: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1869), 70; *Freewill Baptist Register, 1870*, 64.
55. *Morning Star*, 8 Jul. 1868, 121. The letter was signed A. G. She was identified as A. Gerry in the list of letters received. *Morning Star*, 1 Jul. 1868, 117. A search of census and death records suggests that A. Gerry may have been the same person as Almeda (Ross) Gerry, who married John P. Gerry, a travelling salesman, in 1856, and died of cancer in Winona in September 1870 at age fifty-one.
56. *Morning Star*, 2 Dec. 1863, 143; 20 Jan. 1864, 171; 7 Aug. 1867, 79; Burgess and Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopaedia*, 304; Melvin Ticknor Stone, *Historical Sketch of the Town of Troy, New Hampshire* (Keene, NH: Sentinel Printing Company, 1897), 533-4.
57. *Voice of the West*, 13 Jul. 1869, 196.
58. *Advent Christian Times*, 7 Mar. 1871 supplement, 2, 12 Aug. 1873, 6; 2 Sep. 1873, 30; *Voice of the West*, 25 Dec. 1866, 46; 16 Jul. 1867, 164; 13 Jul. 1869, 196.
59. *Winona Daily Republican*, 27 Jun. 1891, 3; 25 May 1893, 3; 11 Oct. 1894, 3; 29 Aug. 1896, 3; 16 Sep. 1905, 8; *Portrait and Biographical Record of Winona County*, 343.
60. *Morning Star*, 27 Aug. 1885, 274; 17 Apr. 1890, 123; *Moody County Enterprise*, 5 Feb. 1885, 1; 13 Mar. 1890. Minerva Cobb's mother Bethia also came to Colman and died there in April 1879.
61. For works on women's evangelical ministry in the early twentieth century, see Leah Payne, *Gender and Pentecostal Revivalism: Making a Female Ministry in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Priscilla Pope-Levinson, *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).
62. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 339.

'A fine stalwart member': Margaret Pares 1878-1963

Susan Pares
Independent researcher and writer

Margaret Pares[1]

The early focus of the women's movement in Britain was for many the securing of the right to vote. That struggle culminated in the granting of a partial franchise in 1918, but it was accompanied by determined campaigns to open up other areas of public and social life to which women had little access or none: education, health, employment, legal status, family life, public duties, active citizenship, international solidarity. A certain amount had been achieved by the time the Representation of the People Act of 1918 and the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 were passed, but feminists soon came to understand the need to consolidate what had already been won, to take on new campaigns and to drive forward the feminist cause, however it might be interpreted. My grandmother Margaret Pares, active in the pre-First World War suffrage campaign, was one of that cohort of women who worked to extend women's rights through the interwar period and the Second World War into the years of the mid-twentieth century. Her story has significance on several levels – organisational, social and personal.

Margaret never had a leading role in the formal British women's movement, but knew, or had contact with, those who were leaders – Millicent Fawcett, Eleanor Rathbone, Teresa Billington-Greig, Margery Corbett Ashby, Eva Hubback – and at times exerted considerable influence within the groups she belonged to. In succession, she adhered to the Liverpool Society for Women's Suffrage, then, in London, to the Hampstead Group for Equal Citizenship, the National Council for Equal Citizenship and the British Commonwealth League (BCL). She was briefly involved with the Women's Freedom League (WFL), which she helped to steer through the early stages of the Second World War. She had an active part in the postwar revival of the National Women Citizens Association (NWCA) through merger with other groups, was again in the BCL and made a visit to India in 1946-7, representing the International Alliance of Women (IAW), to attend a session of the All India Women's Congress (AIWC).

This activity was conducted against a life that by early twentieth-century social norms would have been considered unusual. In April 1913, twelve years into their marriage, my grandfather, Bernard Pares, moved out of the family home, leaving Margaret with the care of their five children, at the time aged between ten and two. Margaret took legal steps to prevail on him to return, but with no success. Their separation became formal in December 1918, but by then Margaret, in effect a single mother, was already the *de facto* head of her family. She was left to educate her two daughters and provide a home, at times, to all of her children. Hers had been a middle-class marriage. After it ended, money was always a problem, but the family was not destitute. She was a good manager, and sufficient financial and social support was forthcoming from both her own family and from Bernard's to allow private schooling, domestic servants and a decent standard of living. What she did lack was social capital, such as funds, an independent home (the family lived in part of her father's house) or any kind of base. She did not have even the status of widow. Probably for that reason, she clung to one thing she had extracted from Bernard to her advantage: a title. When Bernard received a knighthood in late 1919, Margaret was entitled to style herself 'Lady Pares'. This is how she commonly appears in archival material. At a time when divorce was often deplored, the title acted as a reminder that she was not a divorced woman. Her social standing was important to her, and she welcomed this 'handle' to her name.

Margaret's personal commitment to feminist principles began, she later said, in 1904. For the rest of her life she was consistent in her belief in the right and duty of a woman to live as a full citizen of society. Beyond mere membership in an organisation, that meant taking the opportunities that had opened up for women, whether in voting, jury service, education or war work. At an intimate level, it may have extended even to parenting, to the desire to show she could do as good a job as her husband in raising a family and meeting the duties of a good citizen.[2] There is no knowing if her feminist activities

spurred dissatisfaction with her married life, but feminist arguments and agitation may have encouraged her to seek ways of addressing her problems. What is undoubted is that through conviction, her own resourcefulness and a shrewd understanding of her situation, she carved out an independent life in which her experiences obliged her to sharpen her skills of organisation and administration, her ability to work with other people and make good use of funds, and her talents that were put to the service of the women's movement.

Early life, marriage and its ending

Margaret Ellis Dixon was born on 28 March 1878 in Colchester, the second child of Edward Austin Dixon (ca. 1846-1940), a dental surgeon in Colchester, and his wife Mary Brewer Ellis (ca. 1845-1936), in their family of four. It was a middle-class home. On retirement, her father brought his family back to his native city of London, to a house in Belsize Park. Nothing is known of Margaret's early schooling, but she and her elder sister later stayed in a convent in Belgium, where they 'finished' their education. It is likely she acquired some fluency in languages. She was expert in needlework, was a good cook and hostess, and had a fine singing voice, but beyond these skills, she received no further training, and apart from war work, does not seem to have ever claimed the right to paid work. Photographs of 'Daisy' as a young woman suggest a vivacious, bright-eyed girl. In 1901, at the age of twenty-three, she met Bernard Pares, eleven years her senior. Their courtship was rapid. They appear to have married within weeks and produced their eldest son a year later. Probably in 1903, the family moved to Liverpool, where Bernard took up his first appointment at Liverpool University. Between 1904 and 1911, Margaret had five more children: three daughters and two further sons. One of her twin daughters was lost to whooping cough when the baby was nearly eight months old.

By the time of his marriage, Bernard was already committed to the great cause of his life, the promotion of knowledge and understanding of Russia. He first visited Russia in 1898-9, a year during which he learned the language and familiarised himself with the people, politics and history of the country.[3] His university appointments, first in Liverpool and later in London, allowed him to direct his energies wholly towards his goal.[4] Margaret was at first prepared to support his interests: she used her social skills, for instance, in helping to entertain the members of a delegation of the Russian Duma, or parliament, on their visit to Britain in 1909, which Bernard had been conspicuous in organising. However, she came to resent the consuming nature of his 'cause'. At times it led him to override the needs of his wife and family. Although late in his life, Bernard wrote with pride and affection of his five children,[5] he sometimes departed on his travels within weeks of their births, and on occasion failed to make adequate financial arrangements for the family before he left. He appreciated Margaret's sure touch when it came to easing his own projects, but appeared largely indifferent to her own social and emotional needs. The issue at stake was primarily his travel to Russia, from 1904, on his own admission 'ordinarily for two or three months of each year, sometimes for rather longer'.[6] His contract with the university allowed him leave of absence to undertake research for the equivalent of one term in each academic year.[7] Bernard presented this as an unavoidable condition of his employment, one on which he was unmovable. When Margaret reproached him with his absences and neglect, he refused to engage in discussion. In truth, neither he, nor Margaret, was well equipped to handle the incompatibilities that started to emerge between them in temperament and expectations. As his depositions to the court hearings in which he and Margaret were later embroiled made clear, from 1907 she spoke of her wish for a separation and expressed her exasperation in violent words, statements and even, it seems, actions, such as striking her husband. He claimed there were allegations against him of interest in a Russian woman; and that the couple's two eldest children were sometimes drawn into their quarrels.

In April 1913, Bernard moved into lodgings. After two unproductive appeals to him to return, Margaret proceeded, in March 1914, to present a petition to the High Court in London for restitution of conjugal rights. The use of this term here implied desertion and was one of the remedies open to Margaret under the legislation on divorce and separation embodied in the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, still in place, with amendments, in 1914.[8] The hope at this stage may have been to bring Bernard to reconsider his priorities. She was not acting entirely without support. Her parents were aware of her problems, and she had the advice of solicitors. The court minutes of the case brought by Margaret are a disturbing record of the catastrophic collapse of a marriage.[9] The formal exchange of claims made by wife and husband, in which Bernard's are the most detailed, dragged on throughout the years of the First World War, delayed by Bernard's absences abroad and Margaret's inability to produce all of her witnesses.[10] With no further progress possible, Margaret's case was dismissed in June 1918 and then postponed, 'pending the execution of a deed', which was drawn up and signed in December 1918. This 'deed' does not appear to have been a judicial separation, of which some public record would have remained, but rather a private arrangement. It would have been drawn up by professional legal advisors and would have carried legal force.[11] The deed divided the children by gender: Bernard became the guardian of the three boys once they reached the age of eleven, while Margaret retained care of the two girls.[12] Margaret was to receive a modest allowance.

At some point during the war years Margaret had moved her children from the centre of Liverpool to West Kirby, a seaside town on the west coast of the Wirral. It is not clear what the family's sources of income were. Bernard's professorial salary from Liverpool University may have been available to the family until late 1917. Margaret also had the support of generous friends.

Both Bernard and Margaret eventually settled in London, Bernard in 1919, Margaret by the end of 1923. Despite hints and allegations, no third party was ever named in their separation, and they still regarded themselves as married, but there was never any reconciliation, and they lived separate existences for the rest of their lives. Considerable bitterness remained on

Margaret's part. She may have felt she had been forced into a situation she had not wished for, and which brought her some hardship. Her children's desire to maintain relations with their father eventually brought friction, even estrangement. Nonetheless, some lingering acknowledgement of the marriage endured: Bernard's will instructed that Margaret, whom he described as his wife, should receive £100 a year for her lifetime after his death on 17 April 1949.

Early feminist activity

In the pre-First World War years, Merseyside offered considerable scope for militant and non-militant suffrage activism.[13] Margaret herself dated the place and start of her own suffrage and feminist activity to Liverpool, in 1904, under Eleanor Rathbone. No evidence of her early involvement has come to light, but at some point she joined the Liverpool Society for Women's Suffrage (LSWS) and by 1918 was recorded as its honorary secretary. In the intervening years she must have engaged in some of its actions. The LSWS, affiliated to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) from 1898, dominated the constitutional campaign for women's suffrage in Liverpool under its honorary secretary Eleanor Rathbone. When the various NUWSS societies nationwide were reorganised in April 1910 into regional federations, the LSWS found itself within the West Lancashire, West Cheshire and North Wales Federation, along with Birkenhead and Wallasey and Wirral.[14] The patterns of work of the new federations would have differed little from each other. Paid organisers did much of the work on the ground. Constant effort was put into encouraging the formation of new societies through meetings, often held in the open air, even on beaches, backed up by house-to-house canvassing and the opening of committee rooms and shops. A corps of regular speakers travelled around the region. Subscriptions to the NUWSS organ, *The Common Cause*, were sought and followed up; funds were continually raised. Gathering support from women was the crucial aim, but the other important target in a constituency was its male Member of Parliament. It was essential to know his views on female suffrage and, where these were judged to be unfriendly, to attempt to moderate them through continuous lobbying and through questioning at pre-election meetings. Parliamentary general elections, of which there were two in 1910 (15 January-10 February and 3-19 December), and by-elections called for strenuous LSWS campaigning. Taking to the streets in peaceful demonstrations was a further way to exert pressure as shown by the accompanying images of suffrage gatherings in Liverpool. On 18 June 1910, a large number of local suffrage societies (but not the Women's Social and Political Union) gathered in the centre of Liverpool in support of the Women Occupiers' Bill, as the Conciliation Bill was also known.[15] There would have been plenty for someone of Margaret's abilities to do.

Unexpectedly, her name is first recorded on 2 April 1911, the night of the 1911 population census. As a protest against enumeration without political representation, a number of suffrage activists, especially among the Women's Freedom League and the WSPU, 'evaded' the census by disappearing for the night. There seems to have been little take-up in Merseyside; Jill Liddington lists only five names for Liverpool and Merseyside.[16] In any case, Margaret would have had little opportunity to absent herself. She was in charge of four children under the age of eight, was responsible for three resident domestic staff, and was eight months pregnant with her last child. Instead, in Bernard's absence she completed the list of household members on the return, her signature testifying to the accuracy of the schedule. Bernard was included in the return for his younger brother, Harold, with whom he was staying in London. Signatures by women cannot have been rare, given that widows and single women functioned as heads of household. Margaret described herself as 'wife', making it clear that the head of family was absent.

Margaret's identification as honorary secretary of the LSWS in 1918 came in some style on an illuminated

Suffrage meeting, Liverpool, n.d.

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Suffrage procession, Liverpool, n.d.

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scroll presented by the Liverpool Society to Eleanor Rathbone on 8 July 1918, on the occasion of the passing of the Representation of the People Bill on 6 February of that year (see the accompanying image). A wrought silver box and a cheque for 200 guineas (£220) accompanied the scroll, as did a list of those subscribing to the gift. Margaret appears on the list as Mrs Pares.[17] She attended the presentation and as honorary secretary, read a letter from Millicent Fawcett, who apologised for her absence.[18] On 6 March 1919, Margaret represented the LSWS at a ceremony in London when various suffrage societies presented Millicent Fawcett with their contributions to the 'Mrs Fawcett Victory Thanksgiving Fund'. Liverpool's donation was £50.[19]

The Representation of the People Act resulted in an estimated six million women receiving the vote, although many women remained unenfranchised. The act, nevertheless, produced a fundamental shift in British political and social life. The NUWSS, through its publications and *The Common Cause*, offered very specific guidance to its members on how the process of registration to vote would proceed. Forms were to be sent to all householders to elicit information on the necessary qualifications to vote, from which new parliamentary and local government registers would be compiled. Women over thirty might meet the property qualifications in their own right; but equally, they could seek a vote if they were married to a man qualified to be registered on the same grounds of property, even if he were absent from home, provided he was registered to vote.[20] Making use of this last provision, Margaret moved ahead to take up the franchise for herself. By the end of the First World War, she and her children were still living in West Kirkby. Her name first appears on an electoral register in 1918 at the family address. Bernard's name also appears at the same address as an absent, naval or military voter, qualified to vote in both parliamentary and local elections by virtue of his occupation of the premises. Margaret as his wife qualifies equally for the vote.[21] The absent voter categories fall away by 1920, and he is shown as qualified by residence to vote in parliamentary elections and by occupation of the premises to vote in local government elections. Margaret's entitlement to vote rested on her husband's qualifications. They both continued to appear in the West Kirby registers up to 1923.[22] Yet, there is no evidence that Bernard ever visited the house in West Kirby. My interpretation is that Margaret took the decision to register him as both resident and occupier, thus ensuring her own eligibility to vote, such was her determination to secure the benefits of the 1918 Act.

The interwar period

By late 1923, Margaret had moved to London and was occupying the two top floors of her parents' house in Belsize Park Gardens in Hampstead (her parents and her two unmarried sisters lived on other floors). This was the home for her two daughters and intermittently for her three sons. Under the terms of the deed of separation, for all of the children half of the school holidays were to be spent with their mother, half with their father. The comings and goings entailed must have left Margaret's two floors alternately much occupied or comparatively empty. Her accommodation must have had sufficient capacity to permit her to use it as a means of supplementing the family income by taking in paying guests. These were young women from a variety of European countries who came to improve their English. They stayed in the London house and, from around 1923, also joined the family at its summer holiday lettings. There was much demand for what Margaret was able to offer – a stay with a titled English family. Guests came in greater numbers – there were five such groups, 1925-9 – to summer country or seaside house parties that Margaret organised at large, rented properties. One family photo shows a line-up of eight young women dressed for tennis posed at the net, another of the same group mixed in with Margaret's family and children. The latter were enlisted, some enthusiastically, others less so, to entertain the guests. One son recalled that it was an opportunity to 'fall in love'; his

Illuminated scroll presented to Eleanor Rathbone, 8 July 1918, by the Liverpool Society for Women's Suffrage. Margaret's signature is in third place. Reproduced by kind permission of National Museums Liverpool

elder brother dismissed them as 'twerps' (a word of his own choosing).[23]

Once in Belsize Park, Margaret, as the occupier of a property, placed herself on the voter's register at her parents' two successive family homes. This same status allowed her to be added to local lists for jury service.[24] She thereby joined the very small number of women eligible to serve as jurors. On the electoral lists she is identified with the initials SJ as a special juror. The reasons for this designation are not clear. First noted in England in the late seventeenth century, and not abolished until 1949, the system of special juries pointed to distinctions of rank, profession and higher rateable values as qualifications for being called to such a jury.[25] The title of 'Lady Pares' may have carried weight, but the rateable values of the two properties she occupied do not seem to have passed the required mark of £100. Another possible explanation, in an echo of the earlier practice of calling special juries of experts, may lie in Margaret's experiences of matrimonial litigation. A special jury list was maintained for civil cases, among which divorce cases would have been included.[26] A 1921 mention in *The Women's Leader* of women sitting to try divorce cases being termed 'special' jurors may bear this out.[27]

Politically, Margaret carried her former allegiance to NUWSS over to its reincarnation in 1919 as the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), as the earlier group moved into a postwar period of reorientation. In June and July 1919, *The Common Cause* (XI/531 and 534) noted her activity within the Merseyside area on behalf of both a local Women Citizens' Association (WCA) and of NUSEC. Once in her new home in London, she joined her local affiliated branch of NUSEC: the Hampstead Group for Equal Citizenship. The NUSEC archive shows that she was active, 1923-8, in the Hampstead group as *pro tem* or full honorary secretary and, in 1925-26, served as secretary of the NUSEC Entertainments Committee. In 1926, 1927 and 1928, NUSEC organised or participated in demonstrations in support of the full franchise for women, drawing in its affiliated societies, including Hampstead. These may have been the occasions on which Margaret propelled her reluctant daughters into carrying placards. By 1929-30, however, the Hampstead Group for Equal Citizenship had been replaced by a branch of the Townswomen's Guild. The arrival of this new group was a reflection at local level of the growing divergence over priorities and policies within NUSEC ranks: a split between support for equality and a progressive feminist agenda, and a move towards educational work and social reform. NUSEC had extended affiliation to any association that took as one of its objects NUSEC's own objects.[28] One consequence was an influx of groups such as Women Citizens' Associations; another was the emergence of Townswomen's Guilds from 1929. In 1932, the new network of Guilds parted company with NUSEC, which sought to take its work forward as a campaigning group with a 'feminist, political programme' as the National Council for Equal Citizenship (NCEC).[29]

On her own admission, Margaret chose to follow the NCEC. On the one occasion I asked her which organisation she had belonged to, she named NCEC. However, perhaps discouraged by developments within NUSEC, she withdrew between 1928-37 from any recorded action for NCEC or indeed for any women's group. Instead, she filled much of the 1930s with work in the cause of another of her interests: the care and education of children.[30] Her

own children's education and well-being had always been an important concern. Responsibility for their schooling fell as much to her as to their father, especially after he left the marriage. In a middle-class family such as theirs, the choice of school was important, and despite sometimes uncertain finances, the means were always found to pay for private education. The children were not always together – Margaret's eldest son was sent at eight to a boarding preparatory school – and the terms of the 1918 deed of separation removed her sons into their father's care. Her second son fell ill and remained with her, but her youngest son went at nine to live with Bernard. The boys' education followed the lines of public boarding school and Oxbridge. Their sisters attended girls' public day schools, with one subsequently taking a London University degree. Margaret's own education may have ended at finishing school, but she was determined to provide her daughters with something more substantial.

The evidence shows that in 1918-19 she was an active member of women's groups on Merseyside, but a gap until 1923, when she resurfaced in NUSEC, suggests an unsettled period in which the effects of the separation, her children's needs and the move to London claimed her energies. By 1929, her own children were working or studying and she clearly felt ready for a new direction in which she could apply her knowledge of caring for children in a more formal situation. She chose voluntary school work in an area close to her own neighbourhood, serving, again in her own words, as a 'member … of the Children's Care Committee of the London County Council Schools in the Borough of St Pancras, and a Vice-Chairman of School Managers in Kentish Town'.[31] The LCC children's care committees concerned themselves with the nutrition, health and welfare of school children. Often liaising with families, school managers dealt *inter alia* with the appointment of teachers and the custody of school buildings.[32] Of Margaret's care committee work I have found no account, but a formal record of her successive three-year appointments as a school manager exists in the minutes of meetings of the Borough of Saint Pancras for 1929, 1932, 1935 and 1938.[33] Her particular responsibility was for two schools in the northern part of Kentish Town, an area of some deprivation. The schools are within walking distance of the streets where she lived. In early September 1939, with the declaration of war, she participated in the evacuation and billeting of schools from Kentish Town, which took her out of London for a few days as she joined large parties of children and adults bound mostly for reception areas north of the capital.[34] Thereafter, her war duties took a different form.

Years of activity

Despite being occupied with her school work, Margaret must have nonetheless maintained her interest in women's affairs and more particularly kept up some contact with NCEC, since the fact remains that in mid-1938, on the death of Miss Corns, NCEC's honorary treasurer, Margaret was appointed to fill her place. NCEC counted itself 'fortunate in having secured the services of Lady Pares as Treasurer in place of Miss Corns. We are very grateful to her for undertaking this onerous office'.[35] It is likely that Margaret inherited a deficit. By 1938, NCEC was indeed in a precarious situation. The number of affiliated associations remained around fifty, but interest was weakening, and income continued to drop. Even campaigning on problems close to NCEC's remit became difficult as parliament, preoccupied with the worsening international situation in the second half of the 1930s, gave less time to domestic affairs.[36] NCEC nonetheless continued to campaign on economic and industrial issues affecting women, on family allowances, divorce reform and the status of women in the then British Empire, especially in India. It joined other feminist groups to campaign on equal pay. Having inherited from NUSEC the right to attend the triennial congresses of the International Alliance of Women, NCEC delegates joined others from the Women's Freedom League and St Joan's Social and Political Alliance to attend the twelfth and thirteenth IAW Congresses held in Istanbul in 1935 and in Copenhagen in July 1939, respectively.[37]

For Margaret, her appointment as NCEC treasurer in mid-1938 served to bring her back into feminist action and into roles at a national level, and the fifteen years between 1938 and 1953 were among her most productive. Although in her sixties, she was largely free of family responsibilities. Like other women, for example, Margery Corbett Ashby, with whom she had many dealings, she was involved in several groups: in addition to NCEC, the British Commonwealth League (BCL) and the IAW. To these she added the Women's Freedom League, of which, in somewhat unusual circumstances, she became a vice-president in 1938. During 1937, the NCEC and the WFL were engaged in tentative negotiations over some form of co-operation – sharing a secretary was mentioned – but WFL felt unable to agree to any form of co-operation that would include work 'for points outside the immediate equalitarian programme'.[38] In March 1937, the WFL annual conference rejected any proposed amalgamation with NCEC on the grounds of an inequality in numbers, WFL, at ninety-six members, having the smaller membership; but at its 1938 annual conference, it voted to invite a number of women to become vice-presidents, among them Margaret.[39] From 1938 onwards, as a representative of both the NCEC and the WFL, Margaret became prominent at events. In May 1939, representing the NCEC at BCL's fifteenth annual conference, she successfully moved a motion against unequal rates of pay between male and female Civil Defence volunteers and against unequal rates of compensation.[40] The following month, she chaired a ninety-fifth birthday greetings meeting for Charlotte Despard, one of the founders of WFL,[41] and in July 1939 was named as one of four WFL delegates to the thirteenth IAW congress in Copenhagen.[42]

The outbreak of war in September 1939 disrupted both her personal and organisational life. The 1939 National Register showed that Margaret was then living in Wimbledon and described herself as married and of private means.[43] With both parents dead by early 1940 and the family home in Hampstead damaged in the blitz later that year, Margaret thereafter led a peripatetic existence. She took up what may have been her first, and only, paid job. She worked, 1939-45, in the German and Italian Prisoner of War Section of the Censorship (her own description of

what she did – personnel files compiled by her employers, the Postal and Telegraph Censorship Department (PTCD), were destroyed after the end of the war).[44] It is probable that she was employed as an examiner in the Prisoner of War and Internee sub-section at the PTCD, that is, she opened, read and assessed correspondence to and from prisoners of war held in Britain, the majority of whom were German or Italian. Older women of good education, with linguistic abilities and good memories, capable of understanding the significance of what they read, were being eyed as postal examiners in the run-up to war.[45] Margaret was clearly judged suitable for such work and was assigned to Liverpool, where the PCTD had based its Prisoner of War branch.[46]

Within the voluntary sector, the outbreak of hostilities was marked by considerable disarray. Women's organisations vacated offices and abandoned routine work for wartime programmes of activity, and individual members took up war jobs. Some groups, such as the BCL and the London and National Society for Women's Service (LNSWS), were able to make orderly decisions.[47] In contrast, in mid-September 1939, the Women's Freedom League office found itself in a state of near collapse, with funds running out and its organiser, Dorothy Auld, facing redundancy. Margaret, as a vice-president, appears to have taken the situation in hand by devising ways of alleviating the financial shortfall sufficiently to meet the immediate salaries to the paid staff, offered to meet some expenses out of her own pocket, and on 20 September chaired a meeting to indicate a way forward for WFL.[48] In May 1940, she was elected president at the WFL annual conference, and in January 1941, she again addressed WFL's financial situation and outlined proposals on how the organisation might continue with some form of work during wartime: lunch-time meetings with women speakers on questions of immediate interest to women or with expert speakers for groups of women trainees; new programmes and methods to ensure WFL would still be needed after the war; and joint discussions with other women's organisations on the question of 'women's special interests and right to be heard' on all issues that would arise in postwar reconstruction.[49] Her appeal fell on ready ground. Women's associations, reviving a tradition of joint campaigning, again linked together in the war years to protest against a government prepared to utilise women's energies through labour regulations and conscription, but which generally turned a tin ear to their concerns. In addition to applying discriminatory pay differentials between male and female Civil Defence workers, the government attempted, in 1939 and 1941, to keep women on lower rates of compensation for civilian war injuries. From the outset, women MPs within parliament and women's organisations without, largely co-ordinated by the British Federation of Business and Professional Women, the National Association of Women Civil Servants and the Women's Publicity Planning Association (WPPA), protested against these proposals, with nationwide support.[50] The government capitulated in April 1943 over differing compensation.

By the end of 1942, Margaret had relinquished the WFL presidency. Indeed, for the rest of the war, working outside of London, she again disappeared from sight, but kept abreast of developments, since in 1946-7, addressing the All India Women's Congress in India, she was able to both speak and write about women's wartime activities.

Of the women's associations that had emerged before the First World War and during the interwar period with avowedly political aims, many – such as the WFL, the Six Point Group, the Open Door Council, the BCL and the LNSWS – made it through the Second World War to re-establish themselves with greater or lesser success. Some chose the path of a merger. One such was the National Women Citizens Association (NWCA), created in 1917, with the aim of encouraging women's informed use of the vote and participation in politics, working through local Women Citizens' Associations (WCAs). By 1943, it was considering co-operation with any other organisation with similar aims. The National Council for Equal Citizenship presented itself, and in late 1945, the two organisations agreed to amalgamate under the NWCA name.[51] A former NWCA president, reviewing this merger, wrote that NCEC brought its 'modest capital' and some 'fine stalwart members, among them Lady Pares'.[52] Margaret's link with NCEC was clearly still solid. She was voted on to the NWCA executive committee in 1947. The consolidated NWCA found itself in further amalgamation talks during 1948-9 with Teresa Billington-Greig's Women for Westminster group, formed in 1942 to encourage women's participation in parliament. Careful negotiations over membership, finances and records between the two organisations, involving the placating of *amour-propre* on both sides, culminated in the May 1949 AGM of the newly augmented NCWA. Margaret was involved in these negotiations, in which, one senses, she was seen as a 'safe pair of hands'.[53] In 1950, she was elected NWCA president for the customary year. From its inception, the Association had taken a non-party political line but had equally long backed women's participation in local government, and part of its remit was to encourage women both to vote at elections and to stand as candidates for local office. Margaret took a robust line on support for NWCA members standing for public office: 'abstention from support of able, trained women standing on a party basis, would diminish our influence and narrow our outlook'.[54] NWCA inherited NCEC's affiliation to the International Alliance of Women, and so, Margaret found herself, in August 1946, at the IAW's fourteenth congress at Interlaken in Switzerland as part of the British delegation, composed of members of NWCA, the Women's Freedom League and the St Joan's Social and Political Alliance. The British group presented a report summarising the position of women in the UK during the years 1940-46. Margaret was elected to the IAW Board but withdrew her name.[55]

NWCA was not Margaret's only interest. She resumed her involvement in the BCL and served, late 1946-52, as its honorary treasurer. Her report for May 1951-April 1952 indicated that the League was just holding its own financially, with the help of the annual bring-and-buy sale and an annual grant from a well-wisher. As she pointed out: 'The League does not deal in big sums but makes its money go a long way and gets full value for every penny subscribed, largely because of the ungrudging goodwill of its officers, its standing

committee and its members'.[56] Striking off in a different direction, for a couple of years from 1947, she supported a petition, initiated by the lawyer Edward Iwi, to admit women into the House of Lords, and was a member of his executive committee, co-signing a letter of protest to the *Times* in 2 January 1949 against the refusal of the then prime minister, Clement Attlee, to receive a deputation on the issue.

These postwar years may have been among the most satisfying of her life. Valued by her friends and colleagues as a 'go-to' person, knowledgeable, with good contacts and a skilful approach, she comes across as a figure of some influence. From some she drew great affection. The same former president of NWCA, Vera Webb, remembered Margaret as 'a wonderful person to work with. We had a splendid year together and formed a friendship that was very precious to me until her death'.[57] She was a good conversationalist, and her membership of the English-Speaking Union would have provided her with further social outlets.

International connections

In December 1946, Margaret arrived in Mumbai as one of a delegation of four British women attending the nineteenth session of the All India Women's Congress. She came at the AIWC's invitation, as a representative of the International Alliance of Women, having met a group of Indian women colleagues at the IAW's Interlaken congress that summer in Switzerland. Margaret struck up a cordial acquaintance with the Indian ladies and spoke later, on arrival in India, of their 'great hospitality'.[58] One consequence was the invitation to attend the forthcoming session of the AIWC. The other three members of the delegation had closer ties to India, but the presence of all four was indicative of long-standing interest in, and support for, the Indian women's movement among British women's organisations, in some instances, since the end of the First World War. Margaret's particular exposure to the concerns of Indian women went back to December 1941, when, in her capacity as president of the Women's Freedom League, she had responded to Margery Corbett Ashby's invitation on behalf of the Liaison Group of British Women's Societies and the Women's Advisory Council on Indian Affairs to associate WFL with her broadcast message of greetings to the annual AIWC conference. The broadcast went out on 31 December 1941.[59]

Margaret also had a strong personal reason for involving herself in India through her friendship with Hilda Seligman (1882-1964), a writer, artist and sculptor whom she had known since at least the 1930s. Hilda had lived in India and was steeped in Indian culture. The Seligman family home was in Wimbledon, where in 1936, Hilda welcomed the Emperor Haile Selassie during his exile in Britain. During the war years, Hilda nurtured plans for specially built vans equipped with medical and relief supplies that would operate through the AIWC in poor and remote areas of India. She raised money for the scheme through a children's book about a goat, *Skippo of Nonesuch*, written and illustrated by herself and published in 1943. Subscriptions from well-wishers augmented the fund, of which Margaret was vice-chair. As a friend of AIWC, Hilda Seligman was also invited to the conference in India, and so, the small British delegation consisting of Hilda as organising secretary of the Skippo Fund Committee, Margaret as representative of the IAW, Grace Lankester, who was a liaison officer between AIWC and British women's societies, and her daughter Dorothea Lankester, left Britain by sea on 2 December 1946.

They reached Mumbai on 18 December, where they were joined by two American visitors to the AIWC session, Mary Sweeney and Elmina Lucke. The conference, attended by 270 delegates and the five 'special visitors', took place 28-31 December in the town of Akola, northeast of Mumbai, in the modern state of Maharashtra. Both the AIWC journal *Roshni* and the *Times of India* reported on the conference and on the foreign delegates' presence.[60] The British visitors undertook many speaking engagements before and during the conference, Margaret saying later that she had spoken every day in Mumbai. Her themes included British women's war service, a renewed campaign for equal pay by women MPs and women's groups, and women's contemporary role. She also contributed an article to the AIWC journal *Roshni* (II/1, February 1947) on the work of the UK Royal Commission on Equal Pay in the public services and industry set up in October 1944. *Roshni* (II/2, March 1947) later carried an impression of the session by 'Outsider', who found the English women friendly and 'fundamentally' like their Indian counterparts, even though they behaved 'in peculiar ways', wore 'hideous clothes' and had 'strange habits'. The British delegates went on to visit other parts of India and left on 20 February 1947. On their return they reported on their visit to a combined meeting on 13 March in London.

For Margaret and Hilda Seligman, the Indian link continued. At the very end of 1947, their names appeared as signatories to the British Women's Appeal for Women and Children in India in response to a British Red Cross Society appeal for immediate relief work in India and Pakistan.[61] Margaret was on acceptance lists, 1948-53, usually representing the BCL or the IAW, for receptions organised by the Women's Council for women visiting from India and Pakistan. She and Hilda Seligman hosted a reception for the Emperor Haile Selassie during his state visit to the UK in mid-October 1954.

From then on, Margaret seems to have ceased her involvement in the organisations she had been supporting. Once loosed from obligations and without a base of her own, she followed an almost nomadic life, living for a while with Hilda Seligman in London, or moving from one residential hotel or rented flat to another, often along the English south coast. In 1953, she visited one of her sons in Casablanca, where he had been posted as British consul, and in 1953-4 was staying in Darlington near another son. She suffered increasingly from arthritis, which may have caused her absence on grounds of illness from the WFL's Golden Jubilee celebration reception on 11 October 1957. She did turn out, however, for the NWCA's fortieth anniversary dinner on 26 May 1959, when she was one of the speakers. Reading, embroidery and letter-writing were her pastimes. She died on 22 September 1963 in London in her beloved Hampstead.

Notes

1. Undated photograph, private collection. This article originated in a talk given on 12 February 2020 to the Friends of the Women's Library. I am grateful to the Friends for their support and to my cousins Lesley Harris and Michael Pares for sharing material, documents and, more importantly, their recollections and assessments of our grandmother. Margaret appears to have left no record of her activities, and it is largely through the contents of public archives and libraries that it has been possible to prepare this account of her life as a feminist. In that task, I have received valuable assistance from Gillian Murphy and the staff of LSE Women's Library. I have also consulted collections in the British Library, the National Archives, London Metropolitan Archives, Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, the University of Liverpool, the Museum of Liverpool, Liverpool Record Office, Chester Record Office, Lancashire Archives and Wirral Archives Service, and thank the staff of all these institutions for their kind help. I am also indebted to Kate Murphy and the editorial staff of *Women's History Today* for invaluable advice.

2. Bernard, for instance, according to his youngest son, never voted in elections.

3. Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1931), chapter 2.

4. Bernard had a distinguished career as an academic, speaker and writer. In 1907, at Liverpool, he was instrumental in establishing the first school of Russian Studies at a British university and in 1908 was appointed professor. In 1919, he took up a professorship in Russian Studies at London University and served as director of the University's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1922-39. From 1942 until his death in 1949, he lectured and taught in the United States. He was the author of numerous books and articles on Russia.

5. Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Scholar: The Story of a Purpose* (Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1948), 398.

6. Pares, *My Russian Memoirs*, 55.

7. University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies Library Archive, Pares (Sir Bernard) Collection (1902-1948), PAR/2/24/1.

8. See Douglas M. Ford, *Matrimonial Law* (London, William Clowes and Sons Ltd., 1888), for a discussion of the prevailing legislation.

9. These are held in the National Archives (hereafter TNA), Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice, Divorce Court File: 4982, Pares, Margaret Ellis v Pares, Bernard.

10. In early August 1914 Bernard offered his services to the British Foreign Office and was sent to Russia with an official remit to observe the Russian army. This and subsequent missions kept him on and off in Russia until November 1919, when he finally completed his war duties and was rewarded with a knighthood. His periodic returns to Britain to report back to government ministers allowed him to meet his obligations in the evolving stages of the High Court petition.

11. For a discussion of the three types of legal separation then available, see Richard T. Gates, 'Divorce or separation: which?' Divorce Law Reform Union, 1910, LSE Digital Library, Cavendish-Bentinck pamphlets, 4, 141-65.

12. In the absence of any copy of the deed, details are taken from Robin Humphreys, *Elisabeth Humphreys 1904-1990: A Memoir* (privately published, 1992), 11.

13. For a review of the array of groups active in Liverpool in the pre-First World War period, see Elizabeth Crawford, T*he Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London, UCL Press, 1999; paperback edition, London, Routledge, 2001), 349-50 (paperback); and Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey* (Abingdon, UK, Routledge, 2006), 16-19, 20. For more detailed accounts of the suffrage scene in Merseyside, see M. van Helmond, *Votes for Women: The Events on Merseyside 1870-1928* (National Museums and Collections on Merseyside, 1992); and Krista Cowman, *"Mrs Brown is a Man and a Brother!" Women in Merseyside's Political Organisations 1890-1920* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004).

14. *The Common Cause*, II/68 (28 July 1910). *The Common Cause*, organ of the NUWSS, was published weekly, I/1-XI/564, 15 Apr 1909-30 Jan1920.

15. *The Common Cause*, II/63 (23 June 1910).

16. Jill Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2014), 349-50.

17. The scroll, silver box and list are all displayed in the Museum of Liverpool, accession number MMM.1999.22.3.

18. *The Common Cause*, X/484 (19 July 1918).

19. *The Common Cause*, X/518 (14 March 1919).

20. *The Common Cause*, X/471 (19 Apr. 1918); TWL, GB/106/2/NUSEC/X2/4/2.

21. British Library (hereafter BL), register of electors, Wirral parliamentary division (1918), Series SPR. Mic.P.274/BL.C.36.

22. Cheshire Record Office, register of electors, Wirral parliamentary division (1919-23), CCRg 1/380, 407, 418, 427, 436, 445, 454, 463, 472, 481.

23. Humphreys, *Memoir*, 14-15.

24. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 permitted women to serve on juries.

25. See R. M. Jackson, *The Machinery of Justice in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1953), 240, fte 2; James Oldham, *Trial by Jury: The Seventh Amendment and Anglo-American Special Juries* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), chapters 7 and 8.

26. See Patrick Devlin, *Trial by Jury*, published under the auspices of the Hamlyn Trust (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1956), 19.

27. *The Women's Leader*, XII/52 (28 Jan. 1921). *The Women's Leader*, the NUSEC
successor to *The Common Cause*, was published weekly, XII/1-XXIII/29, 6 Feb1920-2
Oct 1931; monthly, Nov 1931-Jan 1933.

28. TWL, 2/NSE, NUSEC Annual Report for 1918, 4.

29. *The Women's Leader*, XXIV/6 (New Series) (April 1932).

30. In an autobiographical note she prepared for her attendance at the 1946 AIWC conference, Margaret listed education as one of her main interests, another being the women's movement. See TWL, WCL/08, Folder 2, AIWC, nineteenth session.

31. The former borough of Saint Pancras lay just east of Margaret's own former borough of Hampstead (both subsumed in 1965 into the present-day London borough of Camden).
32. See G. Gibbon and R. W. Bell, *History of the London County Council 1889-1939* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1939), 255, 303.
33. Camden Local History and Archives Centre, Metropolitan Borough of Saint Pancras, minutes of proceedings of the Council, vols 46, 49, 52, 55, 57 and 58.
34. London Metropolitan Archives, LCC/EO/WAR/5/5; LCC/EO/WAR/5/7, I of 3.
35. TWL, 2/NSE, NCEC Report for 1938-9.
36. NCEC Report, 1936-7.
37. TWL, 2 IAW/1/C/09.
38. NCEC Report, 1936-7.
39. TWL, 7TBG/1/28.
40. TWL, 305.420 60171241 BR1, British Commonwealth League, Annual Conferences (1925-39), fifteenth annual conference (1939), 8.
41. TWL, 7EWD/D/5.
42. TWL, 2 IAW/1/C/09.
43. TNA, RG101/1401E, 1939 Register, register booklet for Surrey.
44. TNA, Postal and Telegraph Censorship Department (PTCD), predecessors and successors: Papers, DEFE 1/55, item 31.
45. TNA, T/162/1014/2, letter dated 9 Aug1939 from V. Bovenizer, War Office, to F.D. Proctor, Treasury.
46. Humphreys, *Memoir*, 37; E. S. Herbert and C. G. des Graz, eds, *History of the Postal and Telegraph Censorship Department 1938-1946*, two vols. (London: Home Office, 1952), §346.
47. TWL, 5BFW/05/51; LNSWS Report, 1 Oct 1938-31 Mar 1943.
48. TWL, 7TGB/2/S7 and S9.
49. TWL, 7TBG/1/28.
50. The WPPA was formed in December 1939 to give a voice to women's groups both nationally and internationally and to stimulate the exchange of views and information. From 1940, it used the IAW's *International Women's News* to air wartime women's issues and to encourage discussion of peacetime reconstruction.
51. TWL, 5NWC/1/B/2/1; 5NWC/1/E/1.
52. TWL, 323.3406041 NAT, pamphlets, *National Women Citizens' Association 1918-1968*, 32.
53. TWL, 5NWC/1/E/1.
54. *National Women Citizens' Association 1918-1968*, 4.
55. TWL, 2IAW/1/C/9.
56. TWL, 3AMS/F /08, CCL 1948-78.
57. N*ational Women Citizens' Association 1918-1968*, 33.
58. BL, British Newspaper Archive, *Times of India*, 19 Dec,1946.
59. TWL, 7MCA/C/11 and /12.
60. BL, Asia Pacific & Africa Or. Mic 14127, *Roshni*, monthly, I/1, Feb 1946-II/2, Mar 1947, special number, 1946.
61. TWL, 7MCA/C/12; WCL/08, folders 1 and 2.

Doing History

Participatory Historical Research with a Women's Club

Anne Logan, Emeritus Reader, University of Kent

The course of the twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of groups established especially for women, many of which owed their origins (however disguised or tangential) to individual women coming together to advocate equal voting rights and/or empower themselves and other women to embrace their post-1918 citizenship.[1] Within Great Britain and Ireland, some groups gradually declined and disappeared (for example, women's citizens associations) while others, such as the Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI), the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) and the latter's sister organisation, the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) have now sustained a consistent presence in civil society for approximately one hundred years.

Mainstream women's organisations such as these operate at many levels: local, national and international. The ICA and the NFWI are both federated to the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), which was established in 1929 and represents rural women at the United Nations (UN).[2] The SIGBI is one of the five world-wide federations of the Soroptimist International (SI), which also has a history stretching back to the 1920s and currently holds consultative status with the United Nations.[3] Yet scholarly investigation of the many groups that go to make up these and similar networks of women's organisations remains somewhat limited in extent and tends to concentrate (with important exceptions) on the national level.[4] Arguably the grassroots of these bodies are especially under-researched, not only with regard to their everyday, possibly mundane activities, but also with regards to their 'small-p' political roles and their gentle, but notable, records of advocacy for national and international gender equality. There is also a tendency for mainstream women's clubs and institutes to be patronised in popular memory for making jam, holding tea parties and encouraging handicrafts, while remaining somewhat overlooked in histories of post-1918 feminism that focus primarily on overtly feminist campaigns and (post-1960) the women's liberation movement.[5]

Recent studies of the suffrage movement, however, suggest how much can be added to scholarly understanding of women's organisations from a concentrated focus on grassroots; additionally, they have illustrated the continuity in personnel and ideology between suffrage organisations and their post-1918 counterparts.[6] The centenary of partial women's suffrage in the United Kingdom in 2018 inspired an outpouring of local studies, which collectively not only highlighted

the individuals and networks that made the campaign for the vote so vibrant, but also began to suggest the outline of a portrait of regional similarities and differences in the movement.[7] Furthermore, it is now well understood that individuals and networks did not cease activity in 1918 or 1928, but that many of them formed the backbone of the early generations of still-active mass organisations such as the SIGBI and the NFWI.[8]

The Project

This was the research context for a group of four academic researchers: Caitríona Beaumont, Ruth Davidson, Anne Logan and Anna Muggeridge. Wishing to undertake rigorous research into grassroots activism in women's organisations, the group realised that the continued existence of bodies such as SIGBI and NFWI offered a unique opportunity to engage in participatory research (PR) methods, by enabling it to work with existing members to shape key research questions and to begin to explore their clubs' histories. With funding from United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) through London South Bank University and led by Professor Beaumont, the group set up a project consisting of two participatory research (PR) workshops with a local SIGBI club, the Soroptimist International of Tunbridge Wells (SITW). When the academic team started communicating with its members, the SITW club had recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, having been founded in 1946. It remains a vibrant, active organisation, campaigning locally on women's safety and collecting aluminium tins for international toilet-twinning projects, as well as providing a social space for local women.[9] The organisation therefore maintains both a local profile and an outward-looking, internationalist ethos.

PR methods offer much more than the obvious advantages of gathering oral evidence from existing club members and potential access to written records of grassroots activity: importantly, they start with member involvement in the shaping of research questions. Initial discussion with SITW representatives resulted in the identification of three key themes: legacy, sustainability and visibility. Club members discussed some open-ended questions from the research team and expressed interest in making 'connections with other organisations and academics.' They identified the preservation of the legacy of SITW archives as a particular area of concern, while also expressing interest in identifying future priorities and recognising that greater knowledge 'about [our] collective past could help us to successfully shape the future', thereby hopefully ensuring the sustainability of the club and maintaining its visibility in the local community.[10] Seven club members volunteered to participate with the academic team in the PR workshops which took place in April and June 2022. To enable working members to get involved, the workshops were held at a Tunbridge Wells hotel in the so-called 'twilight' hours of 5pm to 7pm, the first one followed by a sociable evening meal and the second by a networking event attended by additional SITW members and local WI representatives.

The first PR workshop concentrated on the questions that the club had raised about their archives. Dating back to the club's foundation in 1946, the records are held in different formats and at different locations. Members were seeking guidance on how to safeguard the archive material for the future. The fully participatory workshop was expertly led by a consultant archivist who brought a vital, professional perspective to the discussions and subsequently submitted a detailed report and recommendations for the SITW club as a whole to consider. Since the workshop, the club has considered an action paper on archival practice written by one of the members present and has started a project to catalogue and preserve its archives. Knowledge about archival issues and the value of its past gained by those present at the workshop has enabled the club to re-evaluate the importance of its records and take vital steps to ensure their preservation.

The second workshop, led by the academic team, focused on the history of the Soroptimist movement: in Tunbridge Wells, throughout Great Britain, and internationally. The first Soroptimist Club was founded in California in 1921 with the first in Great Britain opening in London three years later.[11] To research the rich history of Soroptimism we used the method of photo-elicitation. More familiar to sociologists than historians, this research method involved getting all participants – academics and club members—to respond to the chosen images, focusing on the meanings they extracted from them and the emotions that the images engendered, collectively studying the images and recording reactions. Crucially, the group members assisted with the interpretation of the material, rather than it being purely a matter for the group of historians.

This method can be illustrated by the treatment of the first two photographs examined in the workshop. The first set of photographs – discussed in small groups – focused on the local: the history of SITW itself. A photo from the local newspaper, the *Kent and Sussex Courier*, from December 1946 showed the Club's first annual dinner, a formal and well-attended occasion. Participants were not only interested in the photograph itself but also the page it appeared on, which appeared to contain several items stereotypically of interest to women readers (such as an advertisement for a toy department, reports of weddings, and a claim by the local (male) mayor that housewives were 'wonderful'!).[12] It was therefore notable that participants responded to the whole context of the newspaper page, over and above the specific photograph. Participants also drew a contrast between the formality of a dinner at a prestigious hotel 76 years ago with the more relaxed atmosphere of Club meetings today. Nevertheless, there was perceived continuity in the importance of female empowerment, networks and friendships within Soroptimism.

The second photograph (also from the *Courier*) featured a hugely important occasion in the Club's history: the opening of the first set of apartments for elderly, retired single women by a SITW-established housing association, formed with the express purpose of providing accommodation for this needy but neglected section of society.[13] This housing project was central to the work of local Soroptimists in the mid- to late-twentieth century, with fund-raising dedicated to the project from

Soroptimist House—dream fulfilled

ANONYMOUS GIFT OF £10,000 PAVED THE WAY

AN anonymous gift of £10,000 received 16 months ago by Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist Housing Ltd. enabled the group to go ahead with plans to buy and redecorate a house to accommodate elderly tenants.

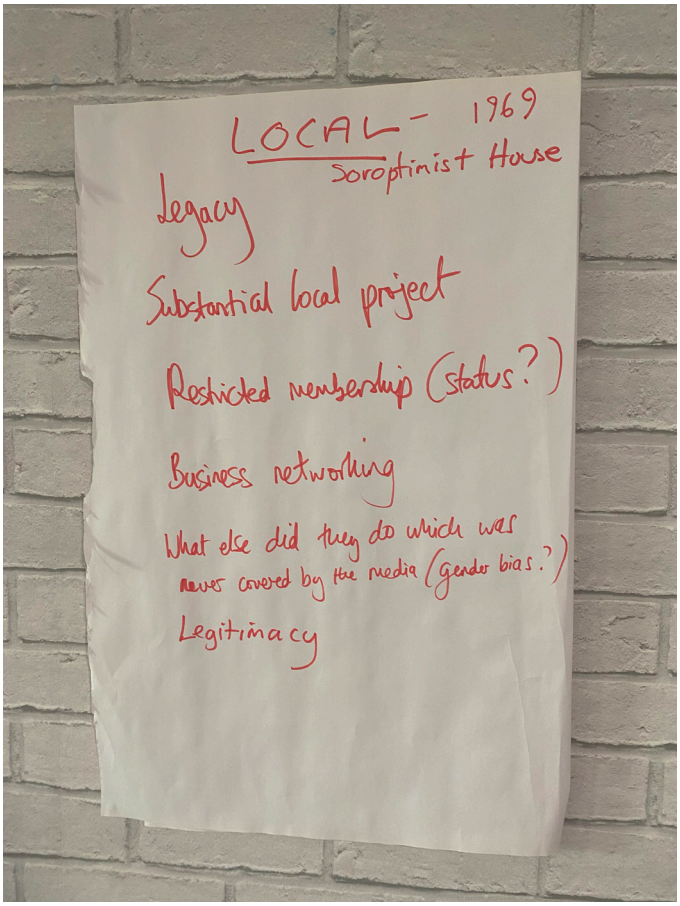
The house, Soroptimist House, at 52 Madeira Park, Tunbridge Wells, was officially opened by the Mayor, Miss Patience Thesiger on Saturday.

Its nine women tenants

THE MAYOR of Tunbridge Wells, Miss Patience Thesiger, officially opens 52 Madeira Park, Tunbridge Wells, new Soroptimist House, on Saturday

Announcement of the Soroptimist House, Tunbridge Wells, in the Kent and Sussex Courier, 3 October 1969

Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist Club's presidential chain of office, designed by Ernestine Mills, c.1947.



Workshop participants' comments on the Soroptimist House announcement; participatory research pilot, 28 June 2022.

soon after the Club's inception in 1946. The opening of the converted house in 1969 was therefore a seminal moment in the SITW's history. However, this initiative was not unique: many SIGBI clubs throughout England, Wales and Scotland formed housing associations in the 1950s and 1960s, most of which existed until (roughly) the 1990s when they became part of larger housing charities. The Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist housing venture fits the general pattern since its housing charity was deregistered in 1997.[14] Participants were impressed by how substantial the project was, involving considerable voluntary effort on the part of the previous generation of SITW members and a sizeable sum of money, to purchase and adapt a property for the intended purpose. Once again, they perceived greater formality on the part of the earlier generation, dressed in their neat suits and hats and posing in front of the newly-opened house with a leading local clergyman. One group of participants pondered what other good causes the former Soroptimists undertook (if any), which were not covered in the local press.

Taken together, the two examined photographs gave hints of the SITW club's history and of the similarities and differences between its historical role and the work today. Members were proud that their organisation had

undertaken a substantial local housing project during its first quarter-century and were aware that although the causes were different today, the philanthropic imperative remains. It was noted too, that the Club's activism (even in the 1950s and 1960s when feminism was supposedly at bay) took a strongly gendered form, with the focus on socially-marginalised, older, single, semi-professional women at a time when both occupational pensions and state help for this group was minimal. But workshop participants noted that Soroptimist membership was much more limited and socially exclusive in the past than it is today and more focused on business networking.

A fuller study of newspaper coverage of the Tunbridge Wells club (for which there was obviously no time in the short workshops) demonstrates that opportunities for professional networking and professional gendered identities lay at the heart of the Club's ethos in its early years. At that time Tunbridge Wells was home to a wide variety of women's groups: a venerable National Council of Women branch (founded in 1896), Townswomen's Guilds, electrical and gas associations for women; not to mention the many church groups and women's institutes in surrounding villages. The SITW niche therefore was to be *the* club for professional women with strong philanthropic motivation. As a result, most of its prominent early members were unmarried or widows, working in a variety of professional, albeit often gendered, occupations: as teachers, social workers, hospital matrons and midwives, or running their own businesses, including a dress shop and a ballet school. Several leading club members were active in local politics: the first four women mayors of Tunbridge Wells, Muriel Wells (1949-51), Clarinda Cox (1964-5), Laura Bowles (1967-8) and Patience Thesiger (1969-70) were all Soroptimists (Mrs Bowles being the only one who was married).[15] In contrast, today's club members, while undoubtedly politically engaged, are less likely to become involved in local government. Workshop participants spoke of enjoying female friendship within the club, something early members must have also valued, although the proportion of single women among members is likely to be far lower than in the early days. Significantly, membership of SITW is less socially restrictive nowadays, being open to those who wish to join.

SITW was of course part of a larger organisation and network; the SIGBI and membership policies have been shaped in that wider arena. In the course of the second workshop participants also examined photographs showing activities of Soroptimist clubs from elsewhere in Great Britain and in an earlier period (1920s). These depictions also highlighted philanthropy, focused on children in Bristol and the sick in Aberdeen. In both cases there was a concentration of activity in the local community. The second workshop concluded with an examination of images from the international organisation and discussion of the activities of the local group, which demonstrated the continued salience of national and international currents for SITW members.

Conclusion

Throughout the PR workshops the academic team and club members alike were conscious of the interconnections between past and present as well as the interplay of local, national and international. Although the workshops' programmes and activities were devised by the academic team and the professional archivist, the design aimed to be highly responsive to the club's expressed needs and wishes. It would be technically possible to be even more collaborative in designing the nature of the workshops, although this might have entailed a loss of clarity and structure in the limited time available. In a post-project evaluation, 100 per cent of respondents agreed that they had had a lot or some input into workshop design and they all said they felt involved in the activities. One club member commented, 'It was an excellent, inclusive approach, which if anything invigorated more interest as it made me consider the past in a more positive way and intrigued [me] about our dynamic past. This in turn has led to positive intent in relation to the future of advocacy and lobbying'. Recently (January 2023) the club has appointed an archivist and has begun the important process of bringing all its papers together in a single place, so real change has been achieved as a result of this PR project.

Notes

1. For a discussion of citizenship in relation to mainstream women's groups, see Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1938-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
2. https://acww.org.uk/our-history-1 (accessed 8 Feb. 2023).
3. https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/about-us/ (accessed 7 Feb. 2023).
4. Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Movement as a Social Movement* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997); Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens.*
5. There has been some interesting research into the cultural life of women's institutes, for example, Lorna Gibson, *Beyond Jerusalem: Music in the Women's Institute, 1919-69* (London: Routledge, 2008); Zoe Thomas, 'Historical pageants, citizenship and the performance of women's history before second-wave feminism', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28/3 (2017), 319-43; Bonnie White, 'Women's Institute drama groups and Shakespeare in early 20th century England, 1919-39', *Women's History Review*, 30/7 (2021), 1201-18.
6. For example, Ruth Davidson, 'A local perspective: the women's movement and citizenship, Croydon 1890s-1939', *Women's History Review*, 29/6 (2020), 1016-33.
7. Anne Logan, 'Writing regional suffrage histories' (unpublished paper, Women's History Network conference, 2018).
8. Davidson, 'A local perspective', 1017.
9. https://twitter.com/SITWD (accessed 8 Feb. 2023).
10. Quotations in this paragraph are from the initial response of SITW to a questionnaire devised by Caitriona Beaumont.

11. https://sigbi.org/who-we-are/history-of-soroptimist-international/ (accessed 7 Feb. 2023).
12. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 1 Nov. 1946, 4.
13. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 3 Oct. 1969, 12.
14. https://findthatcharity.uk/orgid/GB-MPR-18514R (accessed 8 Feb. 2023).
15. See https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-meetings/how-the-council-works/the-mayor/past-mayors (accessed 8th Feb. 2023.)

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Women and the Teaching Profession: Discourse in the archives of Ibstock Place School

Angela Platt, St Mary's University

In their recently published edited collection on British Froebelian women, Palmer and Read suggest that many of the important stories about women in educational leadership roles are yet to be told.[1] Whilst extant historiography about education often highlights the role women held in the teaching profession – often emphasising their natural predisposition for success owing to the maternal nature of these roles – studies of the history of education have often highlighted male educators.[2] The archives at Ibstock Place School offer insight into key women who were responsible for founding and sustaining the school in their roles as philanthropists, headmistresses and teachers, which are evidenced through its publications, diaries, letters and ephemera. The school itself was opened in 1894 as the 'Demonstration School' in connection with the Froebel Education Institute located in Colet Gardens, Kensington. Founded on the pedagogical principles of Friedrich Froebel, the school emphasised experiential learning. Froebel believed that children's learning was curated through their interaction with the world around them. The role of teachers, Froebel argued, was to facilitate this interaction by encouraging children to engage in structured play, in part, by incorporating the use of his 'Gifts', which encouraged children to make connections between themselves and the surrounding world.

The centrality of women to the achievements of this school for over a century are notable. Of the fourteen Heads the school has employed, only three have been men. Conversations about gender are found throughout the history of the school, particularly for teachers, as the role of men and women as school staff are subjects of discussion throughout its first century. This article will highlight some of the conversations born out by the archives, as well as one of the significant women highlighted by its collections, the fifth headmistress, Annie Yelland, and pedagogues that can be identified within the archives. The archives also note the conversations about gender which took place within these communities; interestingly, these conversations were often held by women.

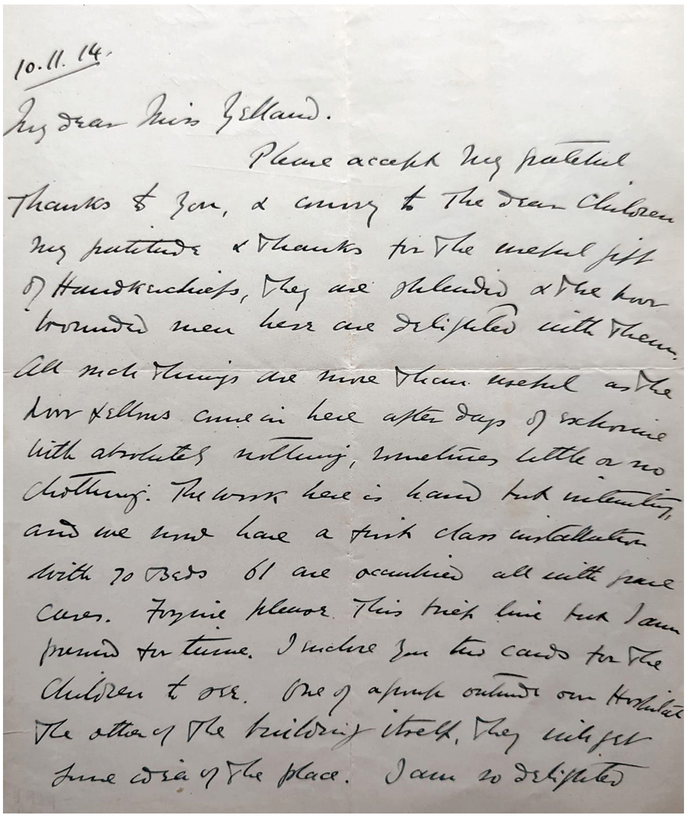
Conversations about women's role are evident early in the history of Ibstock Place. Within the archives is an opening address given by Mrs Alfred Bailey, a philanthropist with a special interest in education. In this address, delivered in March 1894, she introduced the Froebel Education Institute, and its associated Demonstration School, to her friends. Bailey addresses the link between teaching and motherhood and suggests that the Froebel Training College might help women become teachers or better mothers. She further asserts that education is a work which especially belongs to women:

> In these days of discussion as to what is, and what is not, woman's work, there can be *no* doubt that the education of young children belongs essentially to their sphere, and *I* think *all* young girls ought, if possible, to train this way.[3]

The perceived link between women's roles and teaching continued into the twentieth century, as seen in a discussion on extending the age range of pupils which took place in the 1970s. Members of the sub-committee which discussed this initiative collated their thoughts on the comparable proportion of female and male staff. Whilst asserting the need for additional part-time male teachers, they suggested that part-time female teachers would be more palatable than their male equivalent: 'Part-time women teachers with their own families are no doubt a great help, but what sort of person is a part-time man teacher, if he exists?'.[4]

These incidents do not undermine the significant impact of men within the early life of this school. In Mrs Bailey's address, noted above, she also elucidates the salient role of men in the Froebel Institute: 'A man has worked out this System for us, so it is no "woman's fad".[5] She may have been referring to Claude Montefiore, a leading Anglo-Jewish philanthropist, who was the Secretary (later President) of the Froebel Society which supported the College and School. Incidentally, his grandson, Alan Montefiore, was also involved in the School as the Chairman of the Governors in the 1970s. The archives show his involvement in school life in June 1975 during which he requested that parents allow their child to 'take part in some simple, preliminary investigations' akin to the phenomena practised by Uri Geller.[6] The stories of these men, as well as other teachers, heads and pupils, can be found in the archives as well – though it is notable that many of its early leaders were women and discussions about women's roles in the school remained prevalent throughout the twentieth century.

Numerous women, some already mentioned, were associated with the inauguration of this Demonstration School linked with the Froebel Education Institute. The educational benefactor, Julia Salis Schwabe, worked with Claude Montefiore in establishing the college and

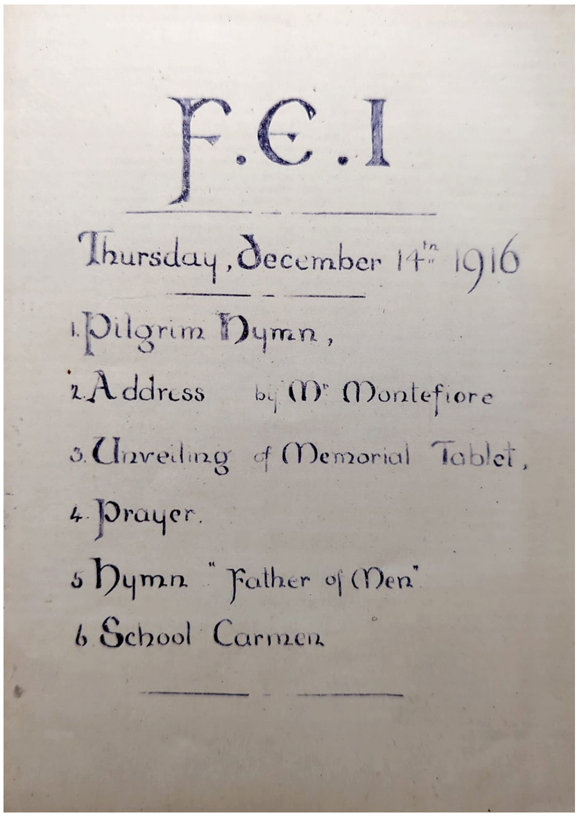


10.11.14.

My dear Miss Yelland.

Please accept my grateful thanks to you, & convey to the dear Children my gratitude & thanks for the useful gift of Handkerchiefs, they are splendid & the poor wounded men here are delighted with them. All such things are more than useful as the poor fellows come in here after days of exposure with absolutely nothing, sometimes little or no clothing. The work here is hard but interesting and we now have a first class installation with 70 Beds 61 are occupied all with [illegible] cases. Forgive please this brief line but I am pressed for time. I enclose you two cards for the children to see. One of a part outside our Hospital the other of the building itself. They will get some idea of the place. I am so delighted

Letter to Miss Yelland from J.G. Hale, 1914, used with permission by Ibstock Place School.



F.C.I

Thursday, December 14th 1916

1. Pilgrim Hymn,
2. Address by Mr Montefiore
3. Unveiling of Memorial Tablet,
4. Prayer.
5. Hymn "Father of Men"
6. School Carmen

Programme for Annie Yelland's Memorial, December 1916, used with permission by Ibstock Place School.

Demonstration School. In an article she wrote on education in 1879, she asserted that Froebel aimed to 'educate and train women for this purpose, and to awaken, foster, and elevate their spirit of maternity…'.[7] Esther Lawrence, the first headmistress of the school, reminisced about the early years of her role; she marvelled at the growth of this Demonstration School as its pupil numbers increased from six in 1894 to dozens by the tenure of her later successor, Annie Yelland.[8]

Indeed, Annie Yelland, the fifth headmistress at the school, is another significant figure in the archives and the history of the school. After attending the Froebel Training College as a mature student in 1895-1896, she became an Assistant Mistress in the Demonstration School in 1898. Here she remained until 1901 when she became the Demonstration School's Headmistress until 1916 when, after a brief and sudden illness, she died. The Archives offer insight into Annie Yelland's life through her school diaries. These diaries, which offer a daily recording of school matters, discuss the death of King Edvard VII and the coronation of George V. On 22 June 1911, Yelland recorded in her diary that the school was to be closed for the 'coronation holiday'. She also recorded a zeppelin air raid in London which took place in October 1915, leading to the evacuation of some pupils.[9] During the First World War, she arranged for the children to send handkerchiefs for the war-wounded men. A letter from one of the soldiers, also a parent of one of the pupils, notes the gratitude with which they were received: 'Please accept my grateful thanks to you, & convey to the dear children my gratitude and thanks for the useful gift of Handkerchiefs…'.[10]

Miss Yelland was, also, noted as devoutly religious. In a short pamphlet reflecting on Annie Yelland's life the author noted that she was 'not only [the school's] leader intellectually by the strength and fullness of her mind… but she was also their leader spiritually in the things of the soul'.[11]

Religion, especially inner spiritual life, was key to Froebelian pedagogy. For Froebel, the spiritual encompassed the whole person and was best inculcated through exploration and play. Through play children were free to cultivate an understanding of themselves and the world.[12] Indeed, for Froebel teaching was something with inherently spiritual qualities; he imbued play with spiritual attributes when he asserted that play 'is the purest and most spiritual produce of the child, and at the same time it is a type and copy of human life at all stages and in all relations. So it induces joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer repose, peace with all the world. From it flows all good'.[13]

Coincidingly, women were often attributed with special insight into spirituality. Indeed, historians have commented that women's propensity to religion offered them access to opportunities – such as teaching – which allowed them to transcend the framework of separate spheres in the modern era.[14] As noted by Stott, women were often labeled as being 'spiritual superiors'.[15] Interestingly, although Yelland was characterised by her religious strength, the author also noted her equal attention to athletic matters. 'Though [Miss Yelland] was very spiritual, [she] was the reverse of namby-pamby. She was keen on sports, and she wanted games to be carried out as efficiently and as strenuously as "lessons"'.[16] The affection in which she was held by the pupils and staff at

the school was apparent after her death; the memoriam written about her notes 'reverence of her was equalled by love'.[17]

The archives at Ibstock Place School offer insight into gendered discussions about teaching and the role of women as philanthropists, educationalists and teachers in inaugurating their Demonstration School in 1894. Through the diaries, letters, publications and ephemera preserved in these archives, we piece together stories which highlight women as significant leaders in education. And, perhaps with equal significance, we note how these women both contributed to and subverted the gendered expectations and prevailing discourse about women in this profession.

Notes

1. Amy Palmer and Jane Read, 'Introduction. Identity and community, revision and dissemination: the evolving Froebel community in Britain', in *British Froebelian Women from the Mid-Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century: A Community of Progressive Educators*, ed. Amy Palmer and Jane Read (Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 3.
2. Palmer and Read, *Introduction*, 3; Eileen Yeo, 'The Creation of "Motherhood" and Women's Reponses in Britain and France, 1750-1914', *Women's History Review*, 8/2 (1999), 201-218.
3. 'Address by Mrs Bailey', Ibstock Place School Archives, Box 1.
4. Discussion of Age-Extension in the 1970s, Ibstock Place School Archives, Location A4.
5. 'Address by Mrs Bailey'.
6. Academic Years 1970s, Ibstock Place School Archives, Box 6.
7. 'Lecture by Madame Schwabe', Ibstock Place School Archives, Box 1.
8. Esther Lawrence, Ibstock Place School Archives, Box AB.
9. Annie Yelland, Ibstock Place School Archives, Box AC.
10. 'Letter to Miss Yelland from J.G. Hale', Ibstock Place School Archives, Box 1.
11. 'In Memoriam', Ibstock Place School Archives, Box 1.
12. Ron Best, 'Exploring the Spiritual in the Pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 21/3-4 (2016), 272-282.
13. Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man* (A. Lovell & Company 1885), 30.
14. Clare Midgley, 'Women, Religion and Reform' in *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1914*, ed. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline DeVries (London: Routledge, 2010).
15. Anne Stott, 'Women and Religion' in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850 an Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2005).
16. 'In Memoriam'.
17. Ibid.

Spotlight on research

Madam Mayor: Women in local government in England and Wales, 1918-1939

Anna Muggeridge, University of Worcester

In November 1921, Christiana Hartley, the daughter of the founder of Hartley's Jam, was elected as the first woman mayor of Southport in Lancashire. The year before, she had become the first woman member of Southport council and served as a Liberal councillor there until 1932. Her time on the council was shaped by a particular interest in the welfare of women and especially children; she was referred to in the local press as the 'Children's Mayor' on several occasions. During her period of office, she pushed for the council to build a new, fully equipped maternity hospital in Southport. This opened in 1932, the year she retired from council work, and was named in her honour. The Christiana Hartley Medical Practice still occupies the same site today. Hartley's family wealth gave her the financial independence to devote significant amounts of time to local government, and indeed other voluntary work, but she was far from the only woman to devote time and resources to such roles. Indeed, working-class women who did not enjoy such financial security equally took on such responsibilities in their own local areas. In 1920, the same year Hartley was first elected, Mrs Edith Sands, the wife of a coal seller, was elected as a Labour councillor in Smethwick. Like Hartley, she was particularly passionate about improving the welfare of women and children in the town; when she was appointed Mayor of Smethwick in 1931, her commitment to the town's infant welfare movement was particularly highlighted in the local press. She, too, was honoured by a municipal building being named after her. The Edith Sands Nursery School opened in Smethwick in 1938 and was for many decades the only local authority pre-school provision in the town. The school was closed in the early 1990s, but, across Britain, there must be hundreds of schools, hospitals, community centres or roads which bear the names of often-forgotten pioneering women councillors.

I was recently awarded funding by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant Scheme to investigate the experiences of women like Hartley and Sands as part of a project on women in local government in interwar England and Wales. My research, which began in January 2023, sets out to explore what difference the vote made to women's lives by examining post-suffrage activism at a local level in England and Wales, through the experiences of sixteen women appointed as mayor of various towns across both nations in the interwar years. It will analyse their roles in both municipal government as well as a wide range of non-partisan women's organisations in the communities in which they lived, seeking to uncover commonalities in their activism in local politics and public life. The sixteen women chosen for the project did not

OUR WOMEN MAYORS

XLV.—Alderman Mrs. E. M. Sands, J.P., Mayor of Smethwick.

Alderman Mrs. Edith Mary Sands, J.P., who has the honour of being the first woman Mayor of Smethwick, may well be described as an expert on Local Government. Thoroughly conversant with the work of every Committee within the province of the Council, she bids fair to be one of the most able of Smethwick's Chief Magistrates.

As a member of the Non-Militant Suffrage Society, Birmingham, and as a member of the Women's Co-operative Guild, Mrs. Sands gained much experience of social conditions and public life prior to launching on her career as a Town Councillor.

During the war, Mrs. Sands acted as Secretary to the Maternity Committee of the Warley Woods Citizens' Committee; was Leader of a Class to raise funds for totally disabled soldiers and sailors; and served on the Executive of the Warley Woods Citizens' Committee.

Appointed a magistrate in 1920, the following year she had the distinction of being the first woman to be elected a member of the Town Council; in 1927 she was the first woman to be elected to the Aldermanic Bench. During the last ten years Mrs. Sands has worked on most of the principal Committees of the Council and has rendered exceptionally valuable service.

From 1926 to 1931 Mrs. Sands held the position of Chairman of the Health and Mental Deficiency and Maternity and Child Welfare Committees. She contends that health depends very largely on the foundation laid before and during infancy, hence efficiently administered schemes for maternity and child welfare are of paramount importance to public health.

In accepting office Mrs. Sands stated her conviction that women have a definite place to fill in the affairs of municipal administration. Her experience of Council work has proved to her that there are many phases which cannot be successfully carried out without the special knowledge and experience which women alone have it in their power to contribute; she called attention to the tribute paid to his wife by each successive Mayor for the invaluable help he had received from her as Mayoress and said that women's influence had proved both acceptable and beneficial in all the deliberations of the Smethwick Council.

Mrs. Sands is keenly interested in the work of the Education Committee—Smethwick has one of the finest educational systems in the country; the Public Libraries Committee, which aims at ensuring continuity of study and reading after the school-leaving age; the Health and Housing Committee; the Public Works Committee; the Estates Committee; the Watch Committee; and the Public Assistance Committee. The work of these and other Committees, the General Purposes Committee directs and co-ordinates with what Mrs. Sands terms "fatherly—and motherly—interest."

Mrs. Sands is well aware that heavy work lies ahead if the many obstacles, arising out of unemployment and world trade depression, are to be overcome in the ensuing year; she is confident that a satisfactory solution to our present difficulties can be found.

THE MAYOR OF SMETHWICK

'Our Women Mayors' from The Vote, 11 December 1931

work together; they were selected through my reading of *The Vote*, the organ of the Women's Freedom League (WFL). After 1918, the WFL was keen to encourage women into all aspects of politics, and ran an occasional series entitled 'Our Women Mayors', profiling individual women who were serving as mayors of their local area. At the time, mayors were appointed annually by and from serving councillors and aldermen, so these were generally women who had had relatively longstanding careers in local government. To date, sixty profiles are available to read in the issues of *The Vote* which have been digitised through the British Newspaper Archive.

For the 'Madam Mayor' project, I have selected women councillors who were appointed mayor who were from diverse social backgrounds, ranging from minor gentry to working-class women. These women represented a variety of locales, including both rural and industrial towns, as well as larger metropolitan districts. Collectively, too, these sixteen women were also drawn from a broad swathe of the political spectrum: twelve were representatives of the Conservative, Liberal or Labour parties, with another four being Independent politicians. The experiences of these women as councillors between 1918 and 1939 will be examined, taking a comparative biographical approach which seeks to identify patterns of female participation in local post-suffrage politics. The significance of local networks to women's activism will be considered, as well as the extent to which these cut across party lines and social backgrounds. The project seeks not only to shine a light on these sixteen women, who have not yet been the subject of academic scholarship, but also to reveal the significance of local government to histories of women's political activism, something which has been curiously overlooked for the post-enfranchisement period.

Arguably, this is not something that is unique to women's history—within the field of political history, local government is certainly the poor relation of 'high politics', with its focus on statesmen, Westminster and elections. In a recent public talk, I referred, tongue firmly in cheek, to a history of local government being 'history with the boring bits left in'. While it is perhaps not a history filled with radical campaigns or hard fought victories, I would argue that we have underestimated the significance of local government, and not just in the role women might play within it. Prior to the establishment of the post-war welfare state, local authorities had far more power and jurisdiction over elements of welfare provision than they do today: from schools to streetlights, homes to hospitals, public toilets to the poor law. Being elected to local authorities gave women an opportunity to really have a say in how their communities were run.

This was recognised by Patricia Hollis, whose ground-breaking research into women elected in England before 1914 shone a light on the experiences of pioneering individuals who broke the glass ceiling of multiple council chambers across the nation from the late nineteenth century.[1] Yet as Hollis, and later Julia Bush recognised, their motivations were highly varied. Though some early women councillors—such as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, whose many achievements include being the first woman to be elected mayor in Britain when she became Mayor of Aldeburgh in 1908—were committed to advancing the feminist cause, others were leading voices in the anti-suffrage movement. Bush's research has shown that some women in the anti-suffrage movement urged women to focus their attentions on local government, rather than achieving the parliamentary vote, as it was local government (they believed) that was more concerned with the kinds of welfare issues for which women were particularly suited.[2]

The work of Hollis, Bush and other scholars means we now have a reasonably thorough understanding of how and why women sought election to local government prior to 1914 and their experiences of being a councillor, though much of this research is focused on the English experience. Elections were suspended for the duration of the First World War, but resumed from November 1918, at which point, all women (not just ratepayers) were eligible to stand for election. Yet despite this, there is no equivalent study of Hollis's nationwide survey for the post-war period. Given the recent scholarly interest in the experiences of women in politics in the aftermath of suffrage, this is perhaps even more surprising.[3] Indeed, Pat Thane noted this absence in 2003, highlighting both that local government was an area in which women could, and did, have substantial impact and that entry into this form of politics was somewhat more accessible to women than entry into parliamentary politics.[4]

There are a number of local studies of specific areas which offer some understanding of the motivations for women to seek election, and their experiences as councillors, in the interwar period. Cathy Hunt's research into Coventry's Alice Arnold demonstrates that some women councillors were strongly motivated by their political beliefs.[5] Indeed, Hunt shows how Arnold, a Labour councillor, was a committed socialist, who emphatically

In Profile

Samantha Hughes-Johnson

Tell us about your area of expertise?

Fundamentally, my research interests are concentrated on the operations of Early Modern Florentine lay confraternities and the trade guilds of the City of London. I am particularly interested in how sodalities responded to external social, political and economic pressures. The Pazzi Conspiracy of 1478 was an occurrence that I have worked extensively around. Accordingly, I have scrutinised how this attempted assassination impacted Florentine sodalities (in particular the Buonomini di San Martino) and conversely, the effects of lay associations on the civic sphere. Beyond the geographical confines of the city of Florence, my most recent investigations have focussed on plague, confraternity, piety and charity in Tudor England.

What motivated you to become an historian?

I was an enquiring child and had always possessed a keen interest in history. However, it was not until I was in my late-thirties that I decided to end my career as a care manager and pursue academia. At that juncture in my life, I had the time and financial resources to embark on further education and enrolled on a Humanities with Art History degree course at the Open University. My course tutors, George Noszlopy and Susan May, could see that I was totally engaged with the art-historical aspects of the course and encouraged me to hone my skills as an art historian. Being a mature student, I was able to take my newly-acquired first-class degree and apply for a PhD studentship at Birmingham City University. I was accepted onto the programme and, by chance, chose to research the fresco decorations of a secretive Florentine confraternity called the Buonomini di San Martino. My mentors had stumbled across this sodality during their own research and as the confraternity had never been the subject of an in-depth study and their frescoes had not benefitted from any past art-historical analyses, the prospect of this investigation was not only thrilling, but also guaranteed new discoveries. So, off I went to Florence, with a government permit to access the Buonomini archive, a camera and my heart full of hope. And from the moment that I began the investigation, I was hooked.

What achievement are you most proud of?

This is a difficult question to answer absolutely honestly, because while I experience some personal pride at being the first woman in my family to gain an undergraduate degree, let alone a doctorate, my innate lack of hubris makes me feel uncomfortable with what I consider as essentially a 'selfish pride'. What I can say with certainty though, is that I gain a great deal of guilt-free satisfaction in encouraging female empowerment. Whether this is through the small part that I play within the Women's History Network, or through my own activism, social endeavours or even via discussions with family and women friends – this is the kind of activity from which I can derive absolute pleasure.

If you could choose five historic figures to enjoy dinner with, who would they be, and why?

Hypatia of Alexandria (c.355 – 415) would be one of the first on my list of fellow diners, as I find her intellectual achievements astonishing and celebrate the fact that her legacy continues to inspire women and girls today. Jeanne de Clisson (1300 – 1359), because who wouldn't want a bold female buccaneer at the table? Mariya Oktybrskaya (1905 – 1944) would certainly hold a place at my table. Her fight against fascism is the stuff of legends and it's always good to provide young women with a role models that reassure them that it's fine to be angry at loss and injustice. Hattie McDaniel (1895 – 1952) would also have to be there: a supremely-talented icon possessing such graciousness, compassion and a steely determination to succeed in her craft. Finally, Cass Elliot (1941-1974) because she had the voice of an angel, defied stereotypes about size and unapologetically embraced life and creativity.

What book about women's history has most inspired you?

Without a doubt, Hallie Rubenhold's *The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper*. The depth, breadth and veracity of this study was indeed something wonderful to behold. Rubenhold masterfully utilises each and every disparate fragment of evidence and compiles the most painfully honest, detailed reconstruction of the canonical five women's existences possible. I found each tale bittersweet and simultaneously spellbinding. As I closed the book upon completion, I could have cheered as the perpetrator of the violence against the five women was starved of oxygen. I was also thrilled that the misogynistic tropes and the accepted 'truths' (those statements that whether false or not, when repeated enough gain credence) that dogged the lives and deaths of Polly Nichols, Elizabeth Stride, Annie Chapman, Catherine Eddowes and Mary Kelly were overturned by such an authoritative revision of their histories!

What important piece of advice would you impart to a budding historian?

I would pass on a triumvirate of tips, which have served me well. Firstly, try to research what you love or learn to love what you are investigating, because embarking on a PhD topic that you're indifferent about is an absolute spirit breaker. Secondly, don't be afraid to reach out to senior scholars or leaders in your field – most are generous and if you're very lucky (as I was) some will grow to be your mentors and even your friends. Finally, as a very wise and kind female scholar once told me (after selflessly gifting me some rare images), "you can never repay a kindness, only pass it on". So, even when you're an established scholar and a student comes to you for help… pass on that kindness.

did not want to be seen as a 'woman councillor' who dealt purely with women's issues; elsewhere, Karen Hunt and June Hannam suggest similar experiences for certain women councillors in the Manchester area.[6] Julia Neville's research into women councillors in Devon, meanwhile, demonstrates a clear link between the pre-war suffrage movement and post-war local government, with some women channelling their energies into the latter after the vote was won.[7] Ruth Davidson similarly demonstrates the links between suffrage and local government in her research into Croydon, but also highlights the significance of voluntary action, noting that women councillors in the borough in the years after 1918 were often members of a range of other women's organisations in the locale.[8]

The 'Madam Mayor' project seeks to build on these and other studies of women's experiences of local government in the aftermath of suffrage. It hopes to tease out some of the commonalities and differences between the sixteen women's motivations for seeking election; their experiences as councillors; the issues on which they campaigned as well as considering the impact of party politics on their local government careers. In a period when some (though crucially not all) women MPs were willing to work together cross-party on so-called 'women's issues', questions will be asked about the extent to which this was true of women politicians in local government. More than simply recovering the stories of sixteen pioneering women, the project aims to produce a comparative history of women's experiences of local government for the post-1918 period, contributing to debates surrounding the nature of women's political activism after enfranchisement.

The project will run for the next two years and I am keen to make contact with anyone researching women in local government across the United Kingdom during the interwar period. I hope, too, that in raising the profile of women in local government historically, it may be possible to have some impact on the woeful representation of women in local government in the present. A 2021 report from the Fawcett Society found that only 34 percent of councillors today are women, and that it will take until 2077 until full gender parity is reached within local government.[9] Coincidentally, this will be 170 years since some women first received the right to stand for election to local government. In historicising the experiences of women councillors, it may be that more can be done to improve the situation today.

The project 'Madam Mayor: Women in local government in England and Wales, 1918-1939' is kindly funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant (SRG22\220061).[10]

Notes

1. Women were eligible for election to smaller urban district and parish councils from 1894 and from 1907, women ratepayers could stand for election to borough and county borough councils. Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
2. Julia Bush, *Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
3. For an excellent overview of women and parliamentary politics after 1918, see: Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945* (London: Palgrave, 2013).
4. Pat Thane, 'What difference did the vote make? Women in public and private life in Britain since 1918', *Historical Research*, 76/192 (2003), 268-85, 274.
5. Cathy Hunt, ''Everyone's Poor Relation': the poverty and isolation of a working-class woman local politician in interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 16/3 (2007), 417-30.
6. Karen Hunt and June Hannam, 'Towards an Archaeology of Interwar Women's Politics: The Local and the Everyday', in: *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, 124-41, 130-33.
7. Julia Neville, 'Challenge, Conformity and Casework in Interwar England: the first women councillors in Devon', *Women's History Review*, 22/6 (2013), 971-94.
8. Ruth Davidson, 'A local perspective: the women's movement and citizenship, Croydon 1890s–1939', *Women's History Review*, 29/6 (2020), 1016-33.
9. https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/local-council-data-2021 (accessed 17 Mar. 2023).
10. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/funding/ba-leverhulme-small-research-grants/past-awards/baleverhulme-small-research-grants-awards-2022/

Book Reviews

Roland Philipps, *Victoire*: *A Wartime Story of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal*
London: The Bodley Head (Vintage), 2021.
£20.00, ISBN: 9781847925817 (hardback), pp. 1-352

Caroline M. McWilliams
University of St Andrews

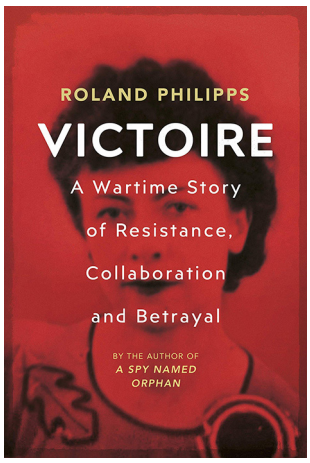
On the roll call of infamous spies, there is none whose name strikes quite as much confusion as La Chatte. Matilde Carré lived a life of changing loyalties, gross oppression and disturbed mental health. Hers was not a happy life, a fact that Roland Philipps amply demonstrates in *Victoire*: *A Wartime Story of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal*, his new biography of Carré. There have been several previous attempts to chronicle the life of Carré including *The Cat With Two Faces (1957)* by Gordon Young and *Double Agent Victoire: Matilde Carré and the Interallié Network* (2018) by David Tremain. Additionally, Carré is a character in many analyses of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), as well as MI5 and the French Resistance. Philipps' contribution to the scholarship is an attempt to explain the causes behind Carré's actions, rather than simply condemning her as either a hero or a traitor.

Carré began the Second World War as a nurse and after the Armistice ended up in Toulouse where she met a Polish soldier named Roman Czerniawski. Carré had

been close to committing suicide but Czerniawski gave her something to live for, a mission to which she could fully dedicate herself and save her country in the process. He had an ingenious plan to set up a resistance network and recruited Carré, as well as beginning an affair with her. Their network, named Interallié, was 'audacious, original and not to be equalled for the rest of the war' (p.43). They divided the occupied zone into sixteen sub-zones, each with a section lead and informants. Information on the Nazi war effort poured in from Brest to Calais and from Bordeaux to Metz, all delivered to post boxes watched over by concierges and collected by Carré each week. They created 'a spy's handcraft for the ages' (p.47) and in a very short time had achieved a cohesive network that was 'a unique feat' (p.49). All ran smoothly until October 1941 when two chance conversations in Cherbourg alerted the German authorities directly to the network. Within a short space of time, the unranked Hugo Bleicher had found the leaders and had Carré and Czerniawski in custody. It only took one night in prison for Carré to agree to collaborate and over the next few days, she was present at the arrests of many of the network's key players.

On the second night after her arrest, Carré was in Bleicher's bed. Over the next weeks, her collaboration was so impressive that she earned a great deal of freedom and favours from her captors, transmitting their messages to Britain using her codes. Yet, Carré was looking for a way out of the situation and found it a month later when she confessed everything to SOE agent Philippe de Vomécourt. By maintaining her façade as a collaborator, Carré successfully smuggled herself and de Vomécourt out of France to England with the full knowledge and cooperation of the Nazis. While she imagined a grand espionage role for herself, by which she would be the best female spy since Mata Hari, the British did not know what to do with her. She knew far too much of SOE and MI5 operations to ever be trusted again and they could not be quite sure that she was loyal to the Allied cause. After much debate, she was imprisoned until 1944. On return to France, she was again imprisoned and remained so until her trial as part of the *épuration légale* in which France attempted to purge itself of all those who had supposedly collaborated and betrayed France. Carré was not tried until 1949 and was sentenced to death by firing squad, a sentence later commuted to twenty years hard labour. Carré was released in September 1954 after twelve years in prison. She had collaborated with the Germans for less than two months.

Philipps gives a perfectly balanced view of Carré's character, demonstrating how she would have appeared guilty in the eyes of the French who had suffered occupation and betrayal. Yet, he also argues the opposite viewpoint as was taken by her lawyer and several of her friends, that she had been forced, risking her own life, and that she turned back to the Allies as soon as she was able. In the last days of 1941, rumours of how the Germans treated their prisoners abounded and wishing to save oneself from torture or death would have been perfectly reasonable. Indeed, when the reader considers that Carré was dealing with the stress and confusion of arrest, her decision to collaborate can be seen as understandable. Furthermore, little was known about the Nazi death and concentration camps at that point in the war so Carré did not knowingly send her fellow Interallié members to that horror.



Philipps effectively taps into Carré's mind, trying to understand why she chose to betray her friends and colleagues and why she willingly succumbed to Bleicher's sexual advances. When asked why she did it at her trial, Carré answered, 'Well, what else could I have done?' (p.292). This gets to the very crux of the matter, in that, as a woman in France at the time, Carré had significantly less power than a male spy. While her gender could help her move around Paris relatively unseen, it was also a hindrance. The inner intrigue of Interallié and the insipid jealousies that contributed to her arrest were fuelled by sexual tensions. Philipps does not go as far as suggesting that her gender played against her in the courtroom but there is every reason to believe that it might have. Women were being tried and condemned for simply having slept with the enemy and Carré had not only slept with the enemy, she had been in a relationship with two men she had betrayed to the Nazis and was responsible for the arrests of many others. This would be an intriguing line of enquiry for future scholars wishing to work on any aspect of Carré, Interallié or the *épuration légale.*

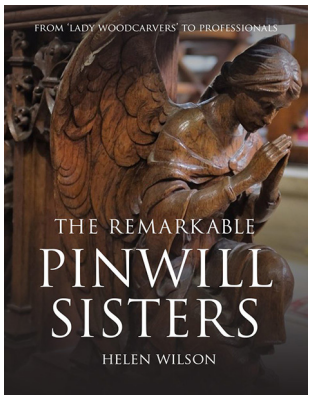
Phillips comes to no solid conclusions as to Carré's guilt. He is sympathetic and goes to great lengths to acknowledge both sides. Yet, the ultimate decision is with the reader, who is presented with all of the evidence and with both the arguments of the defence and the prosecution. Did Carré collaborate with the Nazis? Undoubtedly so. But did she redeem herself by succeeding in extracting de Vomécourt from France and passing on her considerable knowledge of Nazi operations to the Allies? Carré's jury did not think so. Yet, with the power of hindsight and declassified information, the reader might well take the opposite viewpoint.

Helen Wilson, ***The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters: From 'Lady Woodcarvers' to Professionals***

Plymouth, Devon: Willow Productions, 2021. £25, ISBN: 978-1-5272-8264-3 (hardback), pp.xii + 300

Angela Dyer
Independent Scholar

Helen Wilson's beautifully presented book sets out to make up for the lack of any information about the woodcarving company Rashleigh Pinwill and especially Violet Pinwill. Violet worked all her life as a woodcarver in many churches in the West of England along with two of her sisters. Wilson also relates the lives of her sisters, two of whom worked with her. These women, and the company they founded, seem to have slipped from notice



in recent years, a lack first noted some years after the death of Violet Pinwill and now put right in the *Cornwall* volume of the most recent edition of *Pevsner's Buildings of England*.

In the first chapter of *The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters* we are introduced to the Reverend Edmund Pinwill, his wife Elizabeth and seven daughters in 1880 as they arrive at Ermington, South Devon. The vicarage and church were, however, in a deplorable condition and we learn in the next chapter that John Dando Sedding, who was influential in the Arts and Crafts movement, was employed to produce plans for the church.

This led to a lifelong collaboration between the Pinwills and Sedding's nephew, Edmund Sedding, also an architect. The first time was when Elizabeth Pinwill asked the head of the carving team to teach her daughters, when the eldest was only thirteen. Their mother had a vision of her daughters equipped with professions as an alternative to marriage. This turn of events leads the author to examine the position of women artists and craft workers at the time, with several case studies of women woodcarvers.

The next chapter examines in detail the first highly-ambitious commission executed by Mary, Ethel and Violet. They are photographed sitting in front of this piece, an enormous reredos completed in 1889, accompanied by the carver who taught them. Fifteen-year-old Violet appears in this picture in her pinafore, still not old enough to wear her hair up. From this point it was a short but extraordinary step to setting themselves up in business and then later opening a workshop in Plymouth.

Collaborating with Edmund Sedding, the innovative Arts and Crafts work that they produced put them in the vanguard of art and fashion. The author describes how she discovered the Pinwill sisters at Morwenstow Church in Cornwall and it is clear from her descriptions that she is fascinated by the quality and delicacy of their work. In describing the work at Crantock Church (1898) she has a photograph of a naturalistic pew end that is so life-like that a professor of marine biology was able to identify the seaweed in the carving.

From 1908, Violet ran the company on her own, employing skilled men, which allowed the company to grow. We learn about the life of a thriving business that, on the eve of the Great War, employed twenty-nine men and boys with Violet as the sole proprietor.

Each chapter guides us through their lives and the constraints they worked under. In addition to this, there is a series of sections interpolated in the main text where Wilson examines a particular topic in detail, starting with a short family history and moving on to examine Pinwill work at specific churches. This gives a much-valued depth to the text and lends it to being used as a guidebook; however, these sections can break up the flow of reading and, despite being printed on a different colour paper, they can create confusion with the main text.

On turning to the Pinwill archive in the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, a full picture emerges. Wilson also 'shows us her workings': sharing the ups and downs of a researcher's work, compiling spreadsheets and catalogues, giving talks and tours, resulting in more local knowledge flooding in from her audiences.

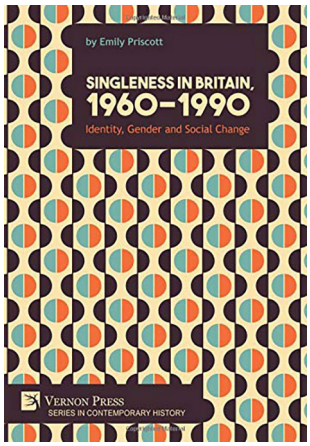
Sadly, the disastrous fires that twice swept through the Pinwill workshop destroyed major commissions and restoration jobs alike but, as is explained, the archive sometimes conceals as much as it reveals. In the matter of attribution of various works, Wilson needed to do much painstaking research to corroborate her initial hunches. As Violet ran the company for 50 years, she clearly is the central character; her artistic work rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement is expressed in a naturalistic style of great beauty and charm. At the same time, we are privy to some of the difficult business decisions she had to make. She was still working up to the 1960s and was able to adapt her style to the severer lines of the 1930s onwards.

In her final chapter, Wilson examines the way in which the workshop operated. After Violet's death, the family only kept the photographic archive, necessitating the need to draw on other sources. Wilson gives an account of the employees and their wages and examines production methods. Oak was not always the wood used and at times of rising costs, chestnut was preferable. However, the most experienced carvers made models to work from and as these were kept, some figures, such as kneeling angels, are repeated in different designs.

The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters is certainly comprehensive in scope. It gives a life history of the family and considers the question of why one family should produce at least three talented professionals all operating in an occupation in the 1880s that was otherwise exclusively taken up by working-class men. It is also an inspiring work of art history, documenting a time when so many churches were being modernised, in a way we sometimes feel is regrettable. In her lifetime, Violet lived through and contributed to the final years of the Gothic Revival, the flourishing of the Arts and Crafts movement and the advent of modernism.

The book is scholarly with endnotes for each chapter and a useful glossary in case the reader is struggling with the difference between a rood screen and a parclose screen. At the same time, it is lavishly illustrated in colour and black and white on a scale more usually found in a coffee table book with each chapter beginning with a detail of one of the works. Sometimes the author has to make do with supposition but then she tells her tale with so much verve that the reader can't help but be caught up in the action. In her Preface, Wilson writes of Pinwill work having a tiny band of admirers; 'fanatics' is the word she uses. Thanks to this book, that club is going to become a lot less exclusive. Wilson's depth of coverage could easily see *The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters* serve as a guide book and gazetteer, enriching any tour of churches in Devon and Cornwall.

Emily Priscott, *Singleness in Britain 1960-1990*
Wilmington USA and Malaga Spain: Vernon Press, 2020. £49, ISBN: 9781622733873 (hardback) pp.163
Zoë Fairbairns
Independent Scholar



What do the following have in common? Germaine Greer, Cliff Richard, Jo Richardson MP, Kenneth Williams, Edward Heath and separatist feminists? Answer: their singleness. They feature – along with many others - in Emily Priscott's survey of women and men who were single between 1960 and 1990, whether because they didn't get the chance of marriage, or tried it but didn't like it, or had ideological objections to it, or were legally disbarred from it, or didn't fancy it in the first place.

The book also looks at fictional representations of people who live their lives without a spouse – James Bond, for example, who 'fed into the contemporary bachelor mythology by unambiguously celebrating casual sex with a string of ever-available women' (p.33), and Miss Jean Brodie who was 'too much of a Romantic individualist to compromise herself by marrying' (p.6).

More revealing than fictional references, which will only work for readers already familiar with the novels or films under discussion, is the book's factual content, particularly on housing. The chapter entitled, 'A house is not a home' looks at residential arrangements enjoyed – or not – by single people at a time when public policy emphasis was on housing for families. What estate agents enthusiastically billed as 'bachelor pads' might have been okay for cash-rich bachelors, but there is no sign of anyone using the term 'spinster' as a selling point for the bedsits, hostels and flat-shares which were the only alternatives on offer to many single women.

In 1971 the Greater London Council began to offer mortgages for single women. This measure, Emily Priscott notes, 'introduced at a time when unmarried people were generally disqualified from mortgages from local councils, set a precedent that would come more fully into fruition in the 1980s' (pp.62-3). But despite such progressive developments, many single people found, when looking for a home, that there was a price to pay for having a lifestyle that was outside traditional family structures. Gay men faced additional hazards from the fact that their sexuality was illegal before 1967, and in some cases after it. Even if they managed to make a home together, a male couple might feel compelled to keep a bed made up in a spare room to give the impression to visitors and prying neighbours that they slept separately. Not everyone could afford to keep a room for this purpose.

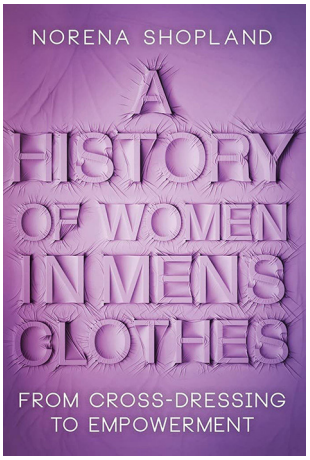
Another category of single person whose status was widely disapproved-of, particularly by advocates of Thatcherite 'family values', was that of single motherhood. A widespread belief in certain circles was that single women got pregnant deliberately as a way into council housing, but Priscott found little evidence for this. She acknowledges that, at a time of high employment, 'young women often "fell" into early motherhood as a way of asserting a legitimate identity' (p.120). One single mother is quoted as saying 'I don't agree with going out to work when they're young' – a comment which, Priscott suggests, implies 'an acceptance of gender roles and an expectation of economic hardship and welfare dependency' (p.120).

This example comes from Feminism and Youth Culture by Angela McRobbie – one of more than 100 books cited in Priscott's less-than-200-page volume, along with countless newspaper articles, official reports, and documentation from campaigning groups such as Shelter and Families Need Fathers. These are valid, relevant sources, but it would have added to the liveliness of Priscott's book if they could have been balanced with testimony acquired directly by the author from individuals with personal experience of singleness, people who are neither celebrities nor the subjects of someone else's research.

Also conspicuous by their absence are examples of the pro-singleness militancy of some feminist activists: Germaine Greer's ringing proclamation in The Female Eunuch that women should refuse to marry; YBA Wife? campaigners wearing 'Don't Do It Di' badges in 1981; and a mass-market-published list of the legal pros and (mainly) cons of the married state.

In her conclusion, Priscott points out the dangers of allowing what she calls 'the dominant narratives' of singleness (sad spinster, scrounging single parent, carefree career girl) to get in the way of seeing the complexity and variety of the emotional, social and financial experience of singleness. More alternatives and viewpoints are waiting post-1990, in the form of civil partnerships, same-sex marriages, and Bridget Jones. Perhaps these will be the subject of another book.

Norena Shopland, *A History of Women in Men's Clothes: From Cross-Dressing to Empowerment*
Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 2021. £20, ISBN: 978-1526787675 (hardback), pp. i - 216
James Earnshaw
University of St Andrews



As Volunteer Rifle Corps formed across England, Scotland, and Wales in 1859, on 23 June, an Irish woman named Curran managed to pass as a man and enlist in the 16th Rifles, based in Liverpool. Although promptly discovered and ejected from the corps on accounts of her sex, according to newspaper reports, the inspector had been completely oblivious, effortlessly deceived by 'her short hair and male attire'.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALLS FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you like to review any of the titles listed below, please email Helen Glew, Book Reviews Editor, at bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.org

You don't have to be an expert to review, if you have a general interest and knowledge of the relevant historical period or territory then that will count for a lot. The ability to summarise a work (within the word limit!) and write interestingly about it is the most important thing. Any suggestions for books to review are also welcome - just email the book reviews editor as above.

Maroula Joannou, *The Life and Turbulent Times of Clara Dorothea Rackham: Suffragist, Socialist and Social Reformer* (Routledge, 2022)

Stephen Williams and Tony Chandler (eds), *Letters from England, 1895: Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling* (Lawrence Wishart, 2020)

Alexandra J. Finley, *An Intimate Economy: Enslaved Women, Work, and America's Domestic Slave Trade* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020)

Katherine Harvey, *The Fires of Lust: Sex in the Middle Ages* (Reaktion, 2021)

Anthony Bale, *Margery Kempe: A Mixed Life* (Reaktion, 2021)

Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and the Vote*, new edition (Irish Academic Press, 2018)

Brianna Leavitt-Alcantara, *Alone at the Altar: Single Women & Devotion in Guatemala, 1670-1870* (Stanford University Press, 2018)

Martin Sheppard (ed.), *Love on Inishcoo, 1787: A Donegal Romance* (Matador, 2018)

Camilla Mørk Røstvik, *Cash Flow: The businesses of menstruation*, (UCL Press, 2021)

Charlotte Cooper-Davis, *Christine de Pizan: Life, Work, Legacy,* (Reaktion, 2021)

Andrew Maranis, *Inaugural Ballers: The True Story of the First US Women's Olympic Basketball Team* (Penguin, 2022)

Joan Sangster, *Demanding Equality: One Hundred Years of Canadian Feminism,* (University of British Columbia Press, 2022)

Andy Clark, *Fighting Deindustrialisation: Scottish Women's Factory Occupations, 1981-1982* (Liverpool University Press, 2022)

Norena Shopland's *A History of Women in Men's Clothes: From Cross-dressing to Empowerment* shows that cisgender women wearing what contemporaries deemed "men's clothes" was quite a common practice across Europe and the United States of America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Extending cross-dressing beyond its usual association with transgender histories, Shopland considers how dressing in men's clothes was also a form of empowerment for cisgender women. By wearing men's clothes and adjusting their appearance, these women enjoyed social and economic advantages formerly denied to them by patriarchal customs and laws. They travelled unaccompanied to museums, served in the military, worked in manual labour, and earned substantially higher wages. They also challenged societal norms, such as openly advocating for dress reform.

Shopland uses a thematic approach, dividing the book into sixteen succinct chapters that demonstrate the variety of contexts and reasons that cisgender women and trans men wore men's clothes. Examples include: to escape family cruelty, to sightsee, and to gain a competitive advantage as a sex worker. Each chapter contains several 'match-stick stories' (p. vii) derived from a wide range of provincial newspaper reports, such as the *Hampshire Advertiser*, detailing arrests and court cases related to cross-dressing. These gripping and varied accounts, some producing a wry smile, others sorrow, demonstrate that women wearing men's apparel was far from a rare occurrence, but rather one which appeared in the local and national press.

A great strength of the work, facilitated by its thematic approach, is its accessibility for non-expert audiences. Gender histories can often become a quagmire of complicated and confusing terminology with bulky introductions crammed with the existing historiography and gender theory. *A History of Women in Men's Clothes* sidesteps this frequent complaint with a concise introduction, outlining the purpose of the book and explaining its terminologies in five pages. Shopland's pleasant prose transforms curt newspaper reports into a catalogue of memorable anecdotes. The addition of thirty-three photographs helps bring these stories to life, though it is a shame the images are printed in black and white.

These strengths, however, come at a cost. The decision to minimise academic jargon and produce a public-oriented history diminishes some of the scholarly credentials of the book. For one, there does not seem to be a coherent methodology or criteria guiding the selection of sources. Instead, examples are listed one on top of another with wild lurches in chronology and geography. In chapter six, for example, which examines female sex workers cross-dressing, within the space of three pages the reader goes from the arrest of Ann Amos in Cardiff for wearing a sailor's clothes (1856), to a brief reference to William Harrison's book *The Description of England* (1577), then to an editorial in 1869. This persistent oscillation between different periods of history can leave the reader feeling disorientated. The rest of the same chapter becomes

a feat of travel befitting Phileas Fogg, with the narrative moving from Belfast to Adelaide, with a brief stopover in fifteenth-century Florence. While this broad chronological and geographic scope points to the prevalence of women cross-dressing throughout Western history, it also invites allegations of arbitrary cherry-picking that a more focused study would avoid.

In addition to these methodological and structural shortcomings, the formatting of references actually hinders, rather than aids, the reader. The controversial question of footnotes versus endnotes aside, the endnotes do not contain page numbers, impeding the retrieval and verification of primary sources. Furthermore, the short bibliography does not distinguish between primary and secondary sources, making it paradoxically both concise and cluttered. The work may have benefitted from including a further reading section to guide those inspired by the topic, and interested in gender history more broadly.

Nevertheless, despite these criticisms, this book is a useful introduction to the history of cross-dressing, one that will hopefully inspire more research projects on the topic.

Katherine MacInnes, ***Snow Widows: Scott's Fatal Antarctic Expedition Through the Eyes of the Women They Left Behind***

London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2022. £25.00, ISBN: 9780008394653 (hardback), pp. 512

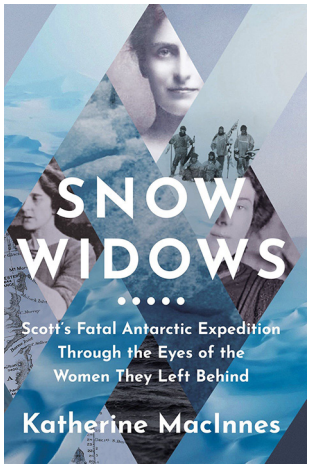
Clare Wichbold

Independent Scholar

'For God's sake, look after our people'. Scrawled in pencil, this was the final sentence Captain Robert Falcon Scott wrote in his journal. Scott and his team had arrived at the South Pole to find Amundsen had already planted the Norwegian flag. After taking pictures to prove that they, too, had reached the pole, they wearily turned north and on the appalling trek back across the Antarctic wastelands, all five perished. Months later some of their bodies were found in a tent by a relief party; their papers and photographs were retrieved and the fatal journey was pieced together.

But who were 'our people'? Katherine MacInnes has spent years undertaking meticulous research, using journals, letters, photographs and personal reminiscences, focussing on the women who were left behind. Three were widows: Katherine Scott, Oriana (Ory) Wilson, and Lois Evans. Together with two mothers, Caroline Oates and Emily Bowers, these are the main protagonists in the book. It is written in the present tense, using people, dates and places to take the reader through time and across continents.

There is a lot of detail on every page, and sometimes the density of information can feel overwhelming. The occasional timeshift back and forth can be confusing, sometimes necessitating backtracking to understand where one is in the chronology of events. The use of Elgar's Violin Concerto as a device to draw the story together added an unnecessary layer of complexity to what was already an engaging read. However, the elements of class, gender and politics are drawn together extremely well by MacInnes, and the women themselves are fascinating.



Katherine Scott, the wife of the expedition leader, is portrayed as an unsympathetic character, full of exasperation for the other wives and mothers. She was constantly trying to promote Scott's and her own ambitions as she could afford to do so with her status and connections. In stark contrast, for Lois Evans, the loss of her husband Edgar (Taff) Evans led to extreme poverty for the family. A naval rating rather than an officer, he gave up his Royal Navy wages to be part of the expedition. The first man to die on the return journey, the posthumous criticism of Taff makes for particularly difficult reading.

The aristocratic Caroline Oates, mother of Captain Lawrence Oates, had to cope with her son's self-sacrifice, his body somewhere in the snow rather than with his companions who were 'officers and gentlemen'. She spent the rest of her life mourning his loss and trying to find out what really happened on the expedition.

The widow of Dr Edward (Bill) Wilson, the only civilian to be part of the South Pole team, Ory Wilson was a respected naturalist in her own right. She struggled to come to terms with the loss of her husband for many years, becoming an atheist, but finding later fulfilment in work and philanthropy. In contrast, the death of Henry (Birdie) Bowers was foreseen by his mother Emily. She had premonitions about him not returning even as he left to join the expedition; however her strong Christian faith sustained her and Henry's sisters.

Having read many books about polar exploration, I enjoyed *Snow Widows* for bringing such a different perspective. Copious references mean that it is possible to go back to primary sources with ease to follow up on the many individuals who form part of the story, and I plan to revisit and follow up on some of these people as a result. In addition the illustrations are excellent, ranging from well-known photographs such as the team at the South Pole to previously unpublished images from private collections which really add depth to the women's stories.

Announcement of Prizes and Funding

The WHN is pleased to share details of three new prizes and funding schemes for 2023. Please do share widely with anyone who may be interested.

BA and MA prizes:

We will be running both the MA and BA prize schemes again this academic year. The MA Dissertation Prize is running through the spring, with entries of not more than 20,000 words due by the end of April. The BA prize, for an undergraduate dissertation of not more than 10,000 words, will be launched in May with entries due by the end of June. Details of both prizes can be found on our website; entrants should be members of the WHN and can join at the student rate of £15. We look forward to announcing the details of winners of both prizes at the September conference.

The prizes are open to any dissertation which focuses on women's history, or gender history that substantively focuses on women. Entrants must be based at a UK institution but we encourage dissertations written on any period, topic or place – the sky's the limit! In recent years, we have been enormously impressed with the quality and diversity of work produced, particularly so as most dissertations over the past two years were written under the constraints of lockdown, with limited access to archival sources. Despite this, the extremely high standard of work submitted, and the vast range of topics covered (temporally and geographically) speaks to the commitment of lecturers in institutions across the UK who, in the current challenging climate, continue to enthuse and inspire students to study women's history.

Check out the WHN Blog to read a selection of entries from previous years, which speak to this quality and diversity.

WHN Research Facilitation Grant:

In recent years, reflecting the challenges of the pandemic and the lack of access to institutional resources for precarious scholars, the WHN has run a number of small grant schemes designed to help support those producing works of women's history for an academic audience. These have included a covid hardship grant; a grant to facilitate access to the copying of archival documents; and an image licensing grant to help cover the costs of illustrative material in publications.

It is our intention to combine these schemes into a new Research Facilitation Grant. Details of the scheme are still being finalised, and will be announced at the September conference, but we envisage a small grant scheme to which applicants can apply to cover research costs while producing a piece of academic work (for example, completing a PhD or writing a journal article). We hope that the scheme would be of particular benefit to precarious scholars, including self-funding PhD students, ECRs without a current institutional affiliation or staff on teaching-only contracts with no access to research funds, as we are aware of the particular pressures facing such groups.

Examples of research costs which might be funded as part of the scheme include: costs of conducting archival research; access to online research collections; costs of attending conferences; or costs of reproducing illustrations in journals or monographs. However, we would be keen to hear of any other particular needs which might be funded by the scheme and encourage suggestions to the address below, which will be taken into account when putting together the scheme.

ECR and Independent Fellowships:

The WHN each year supports a number of Early Career Researchers and Independent Researchers. This year's Fellows have been making excellent progress with their projects and we are delighted to see their innovative and exciting research coming to fruition. We look forward to hearing more at the Fellows Roundtable as part of our Seminar Series, later this year.

The ECR and Independent Fellowships will run again during the academic year 2023/24. Applications will open in early June, with applications due by 1 August. ECR Fellows will be awarded £1,500 each, and Independent Fellows may apply for up to £750.

To keep up to date with our prizes, grants and fellowships, keep an eye on the WHN website and Twitter feed. Alternatively, please contact our prizes and grants coordinator, at WHNPrizesandGrants@gmail.com

WHN Committee Meeting Report

The Women's History Network's Steering Committee met on 25 February via Zoom. In her report, Sarah Richardson, the WHN Chair, applauded the many strong initiatives that continue to take place. She also spoke of some current challenges, including a number of posts that are currently vacant or about to become vacant. One of these is Treasurer and Sarah expressed the Committee's huge debt of gratitude to the outgoing treasurer, who has resigned. There are some challenges in transferring the banking, which the committee are working on.

Membership numbers are very slightly down but are still robust, with 527 fully paid-up members. One suggestion to increase membership was to make the very popular Writing Retreats member-only, offering non-members a free taster, so encouraging them to sign up. This idea will be explored as will a trial PhD/MPhil writing retreat. The Seminar Series was also identified as a potential membership perk although it was felt that a better route was to ensure that the benefits of WHN membership were highlighted at each event. The possibility of having more community history-themed seminars was also explored.

The MA Prize is being launched at the start of March, with six weeks being allowed for the return of entries. A conversation on whether to relaunch the Image License Grant as a Research Facilitation Grant will be continued at a later meeting. This year's Schools Prize is also underway, with the theme of Women in Science.

There has been a steady flow of blog posts, particularly from the entrants of the Undergraduate Prize. Blog posts have also been received from the ECR fellows which will be published in March for Women's History Month. Engagement also continues to be strong on Twitter (follower count – 8444). Despite Twitter politics, followers have increased at a steady pace over the last quarter. Content on the themes of Greenham Common, the Representation of the People Act and the general encouragement of women's history research, have proved particularly popular. The number of newsletter subscribers has also gone up, to 1262.

Following discussion, it was agreed that, for a number of reasons, this year's WHN Conference will again take place on Zoom. The topic is Women and Migration and the conference will take place over 2 days, on 1-2 September.

Membership Announcements

You can manage your WHN membership, update your details, pay your subscription, add your research interests/books and make a donation by logging into the new Members' Account page at www.womenshistorynetwork.org/my-account/

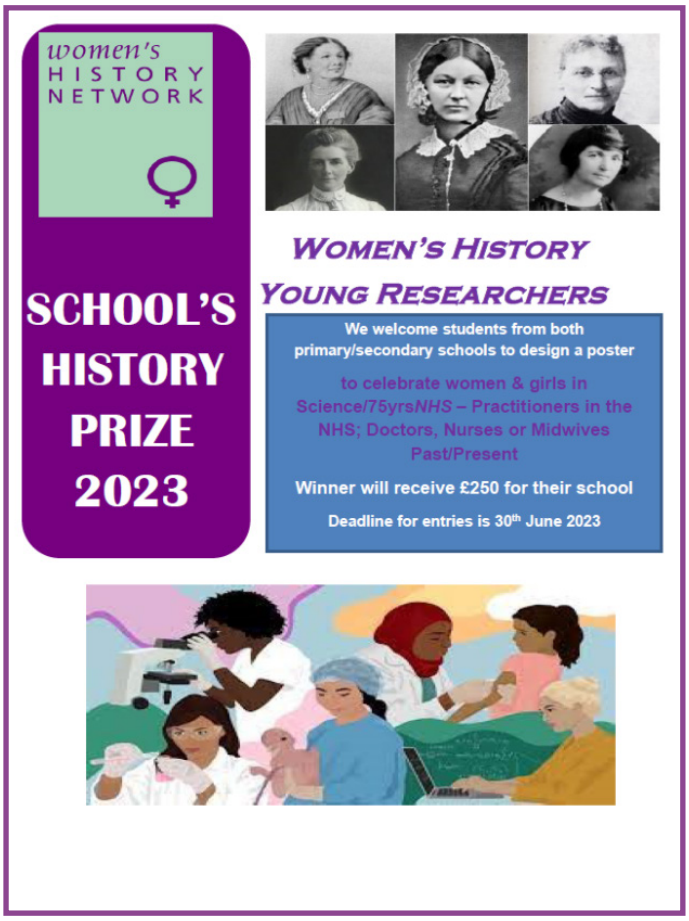
Do you pay your subscription by standing order? If so, please check that the payment details reflect the 2022 rates. Don't forget, we have different rates to reflect different personal circumstances, so it is worth checking that you are paying the correct rate for you. Details of the 2022 rates for all categories of members can be found on the back cover of the magazine or by logging into your account at www.womenshistorynetwork.org.

Has your email address changed? If we don't have your current details, you may not receive the monthly e-newsletter, included in your membership fee. If you have changed email addresses since joining, or recently acquired a new email address, please update your details by logging into your account at www.womenshistorynetwork.org OR by emailing the membership secretary.

All information (or queries) about membership, or changes to personal details, can be arranged by logging into your account at womenshistorynetwork.org OR by emailing membership@womenshistorynetwork.org

Schools History Prize 2023

The WHN annual Schools' History Prize was launched in March, providing a fantastic opportunity for students to become immersed in 'doing' history by creating a poster. This year there are two themes: Women in Science or 75 Years of the NHS, which could be any practitioner including doctors, nurses, midwives or researchers. The Schools' History Prize is a unique opportunity for schools to take part in researching women's history, with their students' work celebrated online. The closing date this year is 30 June 2023. More details can be found on the website: https://womenshistorynetwork.org/whn-schools-history-prize-2023/



Women's History Back Issues

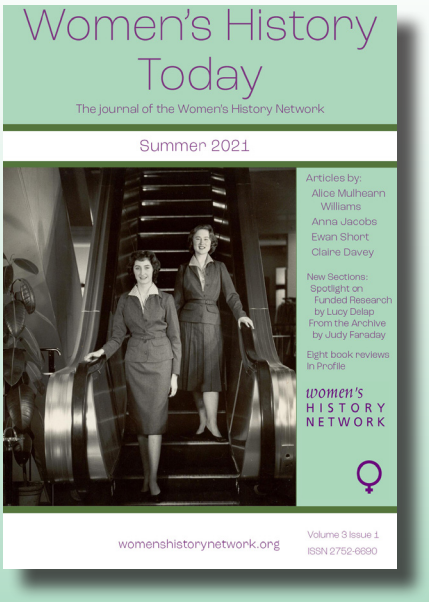
Print copies of back issues of *Women's History* and *Women'sHistory Today* are available to buy (in very limited quantities) for:

£5.00 inc postage (UK)
£9.00 inc postage (Overseas)

Archived digital issues are available free to download from *womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-magazine-download-page/*
Discover the contents of each issue at *womenshistorynetwork.org/category/magazine/editions/*

Publishing in *Women's History Today*

Women's History Today welcomes contributions from experienced scholars and those at an earlier stage in their research careers. We aim to be inclusive and fully recognise that women's history is not only lodged in the academy. All submissions are subject to the usual peer-review process. Articles should be 3000-8000 words in length. Contributors are requested to submit articles in final form, carefully following the style guidelines available at:
https://womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-today/
Please email your submission, as a word attachment, to the editors at
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org



Women's History Network National Steering Committee and Other Contacts—2022

Chair—Sarah Richardson

Charity Rep—Hazel Perry

Social Media and Blog Editors— Kat Perry, Lyndsey Jenkins and Beth Price

Membership Secretary—Susan Cohen

Treasurer—Becki Hines

(Archive) Secretary—Urvi Khaitan

Conference support role—Hazel Perry

Website and publicity—Nancy Highcock

Prizes and Grants—Anna Muggeridge and Helen Antrobus

Journal—Kate Murphy, Laurel Foster, Helen Glew, Samantha Hughes-Johnson, Kate Terkanian, Angela Platt

Newsletter Editor—Catia Rodrigues

Community Liaison Anne Logan and Helen Antrobus

Diversity Officer—Norena Shepherd

Schools Liaison—Tahaney Alghrani and Mary Feerick

Seminar Organisers Sarah Hellawell and Rachel Chua

Co-opted Members of the Committee

WHN Book Prize Panel Chair —Krista Cowan
bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

WHN Journal Editor: Kate Murphy
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

IFRWH rep—Gillian Murphy

To join the WHN just go to
***womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/** and follow the instructions.*
Donations and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well

Why not join the Women's History Network?

The **Women's History Network** is a national association and charity for the promotion of women's history and the encouragement of women and men interested in women's history. Following our establishment in 1991 we have grown year by year and today we are a UK national charity with members including working historians, researchers, independent scholars, teachers, librarians, and many other individuals both within academia and beyond. Indeed, the network reaches out to welcome women and men from any background who share a passion for women's history. The WHN is controlled by its members who elect a national steering committee who manage our activities and business.

Conference

The annual WHN conference, which is held each September, is a highlight for most of our members. It is known for being a very friendly and welcoming event, providing an exciting forum where people from the UK and beyond can meet and share research and interests. Each year well known historians are invited as plenary speakers and bursaries are offered to enable postgraduate students or those on a low income to attend.

Prizes and Grants

The WHN offers annual community history and book prizes, grants for conferences and ECR and independent researcher fellowships.

Networking

Of course, talking to each other is essential to the work and culture of the Women's History Network. We run a members' email list and try to provide support for members or groups who organise local conferences or other events connected to women's history that bring people together.

Publication

WHN members receive three copies of our peer reviewed journal, *Women's History Today*, each year. The content of the journal is wide ranging from articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history, to reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions, as well as information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities. The journal is delivered electronically in PDF form to all members via email, but members can elect to receive a printed hardcopy of Women's History for an increased membership fee.

WHN membership

Annual Membership Rates September 2022 / with journal hardcopy / with journal overseas delivery

Community Group member	£15 / £25 / £35
Student or unwaged member	£15 / £25 / £35
Low income member (*under £20,000 pa)	£25 / £35 / £45
Standard member	£40 / £50 / £60

Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£375
Retired Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy)	£195

The easiest way to join the Women's History Network is online – via our website – go to
https://womenshistorynetwork.org/join-us/

Charity Number: 1118201. Membership application/renewal, Gift Aid Declaration are all available at
https://womenshistorynetwork.org