

Women's History

The journal of the Women's History Network



women's
HISTORY
NETWORK



Summer 2015

Articles by

*Maggie Andrews, Charmian Cannon,
Mari Takayanagi, Sarah Pederson,
Jane McDermid, Anne Logan and
Catherine Lee*

Plus

*Five book reviews
Getting to know each
other
Committee news*

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Women's History Network Annual Conference, 2015

Female agency, activism and organisation

4-6th September 2015, University of Kent (Canterbury)

Plenary Speakers:

Professor Mary Evans: 'But We've Always Been Poor: Some Reflections on Women, Poverty and Austerity'

Professor Pam Cox: 'Translating Women's History for Television'

Professor Clare Midgley: 'Feminism, religion and empire after the transnational turn'

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Conference organised by Anne Logan, Emily Manktelow, Juliette Pattinson,
Kate Bradley and Catherine Lee

This summer 2015 issue of *Women's History* is a special issue on 'New Perspectives on Women and the Great War'. The centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in 2014 has occasioned within the UK a wealth of new publications, academic conferences, and so-called 'public engagement' of historians with the general public through publicly funded centres such as 'Voices of War and Peace' and 'Gateways to the First World War'.¹ The selection of articles here are drawn from papers presented at the Anglo-American Historians' Conference, entitled 'The Great War at Home', and our own Women's History Network Annual Conference on 'Home Fronts', both held last year.

The articles in this special issue all aim to examine the familiar themes regarding British women in the First World War from a new, and a specifically local, perspective. In doing so, they collectively assist a fuller comprehension of the complexity of women's lives in wartime Great Britain. Geographically the articles cover territory ranging from the north of Scotland to the south coast of England. Yet there are many common themes: several of the papers refer to activities such as knitting and caring for Belgian refugees, both of which absorbed the energy of countless public-spirited women in the entire country. While the Zeppelin raids discussed by Charmian Cannon were more localised, women everywhere had to struggle with shortages of foodstuffs, especially towards the end of the war, and most women had male relatives or friends in the armed forces.

The first three papers in this collection focus on permutations of 'the village', with Maggie Andrews' examination of women's role in food production in the settlements of rural Worcester, Charmian Cannon's evocation of life in a Hertfordshire village realised through her grandmother's letters, and Mari Takayanagi's article about the ways in which the so-called 'Westminster Village' (i.e. the Palace of Westminster) continued to function during the war. Interestingly, all these papers give clear indication of the importance of family, as even Westminster seems to have met its labour needs at least in part by utilising kinship networks. Sarah Pedersen's discussion of the war work of middle- and upper-class ladies of north-east Scotland also demonstrates the way in which wartime experience for many women was part and parcel of established routines of life in a largely rural area, and the way in which women adapted their fund-raising and voluntary work capabilities to the new challenges of war. As Maggie Andrews points out in her article, we are now putting 'the "home" firmly back into the study of the home front'.

The final three articles in this edition all address to some extent the connections between the women's suffrage campaign, women's wartime work, feminist action, and the political engagement of women. This has been a contentious subject among historians, but the assumption that women largely put aside campaigning for the vote in favour of war-work has now been comprehensively rebutted. Jane McDermid and Anne Logan look at the activities of constitutional suffragists during the war: the former focuses on fund-raising for the Scottish Women's Hospitals (SWH) and the tensions between various parties involved in the effort, while the latter examines the differing political reactions to wartime developments of leading suffragist women in the Kentish town of Tunbridge Wells. Jane McDermid deftly reveals the mixture of Scottish and Imperial pride which was mobilised to raise funds for the

important work of the SWH, while Anne Logan demonstrates that suffrage women could be divided by some political issues and united by others. One of the unifying causes was women police patrols, the subject of our final research article by Catherine Lee. She challenges much of the historiography of the subject by locating the wartime patrols in established traditions of girls' welfare work, much as Sarah Pedersen demonstrates the strength of existing patterns of middle-class and middle-aged women's voluntary work, which were subsequently adapted to meet wartime needs.

The current issue of *Women's History* is the last one for which Katie Barclay, Emma Robertson and Anne Logan are members of the editorial team. Emma has organised peer reviews very successfully as well as co-editing issues. Katie has made an immense contribution to the team as lead editor and has managed to keep the rest of us in line (no mean feat). It is a remarkable feature of modern communications that the team has managed to work so well as a group with Emma and Katie in Australia most of the time while the rest of us live in the UK! Finally, we welcome a new editor to the team, Rosi Carr, who will join the others in taking this journal forward.

Editorial Team: Katie Barclay, Jane Berney, Lucy Bland, Rosi Carr, Catherine Lee, Anne Logan, Kate Murphy, Rachel Rich, and Emma Robertson.

1. See www.voicesofwarandpeace.org and www.gatewaysfww.org.uk.

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Cover: The ladies and girls of Port Gordon in Banffshire sorting sphagnum moss, circa 1916. Image courtesy of www.thehistorypeople.eu (C) 2014

Rethinking the significance of the 'Home' in the West Midlands Home Front

Maggie Andrews

University of Worcester

On the 8th of August 1914, as the First World War began, the *Worcester Herald* explained to its readers that: 'Now that the dreaded hour has arrived and our country has been asked to take its part in the terrible war which may devastate Europe, we women have to think how we can best aid our soldiers at the front and their families at home; there is much we can do and there are some things which we should certainly refrain from doing'.¹ The outbreak of war produced panic buying and price rises which continued as the economy shifted onto a war-footing, with food shortages and queues becoming commonplace after 1916. Provisioning food for the family became an increasingly challenging part of domestic life, whilst for many rural women wartime expanded their already established (although sometimes hidden) contribution to food production that often took place alongside other domestic tasks.

Thus in the four years of war women in Worcestershire and the surrounding counties in the West Midlands found themselves undertaking a number of tasks which involved extending their domestic roles within and beyond their homes, nurturing their family, friends, even strangers and men on the fighting front. Women's experience of war was varied and was influenced by class, age, marital status, whether they were urban or rural dwellers and a multitude of other factors. The majority of women remained in the home or retained domestic roles and responsibilities alongside paid work throughout the war;² nevertheless domestic life can still be categorised, to use Gilbert and Gubar's words, as the 'unofficial female history' of the First World War.³ The lives of domestic women are not, as Karen Hunt has pointed out, easy to trace; they are in many ways hidden from history.⁴ This article draws upon initial research into the everyday lives of rural women in the West Midlands, and particularly Worcestershire, utilising fleeting references to them found in newspapers, diaries, letters, school log books and local government and voluntary organisation records, reports of military tribunals, ephemera and memories which provide snippets of evidence and traces of life on the Home Front. It will suggest that a focus on a geographically specific rural location, with a commitment to place the 'home' firmly back into the study of the Home Front, may offer new and different perspectives on the First World War and provide the scope to move away from some of the familiar iconography, tropes and narratives of war. It comes at the beginning of a project intended to shed light on how this war impinged on the lives of housewives and how they themselves responded to changes that the conflict created in the Worcestershire region. In so doing it is suggested that boundaries between domestic labour and food production may have become more porous in wartime.

For all women the domestic caring roles, which they already undertook for their own families, expanded and developed within and beyond their own household to include a range of other people in need of care. They undertook to knit, feed, raise funds and support charitable works for those in the armed forces, their dependants and other victims of war. In

autumn 1914 the arrival of over 200,000 refugees who fled to Britain from Belgium and the relocation of army trainees led some women to welcome refugees into their homes whilst others had soldiers billeted on them. The following year some rural women shared their homes with those escaping the threat of Zeppelin raids in the towns and cities. Charitable activities were not the prerogative of the wealthy.⁵ Many women supported the Red Cross, for example, by raising funds for them and for British prisoners of war to whom they also sent parcels. Women also wrote letters and provisioned and sent parcels to their loved ones who had joined the forces; such activities which were domestic in character took time and came on top of their standard domestic chores. For rural women particularly, food production (as well as preparation and preservation) became an ever-increasing burden during the four years of conflict.

The history of rural women in the First World War has tended to focus on the Women's Land Army (WLA) and to a lesser degree the formation of the Women's Institute Movement (WI),⁶ which represent two distinct aspects of women's experience, albeit differentiated by age, working lives and marital status. The WLA is perceived as a body of single women who undertook paid, agricultural work not only outside the home but also beyond their local area, whilst WI women are portrayed as domestic wives and mothers. Yet a closer examination of the Evesham Vale in Worcestershire problematises such distinctions and draws attention to how tenuous the divisions between food production and consumption were for rural women. At the outbreak of war, Worcestershire's agriculture consisted of a higher proportion of smallholdings than any other region of the country. There were nearly 3,000 small units of between one and five acres; 75% of the county's agriculture was tied up in small farms under 50 acres, hence the county was described as the 'home of the smallholder'. In the Evesham Vale such smallholding focused upon market-gardening, due in part to the geography of the area that ensured that both the climate and soil were particularly suitable for vegetable and fruit crops. Protection from the Malvern, Bredon and Cotswold hills enabled fruit to ripen there up to one month before some neighbouring counties. Furthermore, with fourteen railway stations within five miles of Evesham, fruit and vegetables could be quickly transported to major towns such as Birmingham and Bristol. A significant impetus to the development of smallholdings was the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotments Act, which allowed County Councils to buy up farms for sale and divide them up into smallholdings for rent, something Worcestershire County Council did with determination, taking over more than 50,000 acres in this way. The smallholdings were intensively worked and it was noted in 1916 that: 'The land in the Vale is highly cultivated, and the proportion of labour is in the ratio of one man to five acres whereas on other agricultural land the ratio is usually one farm hand to fifty acres'.⁷ Smallholdings relied upon family labour and involved growing a range of foodstuffs; fruit trees were sometimes under-planted with vegetables.



Group of Women
War Workers on
Lord Hindlip's Estate
1917

Thus these farms were finely-balanced small subsistence agricultural units, often selling their produce through co-operative wholesalers, such as the Pershore Co-operative Growers Fruit Market, which when it opened in 1910 was the first covered market of its kind in the country. The food production in smallholdings was complemented by fruit and vegetable growing in cottage production and on allotments set up in the Vale, for example by Lord Coventry on his Croome Park estate. Furthermore, common land – for example at Defford – provided space for families to graze animals or to harvest fruit such as damsons in Tiddsley Wood. All these contributions to food production, which continued during the war, relied upon family labour.

Women sometimes ran smallholdings themselves, but more often worked the land with their husbands who might also have other employment. Adverts for the sale or lease of such units suggest that they were considered suitable to provide a part-time or full-time income, while reports of the military tribunals from 1916 also suggest families often worked smallholdings alongside other paid work. For example one man described himself as 'a printer and a market gardener'.⁸ Running a smallholding involved the care of chickens, a pig or two, and growing fruit and vegetables. The harvesting, marketing and preservation of the Vale's produce would at intermittent points of time have needed the efforts of husbands, wives and children; for women, domestic and agricultural labour ran alongside and intertwined with one another. Larger market gardens, some stretching to over two hundred acres, provided casual and seasonal paid work for women and families. In 1872, Mr Varden who had a large market garden of 250 acres explained during a discussion on the Agricultural Children's Employment Bill that at harvest time he had a demand for '200 or 300 women and children' and added 'I do not employ the children but pay the mothers for the quantity of fruit picked. School in the surrounding districts are closed for the time.....The babies are placed under the hedge in the charge of older children'.⁹ Such practices continued well into the twentieth century to ensure that valuable fruit was speedily harvested, confirming Alun Howkins' assertion that in the inter-war years 'few operations in the agricultural cycle functioned without the work of women'.¹⁰ Likewise, Nicola Verdon has also drawn attention to the significance of women's casual labour in the period, while noting that 'their presence

continued to be overlooked by the censors'.¹¹

The balance of labour in the Vale was disturbed by the wartime removal of sons and husbands into the armed forces. In August 1914 the rush to the colours in some parts of the county was accompanied by concerns about the fruit harvest as reported in the *Worcester Daily Times*. Boy Scouts were dispatched to the area to assist with the harvest, a practice that continued throughout the war.¹² Another threat to the 1914 harvest and the financial viability of the agricultural units in the Vale, was the disruption to the transport system created by the declaration of war when, for example, the Great Western Railway announced that they were abandoning their timetable. As a result the prices of fruit yet to be transported to urban areas plummeted. This – alongside the county's regimental tradition – perhaps contributed to the fairly brisk military recruitment in the area during the autumn and winter of 1914. There was a county regiment and a Yeomanry cavalry as well as recruiting bases for the territorials in Worcester, Evesham and Kidderminster. There were also significant numbers of public school and university-educated men farming larger market gardens that might have been in the Yeomanry reserves or had experience of cadet forces. Their presence would probably have increased the tendency to sign up, as did the speedy mythologising of the Worcestershire regiment's role in the Battle of Ghelvelt in October 1914.

Nicholas Mansfield has argued that recruitment was particularly affected by local factors. The specific seasonal pressures for smallholders in the Vale were an example of this. By the spring of 1915 there were signs of reticence to enlist amongst some smallholders and market gardeners who had a great deal invested in their agricultural units. Although recruitment parades continued, they sometimes had limited success, as the village of Bretforton demonstrated in March 1915. Despite appeals, a list of twenty-five eligible men being read and accusations of cowardice, no-one signed up.¹³ Bretforton was in the heart of the asparagus-growing region; the loss of young men from family farms just before the season could have jeopardised the long-term viability of the family businesses, something men would have been hesitant to do. Despite propaganda few women in this village would have said 'go' to their husbands or sons at this time of the year. Letters from some men from the county who did sign up reveal their

concern at the added strain placed upon a smallholder's wife when they joined the forces. Jack was a married man with a daughter and another child on the way when he volunteered in Spring 1915 and in his early letters to his wife he suggested she get help to 'sharpen the carving knife'. In December 1915, he was again concerned and wrote: 'So sorry to think of you salting the pig without me. Do be careful not to slip on the cellar steps. The pig will pay quite well after'.¹⁴ The pig played a crucial role in the domestic economy of cottagers and smallholders, but its slaughter, butchering and salting were physically onerous tasks that wives would probably have struggled to complete unaided.

Jack's wife sent her husband parcels of food, thus continuing to retain some degree of domestic responsibility for him, like most women with relations in the forces. Caring also extended to the many wounded soldiers in the voluntary and auxiliary hospitals in the region and from 1915, women who were traditionally responsible for poultry were also heavily involved in the National Egg Collection for the Wounded Soldiers. The scheme led to over two thousand collection points organised by volunteers throughout the country where geese, duck, hen and bantam eggs were donated. The eggs were packed into boxes with straw, and shipped to hospitals in France and Britain. Women organised the scheme and donated eggs from their own poultry or utilised fewer eggs in their cooking. As individual women decided whether to use an egg or not in their cooking, making for example an eggless sponge cake, the war came very much into the home of the Home Front.

Women continued to work in varying degrees on family farms, small holdings, allotments and cottage gardens in Worcestershire; they grew fruit and vegetables, tended livestock and continued to undertake domestic tasks, despite a significant reduction in manual labour provided by their sons and husbands, many of whom did in time join the army. Married women were however reticent to undertake paid agricultural labour on other farms outside the harvest season. *The Birmingham Evening Post* noted in 1915 that Worcestershire was struggling to cope with an acute shortage of labour, and went on to explain that 'female labour has been introduced in all branches of farming work' but that the supply was 'altogether inadequate to meet the demand'.¹⁵ Help came from Belgian refugees, Boy Scouts and groups of schoolboys from Manchester Grammar School who camped in the area and picked fruit during their summer holidays. However in September 1915 a public meeting held under the auspices of the Worcestershire War Agricultural Executive Committee in Malvern Wells discussed the need for more women on the land. Mr James Woodyatt, Chairman of the Malvern Urban District Council Sub-Committee, suggested that 'those who came under the category of "the idle rich" should be asked to work' and that 'if a woman did man's work she ought to receive a man's wages'.¹⁶ Others suggested women could rear calves, attend to lambs and, as spring advanced undertake fieldwork such as light hoeing and thistle cutting.

The degree to which agricultural work beyond the family smallholding or market garden was compatible with domestic responsibilities quickly became an issue and concern was expressed about the welfare of children if mothers worked. Some mothers were criticised for their reluctance to leave their children, others for being too willing to do so. Radical proposals were made of how to improve the situation and

included organising a crèche and nurseries and the provision of laundries to undertake the children's washing.¹⁷ (I have however found no evidence that this occurred.) Over the ensuing months commentators suggested other reasons women were unwilling to undertake agricultural work at all times of the year. Some suggested women were too independent as a result of the separation allowances they received when their husbands were in the army, others that the issue was a lack of suitable clothing. A writer in the *Birmingham Daily Post* suggested that 'if women were provided with stout boots and clogs and equipped so that they could face the discomfort and unpleasantness of winter work on the land without the prospect of wet feet and consequent colds, there would be probably many more ready to work'.¹⁸ A further issue may have been their responsibility for small-scale food production in their cottage garden or market garden.

As the war progressed, Irish migrant female labourers, gypsies and students came to work the land, whilst on the Herefordshire borders Portuguese migrant workers helped with forestry work and heavy agricultural tasks. Nevertheless the majority of the temporary labour force working on the fruit harvests continued to be women and young boys. One Birmingham University student who spent her summer holidays at Elmley Castle explained:

The party which set out for work was a strange sight to see; our attire was a marvellous motley—old waterproofs, mackintosh skirts, hockey leggings, old hats, bathing caps, sun-bonnets, motor-coats, hurden aprons, anything old which would keep out the wet. One enterprising lady wore her father's boots over her own. We were usually laden with sacks and buckets to pick into, baskets of bread and cheese and bottles of water. Our bedraggled appearance on our return home after a wet day was even more entertaining, and proved a festival for the village children.¹⁹

In 1916 the Worcestershire War Agricultural Executive Committee set up a Women's War Agricultural Committee to encourage and register women prepared to work on the land leading to a public meeting on the 1 March 1916 at the Shire Hall in Worcester. Chaired by Lord Coventry of Croome Park the meeting was attended by the great and the good of the county; the Canadian Mrs Watt represented the Agricultural Organisation Society, under whose support she was bringing the Women's Institute Movement to Britain. Within a month the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported that:

Lady Dehurst presided at a meeting of ladies and others interested in the work of women on the land, which was held at Worcester yesterday. Mrs Watt of the Agricultural Organisation Society advocated the formation of village institutes for women, engaged on the land, and Miss Day, lady organiser for the Board of Agriculture, described the co-operative system of marketing fruit, etc., now in vogue in Upton-on-Severn.²⁰

Over the following months Mrs Watt's speeches in the West Midlands emphasised the co-operative buying of seeds and owning of garden tools, the prevention of waste and putting every piece of land into production. She promoted systems for the marketing of surplus produce from gardens, allotments



Women picking hops with soldiers in Worcestershire with kind thanks to the Worcestershire Archives and Archaeological Service

and smallholdings. A writer for the *Coventry Evening Post* noted that:

One does not know whether the problem has yet presented itself in this district, but certainly in some parts of England the question of effectively dealing with surplus garden produce has arisen, calling for prompt treatment...

I saw it stated the other day that a plan which had been recommended is a simple form of exchange whereby those having an excess of any one product may exchange it with others for something they lack. Thus smallholders are encouraged to group together in order to bring their supplies in quantity to market. Women's Institutes have been formed, and these arrange for the opening of a market for a certain number of hours one day a week.²¹

By 1916, the National Land Council had already sent women to the Evesham Vale for strawberry, raspberry, gooseberry and plum picking and general summer work.²² In November a proposal to start a WI was passed unanimously in Pershore. The organisation involved domestic women, cottagers, smallholders, market gardeners and wealthier women in efforts to improve food production, preservation and preparation. For many of the women who joined the WI its appeal may have been the companionship, friendship and relief from domestic drudgery that its communal activities offered. But this early WI in Worcestershire also suggests rural women were working hard to increase food production and struggling to maintain the idealised home that was being fought for. Thus there were demonstrations on wartime food, the use of maize and barley meal, and the making of 'really cheap nutritious soup'. Members did welfare work, knitted comforts for soldiers and even set up a communal kitchen for a period in 1917. The drive to increase food production led Pershore WI members to form pig and rabbit clubs and grow herbs. Pig clubs were a form of

insurance whereby all members who had a family pig paid an agreed amount into the club, and should their pig suffer swine fever or a similar disease they would be compensated. These arrangements provided reassurance for women coping with their smallholdings or cottage-gardens on their own.

In Pershore, an area famous for its plum growing, the WI—despite the shortage of sugar—encouraged fruit-preservation and jam-making. Prior to the outbreak of war, the majority of sugar consumed in Britain had been imported from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and wartime housewives struggled to find ways of preserving fruit as sugar supplies fell and prices rose. There were suggestions in newspapers that housewives use corn syrup to replace sugar and even salt, which apparently was not discernible in the taste of the jam after a few months.²³ Nevertheless the Women's War Agricultural Committee's scheme to distribute Canadian granulated sugar to the residents of Pershore in 1917 was done at the Police Station, an indication perhaps that there were public order concerns in the allocation of this rare and much-needed commodity.²⁴ The Women's War Agricultural Committee also provided jars for the jam and gave out seed potatoes and seeds for vegetables to encourage domestic food production by cottage women or smallholders. For women struggling with food shortages and price rises, such help would probably have been very welcome.

Initial research on the study of rural Worcestershire therefore suggests that married women in the Vale of Evesham and the surrounding areas, as elsewhere in the country, were principally housewives during the First World War, but that the war changed what this domestic role entailed. In 1917 the *Coventry Evening Standard* remarked that 'the country woman has become a very valuable asset to the nation. But for her, in many villages throughout the country, there would be no one to care for the gardens and allotments'.²⁵ Further research on the home as a core component of the Home Front will, I suspect, shed greater light on the important role that the home and domestic food production and preservation played in ensuring that the nation was fed in wartime.

Notes

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3. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 3: *Sexchanges* (London, Yale University Press, 1994), 262.
4. Karen Hunt, 'A Heroine at Home: The Housewife on the First World War Home Front', in Maggie Andrews and Jane Lomas (eds.) *The Home Front in Britain Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences since 1914* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 73-91.
5. For further discussion of women's charitable work see for example Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War* (Oxford, Routledge, 2014).
6. Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1997).
7. *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 23 November 1916.
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11. N. Verdon, 'Agricultural labour and the contested nature of women's work in interwar England and Wales', *The Historical Journal*, Volume 52/1 (2009), 109 – 130.
12. *Worcester Daily Times*, 11 August 1914.
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14. *Cheltenham Echo*, 15 March 1915.
15. Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service, 705.1076 BA 9733.
16. *Birmingham Daily Post*, Monday 21 June 1915.
17. *Worcester Daily Times*, 8 December 1915.
18. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 December 1915.
19. 'Field Work in Elmley Castle' in *The Mermaid* (1915-16), 23-24
20. *Birmingham Daily Post*, Friday 21 April 1916.
21. *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, Saturday 11 August 1917.
22. *Birmingham Evening Post*, 1 May 1916.
23. C.S. Peel, *How We Lived Then: A sketch of Social and Domestic Life in England during the War 1914-18* (London, John Land the Bodley Head Ltd, 1929).
24. *Worcester Daily Times*, 14 September 1917.
25. *Coventry Evening Standard*, 9 February 1917.

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World War in a Hertfordshire Village

Charmian Cannon

Independent Scholar

Peg, my grandmother, wrote a monthly letter to her brothers and sisters from 1902 to 1943. She finishes her September letter in 1914: 'So goodbye dear people. May we have brighter skies by next year and no gaps in our families. But I must get on with the socks!' By January 1915 the women of Potters Bar were all at it. 'In Potty B. "tea and bring your knitting" is the formula. I boldly took mine to Mrs. Hick's At Home day. I'm not such a frenzied knitter as a certain young lady who took hers to the village hall tea. She said "Oh I couldn't waste all this time. I have three regiments to supply with socks"! Didn't it sound a superhuman task?' Peg and her daughters sent parcels of socks, helmets and vests to her sons at the Front as well as cutting out and sewing flannel shirts. From accounts of conditions in France and Gallipoli there could never be enough.

Peg lived with her family in Little Heath, an expanding area of large houses in Potters Bar, a village north of London, which had a station making commuting possible (it is now just beyond the M25). Her regular letters to her brothers and sisters are the main source of my account, supported by local history from the Potters Bar Historical Society and wider historical accounts of the lives of the majority of women who tried to sustain their family life in a time of war. Such women are themselves part of the family story, helping to sustain cultural continuity and family solidarity against anxiety and loss.¹

My family letters as a source

These letters were passed to my mother who passed them on to me. I remember my grandmother well. She was the matriarch of a Unitarian middle-class family and involved in the temperance movement, as well as women's Liberal politics, a suffragist but not a suffragette. Peg had five children, three of them girls; Daisy the middle daughter was my mother so I don't analyse the letters as a dispassionate historian but as a highly subjective family member. I hope I can bridge the gap between memoir and women's history, as these are local examples of the different experiences of family women in the First World War.² As a historian I need to address issues around their interpretation; I have to try and step out from my perspective of daughter and grand-daughter to imagine Peg and Daisy as younger women, facing the challenges of war on the home front and relating their experiences to their families.

These letters are explicit about their purpose and took a lot of organising. They are Peg's contribution to a round-robin circulated monthly 'like a snowball, collecting material as it goes' between her and her four siblings: each contributor must respect the contributions of the others. The letters have elements of a diary, chronicling the events of the previous month. Letters are not as spontaneous as spoken dialogue as they give the writer time to compose, and thus to present herself to her respondents as she wishes. Peg obviously saw herself as central to the sibling group and her letters are descriptive, humorous, emotionally restrained, and sometimes acerbic, particularly in relation to the class structure of Potters Bar.

Peg's daughter Daisy joined the letter-writing group

after she married Roy, my father, in 1915 and went to live in lodgings in Dover for a year; he was stationed there as Assistant Paymaster in the RNVR.³ Her letters are full of exuberance at her new status as an independent, married woman and she recounts a very different local experience: Dover was a garrison town subject to martial law and thus she was much more aware of the reality of active combat. The town received hospital ships bringing the wounded back from the front and she describes the sight of the 'poor wounded' as they arrived: 'It was pitiful to see. I had never been so close before.' She needed a permit to live in Dover as the wife of a naval officer, and a pass to walk along the cliffs. Although still fulfilling the traditional gender role of support for her husband in the services, she was more likely to be knitting baby clothes (her first child was born in late 1916) than socks for soldiers.

The family response to the War

As I have shown, Peg expanded her prewar philanthropic activities by knitting; she had two sons at the Front to keep warm. The home provided solace for them when they came home on leave, while her daughters enrolled as part time Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses in the local hospital. They took nursing exams and in March 1915 Peg reported: 'Win and Daisy have been going to practices for bed-making, bandaging etc. and lessons in invalid cookery. It will be a wonderful band of inexperienced nurses.' Peg expanded her temperance work because 'it is even more imperative to fight alcohol. What a part it plays wherever soldiers are.' This kind of voluntary work was typical of middle-class families where the women stayed at home.⁴ But each local war experience is different and two factors made Potters Bar interesting: the reception of Belgian refugees, and the Zeppelin raid in 1916, which was a turning point in the air war.⁵

Belgian refugees

Kathleen Storr explores a less known area of women's work, the efforts to aid the 'unwanted' of the war, namely the displaced, mainly women and children, and the elderly. She traces the variety of women's groups involved in this traditional women's work, caring and humanitarian, which was often performed by suffragists or was religiously motivated.⁶ In Britain a central focus was on the support of Belgian refugees. The press depicted the invaded country as 'brave little Belgium' and the Belgians as 'heroes' to whom we should extend hospitality. Belgian refugees began to arrive as soon as the war started; Antwerp surrendered in October 1914 and about 35,000 people, mostly women and children, landed in Folkestone. They also came from other parts of Belgium to different British ports and then were transferred by the Belgian Relief Committee to Aldwych in London. Here they were met and were allocated to local areas which had volunteered to provide for them.

Peg expanded her public contribution to the war effort by becoming active in the Potters Bar committee for



*'Socks for soldiers:
Daisy and Roy in 1914'*

relieving refugees. On November 2 1914 she wrote fully of this new project, detailing how they planned for the poorer Belgian refugees and put them in cottages, in contrast to the large house already opened by the 'usual few rich people' who could afford to raise money easily. She made a speech at the first meeting and must have been persuasive, for she added at the end of her letter that the committee was formed of 'a few ardent ones'.

By the end of the month there were sixty women contributing, mostly a shilling a week, some five shillings and a few sixpence. I said we should not publish who gave what there's too much of that in Potty B. The cottages were ready ten days after the meeting. We made curtains, had linoleum laid, and promised furniture was fetched by boy scouts with their hand cart ... Among the things sent were: a lamp that wouldn't work; odd saucepan lids that fitted nothing; and the most fearful collection of pictures. ... These are some of the humours of the thing. But many people sent just what we wanted. Then we went to fetch our family.

In her next letter she devoted seven pages to describing the two families allocated to the scheme by the 'portly and decided lady allocator. I doubt if we could have had any other family had we disliked the one she considered suitable for us. Howsomedever [sic] it turns out to be highly respectable: two rather prosperous French speaking families from Brussels and Liege running large millinery shops.'

The Belgians may have been respectable but the way they earned their money apparently made the schooling of their daughters problematic. 'We dared not let Miss Ware [head teacher of a local private school] take any for fear the parents of her pupils should think tradespeople's children contaminating'.⁷ Peg also gave details of the plans for clothing the family and supporting them financially, and her own role in all this: 'I have to do the talking. Nobody else has the cheek to tumble out bad French. So now you know all about our Belges!'

Zeppelins

Reading Peg's letters through 1915 and 1916 I am struck by the alternation of suspense over the whereabouts and welfare of 'the boys', and joyful family reunions and relief at their safety. Writing letters to her sons, brothers and sisters, and later her married daughter, seems to have been part of her war work. There were occasional excitements to offset the routines of life on the home front, caused by the commencement of the air war over Britain. Zeppelins had been developed in the early years of the war with the first bomb being dropped over Britain in January 1915. They were a costly experiment, as the weapons were inaccurate at pin-pointing targets and the airships themselves easily blown off course. Zeppelins caused more fear and anxiety than casualties, being so huge everyone thought they were directly over their own house. A letter in the *Barnet Press* describing one that fell near Potters Bar said it would more than fill the street. 'Could it stand on end it would tower up some seven times higher than Barnet church.'⁸

The first Zeppelin to be shot down over Britain fell at Cuffley, near Potters Bar, in September 1916 and another a month later was even closer. The family seem to have viewed them as a rather dramatic fireworks display. Peg was not at home for the first crash but she described the second in an appendix to her budget dated 2 October.

It was a still night, clear to the north but misty towards London. We had been in bed more than an hour when the sound of gunfire made me hop up and don a dressing gown. We watched from behind the thick curtains; the Zep was turning about trying to escape, it looked like a great shining fish in the air. At one time it seemed perpendicular. It began to come our way and dropped a bomb that shook the house and made the air hit the girls' faces. Then we saw it falling in flames. It looked as if it might fall on the house but really fell on a field behind the church. Shouts of jubilation arose, and soon trampling feet told us the natives were going to see it. This morning

we got near enough to see its crumpled remains hanging upon a tree. The field where the Zep is, is guarded by lots of soldiers and policemen, for strangers are coming from round about, many seeming to be of the London low type. 'Can we see anythin' of it this way lidy?' one of them asked. There'll be a funeral at our cemetery. The commander was nearly saved. He was holding on till [sic] within some feet of the ground he let go and was killed. What a horrible fate the Germans send the Zep crews to! I am wondering if it is any better here than in Dover for Daisy, from the alarms point of view. I lay thinking of that as the busy search-lights continued to examine the sky till after three this morning. The correspondent of the *Daily News* who says that it was only visible when in flames, is wrong. He didn't see it that's all. I see'd un, clear and long, at once, among the stars.

This loss set the seal on the Kaiser's plans of razing London to the ground by means of his 'Iron Thunderstorms', and in 1917 and 1918 the Zeppelins were increasingly replaced by aeroplane attacks over London and Kent towns.

Peg wondered how her daughter Daisy was faring in Dover. In 1916 Daisy experienced many air raids and other attempts to break the 'slender artery' that kept the sea lanes open.⁹ After one raid Daisy recounted to her mother how a plane flew over, 'a brazen bold thing in the sunny blue sky! It sounded as if fierce things were going to land any minute and ...Roy dragged me into a doorway where we were speedily hemmed in by a crowd of frightened beings, little ragged children beside themselves with sobbing terror; aspects of human life I have never experienced before.'

Another disaster in February 1916 illustrates the fragility of the link with France through the Channel. Daisy reported that 'the biggest P & O liner the "Majolica" was blown up just outside the harbour... all through the minister's fine sermon on the war I heard hooters and sirens going. I saw destroyers coming back laden with refugees being taken to the hospital ships in the harbour. It is by no means unusual for a ship to strike a mine and go to the bottom. Dover always knows though the public don't.'

As the slaughter of young men continued official emphasis was placed on the idea of supporting motherhood as women's destiny.¹⁰ Propaganda emphasised traditional gender roles; Daisy was a fine example of a woman following her patriotic duty, though I am sure she wouldn't have seen it that way. By late 1916 she was back in her haven of her maternal home, 'the mutual cossetting society' to have her first child, and was back in Dover the following spring as a mother.

So both Peg and Daisy followed traditional gender roles with relish, adapting to the challenges of war. Daisy was of the generation of young women of whom some escaped the pressure of family expectations for the exciting opportunities offered by service on the war front as nurses or ambulance drivers. But Daisy was engaged in 1914 and married in 1915. She was close to the combat zone in Dover, where the lines of the 'war front' and the 'home front' were blurred. For Peg in the 'sleepy village' of Potters Bar their separation was clear and the war front distant, except on the one occasion when the Zeppelin crashed in the high street. She was at home supporting her sons and sons-in-law in all the ways she could

across the Channel and providing solace for them when they came home on leave.¹¹

Notes

1. For a full account of women's role in maintaining family ties in this period and as a central force in shaping their identities, see Leonore Davidoff et al, *The Family Story; Blood, Contact and Intimacy 1830-1960* (London, Longman, 1999).
2. The need for professional historians to locate family history within public history is explored in the preface to Alison Light's book *Common People: The History of an English Family* (London, Fig Tree, 2014).
3. Neither of her sisters joined the letter writing group.
4. Family women in all the countries involved in the war did similar voluntary work. See Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (London, Pearson Education, 2002), 45-49.
5. Janet Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: experience and the First World War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).
6. Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief, 1914-1929* (Oxford, Peter Lang Publishing, 2010).
7. Three Belgian children were admitted to Little Heath Elementary School in 1914. B. Warren, *The Growth of the Little Heath area to 1914* (Potters Bar Historical Association, 1992), 37.
8. J. E. Bennett, *The Potters Bar Zeppelin* (Occasional Papers No.1, Potters Bar Historical Society, 1989). It was also described as 'one of the great spectacles of London's war.' Gerry White, *Zeppelin Nights: London in the First World War* (London, Bodley Head, 2014), 172.
9. M. and C. George, *Dover and Folkestone during the Great War* (Yorkshire, Pen and Sword, 1988), 78-97.
10. One example was the creation of Britain's National Baby Week (1917). Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*.
11. See C. Cannon, 'Peg's War: a story told through letters', *Women's History Review*, 22/4 (2013) 591-606.

Women staff in the 'Westminster Village' during the First World War

Mari Takayanagi

Parliamentary Archives

When considering the role of Parliament during the First World War, subjects which might first spring to mind include legislation passed such as the Defence of the Realm Acts, debates and discussion by MPs on issues of defence and conscription, and perhaps also the role that many MPs, peers and their families played serving in the armed forces.¹ But Parliament was also a Home Front, part of the civilian population of a nation at war. Hundreds of men and women (other than MPs and members of the House of Lords) worked in the 'Westminster Village' throughout the war, keeping both Houses running. These staff included housekeepers, cooks, waitresses, barmaids, doorkeepers, messengers, estates staff, police officers, telephone operators, Clerks, Hansard reporters, and administrative and secretarial staff.

Little research has been done on women as public sector employees in this period. Female teachers, police and railway workers have been examined.² Building on contemporary studies of women and the civil service,³ Meta Zimmeck has studied women civil service clerks, and Helen Jones has looked at women in the upper echelons of the civil service as part of a much broader survey of women in public life, not just as paid staff.⁴ Helen Glew's forthcoming book analyses women workers in the civil service and the London County Council, with particular focus on women in the Post Office.⁵ The House of Commons and House of Lords, however, were individual public sector employers which were not part of the Civil Service, and have never been studied as employers of female staff.⁶ Although few women worked in Parliament before 1914 other than as cleaning and kitchen staff, the war led to new opportunities in roles beyond that previously defined as 'women's work', through substitution of male with female labour. This article examines two examples of this: the four 'girl porters' employed in the House of Commons, and May Court, who became Accountant in the House of Lords.

The House of Commons 'Girl Porters'

The Serjeant-at-Arms department in the House of Commons employed four temporary girl porters to deliver letters and other items between offices during labour shortages during the First World War. Their names were Elsie and Mabel Clark (aged 16 and 14), Dorothy Hart (18) and Vera Goldsmith (16). Their job titles in Parliament were 'girl porters' but they were also called 'girl messengers' as they wore the same uniform of brown drill overalls and hats worn by War Office girl messengers, and indeed Hart and Goldsmith previously worked as War Office girl messengers. They were employed from April 1917, and discharged in March 1919 on the return of demobilised staff (except Mabel Clark, who died of influenza in November 1918). They worked from 10am to 6pm on weekdays when the House was sitting.⁷

The wartime work of girl messengers has been described by Hilda Martindale, who wrote: 'No picture of the employment of women in the Civil Service during the war would be

complete without reference to the girl messengers who, in their brown overalls, flooded Government Departments and did their best, often with considerable success, to cope with work formerly done by hoary-headed old men.'⁸ Martindale's description appears to be an accurate portrayal of the House of Commons experience too. The Assistant Serjeant-at-Arms, Walter H Erskine, held off employing women until his staff of male porters had been reduced by conscription to two. He was clearly very worried about employing women to do such work. He felt it necessary to write to the Speaker to warn that it was 'an innovation', and also wrote to heads of offices requesting that their messengers do 'a greater share in carrying heavy boxes and books.' But by the end of the women's employment his fears had been completely allayed; he wrote to the War Office: 'It is impossible for me to speak too highly of the way these three girls have done their work while at the House of Commons, and their conduct has been exemplary throughout.' He wanted to arrange their transfer to another government department if possible.⁹

All the girl porters were from working-class families and would have been in paid employment regardless of the war. However, they would never have ended up portering in Westminster without the war. Dorothy Hart and Vera Goldsmith both worked for dressmakers before 1914, an industry hit very hard by the outbreak of war. Laid off by their employers, they came to work as messengers at the War Office, and were recommended to work in Parliament by the War Office Superintendent of Girl Messengers, E M Hamilton. The War Office dutifully took up employers' references on Hart and Goldsmith, which they passed on to the Serjeant. Both girls were described as good, steady, willing workers, although a summary note about Hart has the annotation 'Nice looking', which implies some other factors may have influenced their appointment.¹⁰

The other two girl porters, Elsie and Mabel Clark, were sisters and employed via a family connection. In this they demonstrate a traditional reliance on family recruitment networks to find jobs, which Selina Todd has found applied as much to working-class young women as to anyone else.¹¹ They were 'Nieces of Porter Clark': their uncle, Samuel Clark, had worked for the Serjeant since 1898, first as a cleaner and from 1912 as a porter. Samuel volunteered for war service on 1 December 1915. He was called up on 13 June 1916, but told to return home because he was a widower with a child, and continued to work for the Serjeant through the war and beyond. Samuel's sister-in-law Olive Clark, mother of Elsie and Mabel, was already a widow with seven children in 1914. The two oldest, Alfred and Ernest, joined the Army in 1915 aged 19 and 18 respectively; Ernest was discharged sick in 1916 but Alfred died at the Battle of the Somme. Elsie and Mabel, the next oldest, both went out to work as soon as they left school; their employment in Parliament would have been essential in helping the family through the war, although the death of Mabel must have been a terrible blow: she died of influenza

and double pneumonia at home on 19 November 1918, just a few days after Armistice Day, aged just 15.¹²

It cannot be ascertained what Elsie Clark did after the war but Dorothy Hart returned to dressmaking, and later married and had a family. Vera Goldsmith showed signs of greater ambition, writing to the Serjeant to ask for a reference as she wished to apply to join the London Chamber of Commerce. There is no evidence Goldsmith succeeded in her application, but she never married and seems to have continued to work in retail administration.¹³ There was never any prospect of the girl porters continuing to work in Parliament after the war; their work was by definition temporary, and their example illustrates, as Deborah Thom has described, the war as an episode in their working lives rather than transformative overall.¹⁴ However the experience of Goldsmith can be seen to demonstrate the pattern of work followed by working-class young women after 1918 traced by Selina Todd: moving from more traditional female jobs such as domestic service towards retail and office jobs.¹⁵

May Court, House of Lords Accountant

At the other end of the Palace of Westminster, House of Lords staff also volunteered or were called up to the armed forces. However House of Lords messengers were mostly old soldiers, all over military age, and there was therefore no need to employ any girl porters.¹⁶ The war provided an opportunity for a woman in a different way, and as with Elsie and Mabel Clark, a family connection was vital. Robert Ambrey Court and Hannah Frances Mary Court (known as 'May') were twins who successively worked for the House of Lords; Robert between 1903 and 1917, May between 1918 and 1943. As with the Clarks, the Courts' story shows the powerful impact of the First World War had on a parliamentary family.

Their father, Thomas Ambrey Court, worked for the House of Lords from 1873, initially as a copyist. He rose through the ranks and in 1903 became Receiver of Fees, Accountant and Examiner of Acts, and head of the Accounting and Copying Department. He and his wife Hannah, who died in 1895, had four children. Two of them (Cecil, the oldest, and Edward, the youngest) emigrated to Canada in the early twentieth century. The twins, Robert and May, were born on 13 December 1880 in Balham. At the age of 18, Robert came to work with his father in the House of Lords in 1899 as a copyist. He married and had a son, born in 1910. May worked initially as a junior teacher, but by 1911 she was an 'Embroideress (sic) in decorative society needlework'. Both these occupations were among the very few open to middle-class women in this period, and thus far, all jobs were typical of gender roles; but then the war came.¹⁷

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Robert was quick to volunteer to serve. He had four years' Territorial Army service behind him and applied for a commission in the regular army. The commanding officer nominating him was 'convinced he would make a good officer' and asked for Robert to be posted to his own regiment, 13 West Yorkshire, as lieutenant, as indeed happened. He was appointed captain in September 1915, and later a temporary major commanding a battalion of the West Riding Regiment. He served at Suvla Bay [Gallipoli] and Egypt.¹⁸

Robert Ambrey Court was killed in action on 26 April 1917, at Hermies, Pas-de-Calais, France.¹⁹ He was 36 years old. His name is inscribed on Parliament's war memorials in

the Royal Gallery in the House of Lords and on the Recording Angel memorial in Westminster Hall. The House of Lords paid a gratuity of £470 to his widow, which was more than she got from the army and the gross value of his estate put together.²⁰ One can only speculate as to how desolate Robert's death must have left his widow, his seven year old son, his twin sister, and his 67 year old father Thomas. Thomas had already lost his youngest son to the war.²¹ Thomas must have hoped that Robert would make it through the war, return to work in the House of Lords, and succeed him as House of Lords Accountant. This was not to be. However perhaps the opportunity Robert's death gave to his twin sister might have been some consolation for the family, because just under a year later, May followed in his footsteps by entering the House of Lords accounting department. It would be too simplistic to say that she was given her brother's job, but his death had provided a vacancy and therefore an employment opportunity for her. Thomas Ambrey Court did not see his son become Accountant, but he did live to see his daughter do so.

Miss Hannah Frances Mary Court was appointed as one of two 'Lady Clerical Assistants' in April 1918, along with Miss Mabel Evelyn Waterman. They were therefore appointed during shortages of male labour near the end of the First World War, and in traditional roles of clerical support. But, unlike many such women, like the girl porters, both Court and Waterman kept their jobs after the war and were quickly promoted. On 1 June 1919 Miss Court was appointed Accountant and placed on the same salary scale as H P Norris, the head of the Accounting and Copying department: a remarkable and rare example in this period of equal pay. Miss Waterman was made Assistant Examiner of Acts at the same time.²²

So just how important a position was that of House of Lords Accountant? How significant was this role? A statement to the Treasury in 1924 outlined the position as follows. The Clerk of the Parliaments, as head of the House of Lords administration, was Accounting Officer and head of the Accounting Division. Direction was carried out by a senior clerk as 'Supervisor of the Accountant's Department', and 'all work in connexion with payments and keeping and rendering of accounts etc is carried out by the Accountant.' The supervisory role was performed by one of the Table Clerks, in this period by C K Davidson and F W Lascalles, whose signatures appear on the accounts alongside Court's signature. But Davidson and Lascalles had many responsibilities as Table Clerks, would not have actually carried out the accounting work, and probably devoted little time to checking it. Court carried out all the calculations, paid salaries, pensions and other fees, countersigned cheques, corresponded with the Treasury, and ensured information was printed and laid out as necessary. There is no doubt that her role was an executive and a responsible one, and Court's achievement is a significant exception to the stereotype of women filling mainly low status, semi-skilled posts.²³ It was also an unusual one for a woman to hold. Historians have found that the accountancy function of office work in this period was almost invariably defined as 'men's work'.²⁴

At the same time, it would be wrong to suggest that the House of Lords Accountant's department was an up-to-date professionally run operation in this period. On the contrary, there is no evidence that anyone working there had any professional accountancy qualifications, and the Treasury

regarded their systems as bad but the previous systems had been worse. There was a major audit of the House of Lords Security Fund and Fee Fund in 1929-30, in which the Treasury discovered a long-running deficit of nearly £6000.²⁵ The Treasury concluded:

The deficit is due to defalcations by one, or possible two, of the Accountants who held office prior to 1902. Both are now dead and there is no possibility of recovery...It may confidently be said that no one of the last 3 Accountants has embezzled funds: each of them in turn ought to have brought past embezzlement to notice, each of them should have suggested improvements in accounting. Miss Court has in fact kept better records than any of her predecessors.²⁶

The report went on: 'As to disciplinary action the real culprits are dead, and I doubt as regards Miss Court whether more than an expression of displeasure is necessary. She must have lived for some years in dread of disclosure of unhappy incidents of the past of which she had no clear understanding and which she suspected might involve her father's honour.' It must indeed have been a great relief for May Court to have not only herself but her father exonerated. The House of Lords had been willing to look beyond the male breadwinner model and employ her even after the war had ended, enabling her to move out of traditional low-paid and low status female occupations, and she must have felt very vulnerable to even the suspicion of embezzlement. By this date she was not only Accountant, but head of office. When H P Norris retired in 1927, May Court became head of the Accounting and Copying department with the title Receiver of Fees and Accountant. The importance of this appointment is shown by the press reports:

'The Monstrous Regiment'. The few die-hard anti-feminists who are left may fly to John Knox for consolation in the latest shock they have received, for 'the monstrous regiment of women' has captured one of the high administrative posts in the House of Lords staff. Miss H F M Court has been made head of the Costings and Accounts department. Her assistants will be two women. They will be three lonely women, for in no other department or office in the House of Lords do women hold the higher appointments. Their duties, however, are intricate enough to keep them from brooding over their solitary grandeur..²⁷

Mabel Waterman was promoted to Examiner of Acts at the same time, and in the nine years between Norris's retirement in 1927 and Waterman's resignation on marriage in 1936, no men worked in the Accounting and Copying department. A male assistant accountant was appointed in 1936, reporting to Miss Court. May Court was awarded the OBE in 1942 for her services to the House of Lords, and retired in 1944. She had worked in the Lords for twenty-six years.²⁸ Court's retirement saw the end of female management of the Accounting and Copying Department, but all the women appointed under Court's management retained their positions and went on to have long careers with the House of Lords after the Second World War. Like some other early women workers in Parliament and elsewhere, May Court owed her

opportunity to family connection and wartime expedencies. Her subsequent success, however, was undoubtedly due to her own abilities.

Overall, the House of Commons girl porters and the House of Lords female Accountant are good examples of varied roles of women in the First World War, illustrating themes such as substitution of male with female labour in wartime and of women taking on new roles beyond that previously defined as 'women's work'. The girl porters were perhaps more typical in being dismissed at the end of the war on the return of demobilised soldiers, while by contrast May Court managed to keep her job and build a successful career in the House of Lords after the war. May Court and Vera Goldsmith both provide good examples of the longer-term effect of war on young women's employment identified by Selina Todd, moving from embroidery and dressmaking jobs before the war to administrative and retail jobs respectively. Examining Parliament as the 'Westminster Village', through a local lens, gives a new perspective on the subject of women and Parliament, and helps position Parliament in the wider story of the Home Front in the First World War.

Notes

1. This paper draws on research done for 'Women in Parliament during the First and Second World Wars', a talk given in Parliament for the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art, March 2014, and 'The Home Front in the "Westminster Village": Women in Parliament during the First & Second World Wars', a paper given at the Women's History Network conference, Worcester, September 2014. For an overview of Parliament and the First World War, including information about MPs, peers and staff who died serving in the war, see www.parliament.uk/ww1.
2. Alison Oram, *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics 1900-1939* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996); Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1879-1930* (London, Routledge, 1996); Louise A Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the 20th century* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006); Helena Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen: Exploitation, betrayal and triumph in the workplace* (Hastings, Hastings Press, 2005).
3. Dorothy Evans, *Women and the Civil Service* (London, Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1934); Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State 1870-1938* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1938); Emmeline W Cohen, *The Growth of the British Civil Service 1780-1939* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1941).
4. Meta Zimmeck, "'Get out and get under": the impact of demobilisation on the Civil Service, 1918-1932' in Gregory Anderson, ed, *The White-Blouse revolution: female office workers since 1870* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988), 88-120; Meta Zimmeck, 'The "new woman" in the machinery of government: a spanner in the works?', in *Government and Expertise: specialists, administrators and professionals 1860-1919*, ed. Roy MacLeod (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 185-202; Meta Zimmeck, 'Strategies and stratagems for the employment of women in the British civil service, 1919-1939', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 901-24; Helen Jones, *Women in British Public Life, 1914-50: Gender, Power and Social Policy* (Harlow, Pearson Education, 2000).
5. Helen Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: women's work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55*

(Manchester, Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

6. For more information about women staff in Parliament, see Mari Takayanagi, 'Parliament and Women c1900-1945' (unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London, 2012), chapter 7.

7. The pay was 9/- a week if aged 14-16, 12/- if aged 16-18, with 1/- war bonus in both cases. Parliamentary Archives (hereafter PA), HC/SA/SJ/9/13.

8. Martindale, *Women servants of the state*, p.81.

9. It does not appear that was possible, as the Serjeant later wrote (glowing) references for the girls for different jobs elsewhere. This included a reference for Goldsmith to join the London Chamber of Commerce, although there is no evidence she succeeded in that application. PA, HC/SA/SJ/9/13.

10. Hamilton described Hart as a 'good steady worker' and Goldsmith as 'a good and willing worker'. PA, HC/SA/SJ/9/13.

11. Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family 1918-1959*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 91.

12. Before coming to work in Parliament, Elsie previously worked at a leather merchants, and Mabel at an art colour printing and advertising company. PA, HC/SA/SJ/9/13. Family history details in this paper for the Clarks and others is constructed from census, birth, marriage and death records via www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk [accessed March 2014]. Military service details for Alfred and Ernest are from The National Archives (hereafter TNA) medal card WO/372/4, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (hereafter CWGC) website, www.cwgc.org [accessed March 2014].

13. There is no sign of Goldsmith in the London Chamber of Commerce membership records, which show very few women members in this period. London Metropolitan Archives, CLC/B/150/MS16456/002 and CLC/B/150/MS16455/010. The Serjeant gave her a reference for a post of clerk at the Food Control Office in Croydon, see PA, HC/SA/SJ/9/13. Her death certificate in 1950 gives her occupation as butcher's clerk.

14. Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London, IB Taurus, 1998), 205-6.

15. Todd finds that although the short term effects of the war on young women's employment may have been limited, it accelerated a longer-term trend, particularly away from domestic service. Todd, *Young Women*, 22.

16. House of Lords Offices Committee papers, January 1916. PA, HL/PO/CO/1/418.

17. Parliament Office appointment book. PA, HL/PO/1/549/2.

18. For Robert Ambrey Court's military service, see TNA, WO 339/14175, WO 329/2199, WO 329/2948 WO/372/5; *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 12 Jan 1915, 6 Jan 1916, 8 Jan 1916, 8 May 1916, 13 June 1917 and 7 Aug 1917; and PA, HL/PO/CO/1/418.

19. CWGC website. Robert Ambrey Court was with the 9th Battalion of the Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment). He was in attendance with the 8th Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) with the rank of temporary Captain when he was killed. He is buried in the Hermies British Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France, one of 87 British soldiers.

20. £270 was paid initially, equivalent to his annual salary. His widow applied for more, and obtained another £200. *HL Offices Committee 3rd and 4th reports* (1917), 14 and 26 June 1917. PA, HL/PO/CO/1/423. This was, sadly, more than she received from the Army: his service file shows she was paid a total of £172/9/7 (of which £155 was a gratuity, the rest being

promotion pay owed and the £7/11/8 he had on him when he died). It was also more than his estate was worth: this was valued at £251/10/9. TNA, WO 339/14175.

21. Edward Crawford Court served with the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles Battalion (Saskatchewan Regiment), with the rank of sergeant, and died at the Battle of the Somme, aged 28. He was buried at Regina Trench on 1 October 1916. CWGC website.

22. Parliament Office appointment book. PA, HL/PO/1/549/2.

23. PA, HL/PO/AC/15/43; signatures are on various salary records in PA, HL/PO/AC/15. On cheques, a letter from the Bank of England notes that cheques will be countersigned by Miss M F Court instead of by Mr Norris as before, May 1919, in PA, HL/PO/AC/15/36. Also PA, HL/PO/AC/15/46.

24. On women in accountancy, see R Guerriero-Wilson, 'Women's work in offices and the preservation of men's "breadwinning" jobs in early twentieth century Glasgow', *Women's History Review*, 10/3 (2001), 463-482. For women in office jobs more generally, see Gregory Anderson, ed, *The White-Blouse revolution: female office workers since 1870* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988); Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls: the Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914', in *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, ed. Angela V John (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986). Women were not able to be chartered accountants until the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 permitted them entry to incorporated professional societies.

25. There had been much confusion about these two accounts. The Security Fund (deposits by appellants in judicial proceedings as security against costs) showed a substantial deficiency going back more than thirty years. PA, HL/PO/AC/15/11.

26. TNA, T 162/282.

27. *Aberdeen Journal*, 13 Dec 1926. Miss Court's appointment was also described as 'another instance of the increasing invasion by women of the higher ranks of the Civil Service'. *Western Daily Press*, 15 Dec 1926.

28. Her OBE award lists her as 'Accountant, House of Lords Offices', *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 11 June 1942.

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Ladies 'doing their bit' for the war effort in the north-east of Scotland

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My son's primary school class recently undertook a project on the First World War. One of the topics that the children could choose to study was 'Women in the War' and the usual subjects were included – nurses, VADs, munitionettes and the women's auxiliary services. As was obvious from the wall displays, such contributions to the war effort were mostly undertaken by unmarried, younger women, although of course many of the organisations were under the (nominal at least) leadership of older men. There were very few photographs or descriptions of older women in the children's project. As Braybon points out, it is young and photogenic women who were most likely to receive attention and become part of the photographic record of the war.¹ This led me to ask where the older married women were during the war. What was their contribution to the war effort and how has it been perceived by posterity?

Looking at the history books, it seems that the contribution of older women can be summed up in one word – socks. And, as Ward points out, the outbreak of knitting in the summer of 1914 has been treated with ridicule.² Marwick tells us, 'one very widespread female response to the outbreak of war was the knitting of "comforts" for the troops: socks, waistcoats, helmets, scarves, mitts and bodybelts. It was said that many men in the trenches used these unwanted and often unsuitable items for cleaning their rifles and wiping their cups and plates'.³ Turner talks of there being such an outbreak of sock knitting that the government had to intervene. He refers to the organisers of the knitters as 'hard-driving society dames'.⁴

Women's contribution to the war effort has frequently been linked to post-war political change – with the idea that, through their involvement with the war effort, women had somehow 'proved' themselves and could now be trusted with the vote. However, the achievement of women's suffrage in 1918 was limited and those young women who worked in the munitions factories, or as nurses or who joined the women's services did not actually win the vote until 1928. In fact it was women over the age of 30 who were married to or were property owners in their own right – in other words the scorned sock-knitters – who achieved the vote in 1918. Nonetheless, women's wider involvement in the public sphere of the war effort has been seen as game-changing by some scholars, leading to increased self-confidence and new job opportunities, at least during the war.⁵ However, others, such as Braybon, have criticised the idea of a 'watershed moment' for women during the war. Instead, some scholars have identified a backlash at the end of the war focusing on the reconstruction of more traditional gender roles.⁶

Women's experiences during the First World War differed dramatically in respect of region, class and age. This paper investigates the varied and unpaid contributions to the war effort of older women in the county of Aberdeenshire in Scotland. Less is known about the activities of such women, possibly because of a perceived lack of evidence for their activities during wartime. However, local newspapers such as the *Aberdeen Daily Journal* and *Free Press* offer an abundance

of material for such a study.⁷ Women's activities included the raising of funds for a wide variety of war-related causes, the organisation of comforts for the troops and the collection of sphagnum moss. Such fund-raising was important for the war effort: Grant estimates that 17,899 war charities raised funds of at least one million pounds between 1914 and 1918.⁸ They were led in these activities by established ladies from the upper and middle classes with life-long experience of leading charitable good works at parish, county and national levels which was now brought to bear on the war effort. As scholars such as Watson and Monger have pointed out, the outbreak of war did not introduce new ideas of service for such women, it merely shifted their focus to other groups such as war refugees, the troops and their families.⁹

The First World War is often seen as the last flowering of the ideal of aristocratic ladies leading the way in charitable good works, and it is certainly true that many of the voluntary efforts undertaken by women in Aberdeenshire were led by the aristocracy. A particularly good example of this is the indefatigable Lady Sempill of Fintray House, in her mid-forties at the outbreak of the war, who stated that 'all parishes will work if they are organised and led'.¹⁰ Gwendolyn, Lady Sempill, was a Welshwoman by birth, but moved to Fintray House, Aberdeenshire, on her marriage to the 18th Lord Sempill in 1892. The Sempill family was of a proud military tradition and Lord Sempill and his three brothers served in the armed forces, while his heir was an early member of the air force. Lord Sempill commanded a battalion of the Black Watch until being severely wounded at the Battle of Loos.

As befitted the wife of a military commander, Lady Sempill was at the forefront of the voluntary activity in Aberdeenshire during the war, and reports on her energetic activities are frequent in the newspapers. She was a divisional president of the Aberdeenshire Red Cross War Fund and raised funds to support four ambulances and two motor launches for the transport of the wounded. She also ran Fintray House as a military hospital and found time to organise treats for the children of soldiers and sailors. The majority of such charitable activities may be seen as an extension of the usual expectations of upper-class ladies.

What may not come through in such a list is the intensely *localised* nature of Lady Sempill's activities. In the first weeks of the war we find her running a recruitment campaign on the family's estates.¹¹ Her aim was to raise men specifically for the battalion commanded by her husband, and she held out the inducement of extra weekly payments to these men and their families. When she first wrote to the newspapers as divisional president of the Aberdeenshire Red Cross War Fund in August 1914, she promised readers that all funds raised would be applied *exclusively* to assisting Red Cross work within the county.¹² The four ambulances that she raised funds for were given names that proclaimed their provenance, such as 'City of Aberdeen', 'Bon Accord' (the motto of the city) and, of course, 'Lady Sempill'. The motor launches, sent to the Dardenelles in 1916, were called 'Aberdeenshire' and 'Lady Sempill'.¹³ Such



Hon. Margaret Forbes-Sempill
and Lady Gwendolen Emily Mary
Forbes-Sempill (née Prodgers)
© National Portrait Gallery,
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self-publicity was a frequent occurrence during the war where aristocratic ladies or the wives of military leaders would attach their names to a particular fund that they wished to promote.¹⁴ The ambulances were painted blue instead of the usual khaki so that they would stand out in the field.¹⁵ Regional rivalry was stirred up by fundraisers with stories in the newspapers about how Dundee had raised far more money for ambulances than Aberdeen.¹⁶

Such a focus on a local response has been seen as characteristic of the early years of the war, being replaced in the later years by a more nationalised response led by the Lloyd George government.¹⁷ However, there is evidence of this localised approach throughout the war years in the Aberdeen newspapers. Right up to 1918 there are letters and reports of fundraising and other collections to be sent directly to local men fighting at the front, and evidence also of the positive impact on morale that these donations brought.

While aristocrats like Lady Sempill made up the ranks of the divisional commanders and chairs of volunteer groups, every woman in Aberdeenshire was made aware of numerous opportunities to contribute to the war effort through news stories and appeals in the local newspapers. Fundraising for groups such as the Red Cross, the Scottish Women's Hospitals or the Belgian Relief Fund was never-ending, and women volunteers can be found on the pages of the newspapers participating in fundraising galas, concerts, teas, *café chantants* and sales of work, or selling flowers and souvenirs such as regimental badges in the streets. Sales of work required the production of cakes, jams, needlework, etc., to be sold on the stalls. Alternatively, women might send such products directly to their local hospital or to the troops. What was important was that such activities were publicly acknowledged in the pages of the newspapers.

Each week the newspapers would print lists of contributions to the various war funds. Some contributions were monetary – mostly from the upper and upper-middle-class families in the county, each contributing ten shillings or a few pounds to the latest fund to send tobacco to local

men at the front,¹⁸ to raise money for an 'Aberdeenshire' bed in a hospital in France,¹⁹ or to buy bagpipes for the Gordon Highlander regiments.²⁰ However, the majority were long lists of contributions in kind, giving full details of the giver's name and address and precisely what had been submitted. It should be remembered that such contributions would have come out of a housewife's domestic budget, which would have become increasingly tight as the war continued and rationing was introduced.

A typical example comes from a report published on Christmas Day 1914, listing the contributions to the local general hospital full of injured servicemen from France. In the long list we learn about contributions such as 'Miss Davidson, 8 Queen's Gardens, tea bread'; 'Miss Reid, 37 Albyn Place, jellies and cream', 'children of Berefold School, Ellon, 7 fowls, currant loaf, scones, eggs, cocoa, jam, matches' and, of course, 'Lady Sempill, Fintray, 20 rabbits'.²¹ The list is extensive and must have served not only to acknowledge those who did contribute but also to prick the consciences of those who did not.

Acknowledgements might also come from further afield. Letters of thanks from the fundraising wives of military commanders, such as Lady French, were forwarded by the recipient to the newspapers for wider publication.²² So too were letters of thanks directly from the front. In May 1915 Lady Sempill forwarded a letter to the *Journal* that had been sent to her by a corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps to tell her about the arrival of 'her' ambulances.²³ Again, the focus on the local nature of her fundraising was made explicit. The letter starts by stating, 'Being native of Aberdeenshire, and knowing the keen interest you take in the work of the British Red Cross in France during this war, I thought it was the least I could do to send a few lines from the scene of operations'. The corporal then describes how 'It caused a little excitement amongst the staff (a large number of same being Scotchmen) when the Scottish cars made their first appearance ... It gave them good encouragement to go on with the work although almost exhausted, knowing the great help the cars were, which had been given by their friends in "Bonnie Scotland."'

A similar letter to Lady Sempill from Sir Alexander Ogston, who was with the First British Ambulance Unit in Italy, was published in January 1917.²⁴ Ogston was the 70 year-old Professor of Surgery at Aberdeen University who had already served in the Boer War and had been instrumental in the creation of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Having described the joy of his ambulance drivers at the arrival of the new vehicle, his final line to Lady Sempill simply stated, 'To me it will always feel like a friend's warm greeting'. The provision of such ambulances demonstrates the continuing reliance of parts of the war effort – as late as 1917 – on the fundraising of volunteers, and the continued emphasis on local and personal relationships, although Grant points out that the provision of ambulances from different sources and of different makes and types meant that maintenance became a serious problem.²⁵

As well as supplying local hospitals and fundraising events with the products of their labour, women also contributed to sending 'comforts' to the troops. While this euphemistic word suggests the sending of parcels of chocolate, tobacco and reading materials overseas, the ubiquitous 'comforts' actually covered far more than this. At the start of the war an appeal was sent out to members of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild to supply certain items of clothing for men in the trenches. Such items were not just socks, but also shirts, hats, belts, gloves, underwear, sweaters, bed linen, operation gowns, surgeon's coats, surgical dressings, pyjamas, bed jackets and shrouds. All garments were made to military specifications and contributions were checked for quality before being sent to hospitals and troops at the front. The production of these garments, and the raw materials, was supplied entirely by volunteer labour. Such commitment demonstrated women's willingness to participate in the war effort.²⁶ Queen Mary's Needlework Guild had over 680 branches worldwide, including India, Ceylon, Jamaica, the Gold Coast and British Guinea, and continual demands were made on this 'dispersed, world-wide assembly line' of women.²⁷ Grant states that the total production of the Guild amounted to 15,577,911 articles by 1918, with an estimated value of £1,194,318, although he also notes that the enthusiasm of the significant work force of the guild exacerbated the unemployment situation of working-class women in the textile industries.²⁸

Again the Aberdeen newspapers frequently published lists of garments produced by branches of the Guild throughout Aberdeenshire and despatched to the front. Such contributions came from small groups of women all over the county, such as the Kintore Church Work Party, the Ellon Needlework Guild, and the Oldmeldrum War Relief Ladies Working Party. Such groups offered women a social as well as a national activity.²⁹ All organisers' names were listed – Lady Sempill had organised and funded a work party at Fintray Manse. (In March 1917 she also passed on to *Journal* readers the instruction she had given to churchgoers in the village of Echt, to 'knit during the sermon'.³⁰) Thus the provision of comforts was far more than the inundation of the front line with poorly knitted socks. Instead it was a more organised and very necessary provision of a wide selection of garments, including materials needed in the hospitals. In the Aberdeen newspapers it was frequently framed as a response to requests by military commanders themselves. For example, Julia Stewart, of Banchory House, Aberdeenshire, wrote to the *Free Press* in February 1915 to share the contents of a letter sent to her by General Sir James Willcocks, commanding the Indian Expeditionary Force

in France, in which he asked for more socks for his troops.³¹ Later that year, Sophia Carr of Aboyne, who had written to urge women to continue to knit socks in the summer months, added, 'Since writing the above I have received a note from an officer in the south asking if I have any socks to spare, telling me he has spent pounds himself in providing them for his men, and so preventing them from going without.'³² Two ladies from Nairn wrote to the *Journal* in March 1916 enclosing a letter they had received from a dugout close to the Belgian firing-line thanking them for their contributions: 'The socks are lovely. So many men come to us with their stockings soaked through, and then we can give them a fresh pair and send them back to the trenches with dry feet'.³³

Over the four years of the war, repeated appeals for socks and other comforts were submitted to the two newspapers. Some correspondents encouraged knitters to place little letters with names and addresses in their socks so that the soldier in receipt of the gift might write back in thanks. And this did happen. In August 1915 the *Aberdeen Evening Express* reported that 'Little Miss Maggie Adams' had just received a letter of thanks from a Belgian soldier in hospital in France telling her that her socks were much appreciated.³⁴

In her discussion of the knitters of Newfoundland,³⁵ Duley suggests that such knitting gave women a heightened sense of the importance of their domestic skills, highlighted the economic value of such products, and gave recognition to the type of charitable work that many had carried on all their lives with little thanks. Thus such contributions to the war effort both placed women within their proper, domestic, sphere, but also allowed them to be involved in the public sphere of warfare, making a womanly contribution to a war that therefore involved the whole country. It should also be noted that many of the appeals were again framed in terms of locality – with women being urged to produce comforts to be sent to local soldiers in regiments such as the Seaforth or Gordon Highlanders and campaigns being run by the wives of local officers.

Some historians have seen such voluntary activity as static and predominantly a phenomenon of the first stages of the war, being replaced by a more centralised approach after the end of 1915.³⁶ However, as described below, the letters to the Aberdeen newspapers offer evidence of such activity continuing throughout the war, changing in response to new needs, such as prisoners of war, and adapting itself to new structures imposed from above. One local campaign that ran in the early years of the war was Mrs Niven's Fund for Prisoners of War, and in the history of this fund we do see the impact of the centralisation of the war effort after 1915. Mrs Niven, wife of the Professor of Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen University and in her late forties at the outbreak of war, started her fund for Prisoners of War from the Aberdeen area in 1914.³⁷ Using donations of money and in kind she sent comforts to the men, but also offered support to their families. As 'A Prisoner's Mother' wrote in a letter to the *Journal* in January 1917, 'When anything went wrong in Germany the first thing one did was to write to Mrs Niven, and never once did she fail one. By return would come the kindly and sympathetic letter saying she had taken the matter up and was writing about it. Only those who have appealed to her know the help and comfort she has been in many a dark hour'.³⁸

Mrs Niven's personalised approach, however, ran into difficulties after 1916 when all such funds were required to



The ladies and girls of Port Gordon in Banffshire sorting sphagnum moss, circa 1916.
Image courtesy of www.thehistorypeople.eu
(C) 2014

be registered under the aegis of a national organisation. Mrs Niven refused to register because of the paperwork that this would require, and was refused exemption by the magistrates.³⁹ Her fund should therefore have been closed down and all donations sent instead to the official Prisoners of War Bureau. However, letters to the newspapers throughout the rest of the war demonstrate that she continued to receive donations, from as far afield as America, from donors that 'expressly stated that they wished her to take charge of the money'.⁴⁰ A news article in the *Journal* from February 1916 quoted a letter from Private Riddoch, of the Gordon Highlanders, who was a prisoner of war at Sennelager, Germany. He had written to his mother asking her to thank Mrs Niven for the New Year's gifts sent to him and to other Gordons in camp. "Tell Mrs Niven," he adds "that the boys are very glad at having got her boxes. It is very good of her."⁴¹ Such a letter again demonstrates the personal approach of such funds and their impact on the morale of soldiers.

Thus local charities that started in the first months of the war were, by the end of 1915, being pressured to come into line with national organisations or to close down. In early 1916 the War Office Organisation Scheme formed the County of Aberdeen War Work Association. This was part of the first direct state control of charities.⁴² A letter was published in the *Journal* in January 1916⁴³ explaining that the Association had been formed because of the amount of 'overlapping' that was evident with the voluntary organisations. Instead, a Central Depot for the whole county would be instituted for the receipt of comforts, and, while individual organisations were encouraged to continue to meet and work for the war effort, they would now be told what to make or collect, how much was needed from them, and would have no say in where their products went.

By this time, Aberdeenshire had a new focus for its war effort – the collection and processing of sphagnum moss for surgical dressings, and almost from the start this was centrally organised. The absorbance, availability and cheapness of the moss meant that it was a suitable replacement for cotton gauze

dressings, although, as Riegler points out, this cheapness was only because the labour-intensive making of the dressings was dependent on the volunteerism of women.⁴⁴ The moss grows in boggy areas, along seacoasts and on moors, and a plentiful supply could be found in Aberdeenshire. It had to be collected, picked over to remove material like twigs and dirt, dried and then made up into dressings. From 1916, when the moss was placed on the list of materials approved by the War Office as official surgical dressings,⁴⁵ the newspapers were full of reports of moss-collecting work, particularly during weekends in the summer and autumn. Large parties would go to the moors for the day, for example troops of boy scouts and girl guides.⁴⁶ Some ministers even conducted church services on the moors in order to get as much moss collected as possible.⁴⁷ Lady Sempill, of course, was involved in such activities, as she outlined in a letter to the *Free Press* in January 1917:

It may interest your readers to hear that I started a two-hour Saturday afternoon class here (of course attending regularly personally) last September gathering moss whenever weather permits and drying it in a laundry loft in cricket nets. So popular was this meeting, resulting in one bag weekly cleaned moss, that I started an evening class ... the result being fully two cleaned sacks weekly. Several workers, including children, are so keen that they attend both classes.... It is merely a matter of getting someone to take the trouble to start the movement, and he or she will be as ably supported as I have been. An occasional tea party, marks for attendance, and homework brought in, with little prizes, all help to stimulate interest.⁴⁸

Once processed, the moss would be sent to a number of war-dressings depots in Aberdeen, where it was made into pads and dressings, packed and despatched to hospitals. The vast majority of the labour here was again voluntary, and the work

was mostly manual, although some machinery was introduced in the last few months of the war. The continued appeals in the newspapers for volunteers to process the moss suggests that it was difficult to obtain sufficient numbers of volunteers for what was a very labour-intensive task.⁴⁹ The honorary secretary of the Aberdeen depots, and author of many of such appeals, was Constance Ogston, daughter of Sir Alexander Ogston.

The involvement of local ladies such as Constance Ogston and Lady Sempill in the collection and processing of sphagnum moss demonstrates that the centralisation of war work did not necessarily mean the replacement of local volunteers. Instead, those who were willing to co-operate with a centralised authority continued to lead the voluntary effort in Aberdeen and its county. While Mrs Niven could not work under a bureaucratic system that required her to fill in paperwork, it is evident that not all ladies were of the same opinion and that those who had proven their abilities in the early years of the war continued to contribute and to offer local leadership in the later years. And the groups that they led continued to be local ones – as Lady Sempill's work in her parish demonstrates. A more centralised approach was placed over a very local structure, using the same local leaders and structures rather than replacing them.

Voluntary work for the needy had always been seen as part of women's traditional domestic sphere, but during the First World War women's voluntary work for the war effort became important for a number of reasons. It enabled older women, who were not able to desert their domestic duties, to feel a useful part of the war effort, but it also *was* a useful part of the war effort. Their fundraising for wartime charities and provision of comforts was necessary for both the provisioning and morale of the troops and for the better running of medical services. Whilst the first years of the war saw a very voluntary and localised approach to such voluntary efforts, from 1916 onwards the voluntary war effort became much more organised and nationalised. However, this did not mean the replacement of the local networks and expertise that had been built up, but rather their better use.

Because such work was already an established part of middle-class women's lives it has not been perceived in the same way as other types of war service undertaken by women, such as joining the auxiliary services, the police services or nursing. However, for many women who had domestic responsibilities or were older and less fit, this type of voluntary activity was an important way of demonstrating their commitment to the war effort, and a way in which they could demonstrate their patriotism and citizenship that was not possible before the war.⁵⁰ The involvement of these upper and middle-class, middle-aged, ladies in the types of war service discussed in this paper demonstrates that the First World War was total war – all sections of the population were engaged in the war effort in one way or another – and it is important to examine the often-neglected experience of these local volunteers rather than ignore it because it does not fit a more transformative picture.

Notes

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2. Paul Ward, "Women of Britain say go": Women's patriotism

- in the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12/1 (2001), 23-45.
3. Arthur Marwick, *Women at War 1914-1918* (London, Fontana, 1977) 35.
4. Ernest S. Turner, *Dear Old Blighty* (London, Michael Joseph, 1980), 31 and 44.
5. See for example Marwick, *Women at War*, or Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War' in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989), 258-323.
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7. See, for example, Sarah Pedersen, 'A Surfeit of Socks? The impact of the First World War on women correspondents to daily newspapers', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 22/1 (2002), 50-72.
8. Peter Grant, 'Mobilising charity: non-uniformed voluntary action during the First World War' (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City University London, 2012).
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10. Lady Sempill, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 29 January 1917.
11. 'County lady acts as recruiting officer', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 31 August 1914.
12. Gwendolen Sempill and Grace Coltman, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 10 August 1914.
13. 'Red Cross launches', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 27 June 1916.
14. For more examples see Ward, 'Women of Britain say go', 32.
15. 'Aberdeen's ambulance car', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 11 February 1915.
16. 'Red Cross hospital in France appeal for motor ambulances', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 26 October 1914.
17. Grant, 'Mobilizing charity'; Marwick, *Women at War*.
18. Lady Lumsden's Penny Tobacco Fund, *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 29 December 1916.
19. 'For Verdun zone wounded', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 9 January 1917.
20. 'Bagpipes for the Gordons', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 1 October 1914.
21. '1st Scottish General Hospital', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 25 December 1914.
22. 'Lady French's gratitude to Millbank teachers', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 16 June 1915.
23. 'Motor ambulances at the front', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 18 May 1915.
24. 'British ambulances on Italian front', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 12 January 1917.
25. Grant, 'Mobilizing charity', 271.
26. Ward, 'Women of Britain say go', 31.
27. Margot I. Duley, 'The unquiet knitters of Newfoundland: from mothers of the regiment to mothers of the nation' in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, ed. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012), 51-74.

28. Grant, 'Mobilizing charity', 167-68.
29. Ward, 'Women of Britain say go', 31.
30. Lady Sempill, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 27 March 1917.
31. Julia Charlotte Stewart, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 27 February 1915.
32. Sophia B. Carr, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 16 June 1915.
33. Florence Mackintosh, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 16 March 1916.
34. *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 17 August 1915.
35. Duley, 'The unquiet knitters'.
36. Marwick, *Women at War*.
37. C. Niven, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 19 October 1916.
38. 'A Prisoner's Mother', 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 26 January 1917.
39. L. B. and M. S. Niven, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 24 January 1917.
40. Professor Niven, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 19 October 1916.
41. *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 7 February 1916.
42. Grant, 'Mobilizing charity'.
43. County of Aberdeen War Work Association 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 11 January 1916.
44. Natalie N. Riegler, 'Sphagnum moss in World War I: The making of surgical dressings by volunteers in Toronto, Canada, 1917-1918', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 6/1 (1989) 27-43.
45. Riegler, 'Sphagnum moss' 32.
46. 'Sphagnum moss: urgent requirement. Work in the Aberdeen area', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 21 August 1918.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Lady Sempill, 'Letters to the Editor', *Aberdeen Free Press*, 29 January 1917.
49. Riegler found similar problems in Canada. Riegler, 'Sphagnum moss'.
50. Ward, 'Women of Britain say go', 31.

The Scottish Women's Hospitals: fund-raising on the home front

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In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War, Home Rule became a central issue in Scottish politics and in May 1914 a Home Rule Bill won a majority on its second reading in the House of Commons. The outbreak of war, however, checked the movement for devolution.¹ Martin Pugh contends that the impact of the war nevertheless had a radicalizing impact on Scotland, where the mortality rate for Scottish troops (he cites 26%) was considerably higher than for the British Army (12%), and though this disparity has been disputed the perception of disproportionate losses is still widely held in Scotland.² An examination of fundraising by the Scottish Women's Hospitals (SWH) in the First World War will shed light on that perception of Scotland's particular contribution to the war effort. As the following examples will show, SWH fundraising appeals within Scotland played up its 'Scottish-ness'. At the same time, with its origins in the suffrage movement, the fundraisers had to broaden that appeal to the wider community, and to reach out to the rest of the United Kingdom as well as the British Empire. Whereas its founder, Dr Elsie Inglis had feared that having 'women's suffrage' and 'Scottish' in the title would narrow its appeal, it will be demonstrated that she was right about the former but wrong about the latter.

A 'non-committal' name

There have been a number of histories of the SWH, notably by Eva Shaw McLaren published the year after the Great War ended and by Leah Leneman on the 80th anniversary of the start of the War and the foundation of the SWH.³ Established in Edinburgh by the Committee of the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies, the SWH was not the only, or

first, all-woman wartime organisation, but it became the largest and most famous, working in France, Belgium, Corsica, Salonika, Malta, Macedonia, Serbia, Romania and Russia. On October 9th 1914 its most prominent founding member, Dr Elsie Inglis, wrote to Mrs Millicent Fawcett: 'we felt that our original scheme was growing very quickly into something very big – much bigger than anything we had thought of at the beginning – and we felt that if the hospitals were called by a non-committal name it would be much easier to get all men and women to help'.⁴ She was trying to reassure Mrs Fawcett that although the hospitals would not be called after the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), so as not to deter anti-suffragists or, indeed, suffragettes, from contributing to or volunteering for the cause, its founders considered it an NUWSS scheme. Hence, the NUWSS logo would be included in appeals and press notices (though in smaller font and below the SWH) and the field hospitals would fly the NUWSS colours of red, white and green just below the Union Jack. Inglis felt that it was necessary for fundraising to signal that the SWH was part of women's war work in general and not exclusively feminist. She pointed out to Mrs Fawcett that several of the largest subscriptions on the home front in the early days were from prominent 'antis'. Indeed, a personal friend who had strongly disapproved of her suffragist activities sent Inglis a note with her donation: 'I am glad you are doing something useful at last!'⁵

Moreover, the NUWSS was not to use the SWH explicitly in its lobbying for female suffrage: even when a franchise bill was being discussed in 1917, the SWH rebuffed the National Union (NU) request for a representative to join its delegation to meet Lloyd George.⁶ In her distinctive grey uniform trimmed with tartan ribbons and thistle-themed badges (which the

Manchester Guardian reported in 1916 had earned the 'Scottish' women the nickname 'little grey partridges'), an SWH delegate would have been immediately recognizable.⁷ The NUWSS accepted that its name and cause should not come first, except in its journal the *Common Cause*, which wrote of 'our' hospital and quoted Inglis, who led the London Unit in Russia in 1916-17, referring to the 'NU' hospitals.⁸ At the same time, the SWH founders appreciated how much their fundraising efforts within Britain owed to the NUWSS: even into 1919, local suffrage societies across the UK collected money for the SWH.⁹

Elsie Inglis is often acknowledged as *the* founder of the SWH, but she was not the only one and unlike the others she quickly regretted the name. Inglis wanted to change it to 'British Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service' to reflect the scope of the organisation, but the Edinburgh committee resisted. Inglis confided in Fawcett that she was sure that 'if there is a splendid response from England and other Federations' the name would have to be reconsidered.¹⁰ There was indeed a great response, with fundraising committees springing up across the UK. Still, the name did not change. Indeed, rather than being a 'non-committal name', keeping 'Scottish' in the title may have been part of the reason people at home and abroad responded so generously.

The 'Scottish' appeal

Though letters and diaries of the volunteers and the records of the headquarters in Edinburgh show that all concerned were loyal unionists and imperialists, it was calculated that an emphasis on Scotland as a small country in fundraising appeals would evoke more sympathy than references to Britain and its Empire. This also reflected the high rate of emigration from Scotland and the development of a distinctively Scottish imperial identity, as seen in the establishment of Caledonian societies across the Empire which raised considerable sums of money for the SWH.¹¹ Moreover, Kathleen Burke's lecture tours on behalf of the 'Scottish women' in the USA and Canada proved remarkably successful, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars. Burke was the most celebrated fundraiser: according to Leah Leneman, she raised so much money in North America that she became known as 'the \$1000-a-day girl'.¹²

The SWH like other charities relied heavily on volunteers, but it also employed local fundraisers who were expected to tour the small towns across the country and on the islands. While the sums they raised were small compared to the international efforts, they involved the local communities, notably raising funds in kind (for example, through the donation by local businesses of materials which could be used in the hospitals including tents and medical supplies) as well as locally grown produce, the collection of waste paper and other materials which could be sold, and the pledging of small subscriptions (from schools and workplaces). This was done across the UK, but it was recognised by the Edinburgh headquarters as constituting a particularly Scottish contribution and reflecting a national talent for inventiveness, such as the 'special appeal for old bicycle wheels which are needed for mechanical arrangements in orthopaedic workshops'. The employment of paid assistants also revealed how broad and complex the work of the SWH treasurer Mrs Jessie Laurie, who lived in Greenock and took no salary herself, had become by the middle of the war.¹³

Fundraising appeals in Scotland thus called on people to show what they could achieve as a nation. The SWH may also have been appealing to the Scottish military tradition and its contribution to the Empire, while showing that women had an important role to play in what tended to be seen as a predominantly masculine enterprise. This is reflected in newspaper reports of its work in Serbia which emphasised that Serbia was another small country and that it was Scotland's duty to help her against an over-mighty oppressor. A published appeal of 1915 noted that helping those in distress was 'worthy' of Scotland's highest traditions, while Serbia, it was claimed, had a particular appeal to the Scots: 'Its mountains and glens resemble our own Scottish Highlands, its people have made a similar fight for freedom against tyranny and oppression. It has been rightly termed the "Scotland of the East" and the Scottish people will not fail this brave little nation in her hour of trial'.¹⁴ In December 1915 at a sale of work held in Edinburgh University Union, the Reverend Dr Wallace Williamson declared: 'Serbia, like Scotland of old, dared to resist the invader, preferred death to such slavery. ... [We] looked back upon [our] own Scottish history and [we] knew that something of the same spirit was being shown there as enabled Scotland to achieve final independence and [we] believed, though things were dark at the moment, that a splendid result would be achieved. [We] all deeply rejoiced that the women of Scotland had enabled Scotland to take her part alongside suffering Serbia and were fulfilling the blessed ministry of healing'.¹⁵ Besides the gender assumptions, there were echoes here of the 'home rule' debate between 1910 and 1914.

This theme of brave small nations was echoed in the response of Serbs to the SWH. At a reception held in the Caledonian Station Hotel, Edinburgh, in November 1916 the guest speaker Father Nicholas Velimirovic said he had wondered why so much help had come from Scotland, but a study of Scottish history showed him that that there were parallels between the struggles of the two nations for freedom.¹⁶ There were similar appeals to aid the 'plucky little Belgians', both the refugees and those still in Belgium, but since such parallels could not be drawn with France, the historical links through the Auld Alliance were highlighted: the *Scotsman* reported in 1927 that the French Ambassador in London paid tribute to the SWH war work, remarking 'we all know that Scotland is the only country in the world that has never been at war with France'.¹⁷

Always in the public eye

Within Britain, the SWH had a very good press, not only in suffrage papers and women's magazines (such as *The Lady* and *Queen*) but also in the local and national press, tabloids and broadsheets, medical papers (including *The Lancet* and *Nursing Mirror*), and even trade papers (such as *The Draper*, *Railway Review* and *The Electrician*) as well as a wide variety of magazines (for example *Blackwood's*, *Field*, *Spectator*, *Sporting Times* and *Irish Life*). Such a spread of regular reporting throughout the war, from the smallest notices to feature articles and published letters, greatly aided the fundraising efforts. Scotland had no national paper and the SWH placed its appeals in the two main regional ones, the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, but it also ensured that it was reported in other papers, notably the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*. Indeed, readers' letters in these three papers were strikingly similar in



*'NUWSS Scottish Women's Hospitals'
ambulance at the 'Hopital de ROYAUMONT',
France.
Image courtesy of Women's Library @LSE*

both phrasing and content, while members of the Edinburgh committee wrote to each.¹⁸

Reports on what the SWH did on their various fronts were prominent in appeals for funds: there were stories of units travelling under difficult circumstances arriving at their destination safely, of the drivers searching for wounded under enemy fire, of the hospitals continuing to function while being bombed, of advanced casualty clearing stations having to evacuate, of the wounded and dead among the volunteers, and of the honours awarded them by the grateful governments. For example, Dr Frances Ivens, formerly Chief Surgeon of Liverpool's Stanley Hospital for Women who served as the Chief Medical Officer at the Royaumont hospital, was awarded the Légion d'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre avec Palme.¹⁹ While the Serb authorities bestowed on Dr Inglis the Order of the White Eagle Fifth Class in 1916, the first woman to receive this medal, they also honoured the work of the fundraisers in Edinburgh: the SWH president (and its co-founder with Inglis), Miss Sarah (Sally) Mair, was given the Order of Saint Sava, Third Class; Mrs Hunter (hospitals committee), Order of Saint Sava, Fourth Class; and the Fifth Class was awarded to Mrs Wallace Williamson (personnel and uniforms committee), Mrs Russell and Mrs Walker (equipment committee), Miss Kemp (transport committee) and Mrs Fred Salvesen (motor car committee).²⁰ All of these honours were used to publicise the SWH's appeals.

The expressions of gratitude by patients to the 'Scottish women' helped fundraising. They were encouraged to write letters to the Edinburgh headquarters while they also wrote to donors, both individuals and groups, sometimes lengthy letters which detailed their own grim experiences of war as well as praising their medical care. Quotations from these were used in public lectures, often delivered by women who had been platform speakers for the female suffrage cause and sometimes by women who had served with one of the units. Some of the latter also wrote letters, and these indicate that there was cooperation between fundraisers: for example, in 1915 Dorothy Grierson Jackson wrote of her experience as a nurse in Serbia with Lady Muriel Paget's unit but ended with a call for donations to the SWH.²¹ Press reports of the work done by the SWH at the front raised the profile of the organisation at home

while donors could see just how successful fundraisers had been and how their contributions were spent. The Edinburgh committee detailed the costs of equipping and maintaining hospitals, encouraging group efforts of schools, colleges, literary societies, professional associations and businesses. It adapted some of the practices of the Red Cross (the largest and most successful fundraising organisation of the War), such as 'name groups', calling on donations in memory of people born in particular months, or with particular names. For example, in February 1918, the *Scotsman* carried a letter from Mrs Madge Fleming calling on her sister 'Margarets and Marjories' to raise £200 to add to the £411 raised in their names over the previous three years, though she admitted that this would still be less than half of the 'Agnes' fund.²² At the start of the following year the *Scotsman* carried notices that the 'January Bairns' Birthday Bed' which had been at Royaumont was to be sent to Serbia, while the 'December Bed of Memories' had enough subscriptions to fund it for the coming year: at present in Salonika, it too was destined for Belgrade.²³

Voluntary efforts

The Edinburgh committee set ambitious targets first of £50,000, then £100,000, but called for donations 'however small', believing that public acknowledgement of the pennies as well as the pounds would encourage regular and new donors. The Scots' reputation for being careful, if not tight-fisted, with money was praised as a virtue: the Serbs, it was stated, very much admired the thrift of the Scottish women in whose hands 'every penny does the work of two'.²⁴ A donation of £25 carried with it the right to name a bed for six months and £50 for a year, while £350 would name an ambulance. As well as those listed above, the following examples reveal the range of donors, many of whom were associated with education (the Scottish Society of Women Teachers bed, the Paisley Teachers bed, the St. Bride's School, Edinburgh, bed) and more generally with children (the Greenock Girl Guides and Greenock District Boy Scouts each had a named bed). Some individuals had named beds: besides the Churchill bed and the Princess Helena bed there was the 'Mrs James Dalrymple Bed' (wife of the general manager of Glasgow Corporation Tramway Department). Others were named after sports associations (the Irish Golfing Union bed) and places throughout Britain (the Isle of Wight bed), its Empire and the Dominions as well as North America (Martha's Vineyard bed). While acknowledging the wider contribution, the SWH at home always emphasised the local efforts. In August 1917, a Miss Campbell of Tarbert, Loch Fyne, appealed for a further £20 to complete the eleventh bed endowed by her clan.²⁵ This naming in turn was used to drum up donations: for example, in August 1916 the employees of Yarrow Shipbuilding requested that a photograph of the bed plate and the bed's occupant be sent to them so that they could get postcards made to sell in the yard for the benefit of SWH funds.²⁶ Where sums were larger, wards ('Irish') or whole units ('London', 'Calcutta' and 'America') could be named. Such naming highlighted Scotland's place in the world.

Appeals emphasised that the bulk of donated money went to the units in the field. The appeal of May 5th 1915 stated that of the £50,000 urgently needed £20,000 had already been received, and listed the efforts being made in France and Serbia.²⁷ The *Common Cause* reported three months later that the London Society for Women's Suffrage had sent an X-ray

ambulance 'equipped on a magnificent scale at the cost of over £1000' to the SWH at Royaumont.²⁸ From 1915 the committee published annual abstracts of its accounts and the auditors donated their services: the account in the *Scotsman* in March 1919 showed that total receipts and payments for the fourth year of their work had been £182,309, 12s, 3d. The report concluded that while the Armistice had meant they could end their work in France, there was a real need to continue supporting the hospital in Serbia.²⁹

Besides the appeals in newspapers and the public lecture tours, fundraising efforts included the usual methods of charities: flag days; pageants; concerts; dances; whist drives; 'snowball appeals' and 'sales of work'; garden fetes at which tea would be served by locally prominent ladies; 'market days' for the sale of donated fruit, vegetables, game and flowers; appeals for soldiers' comforts, including socks, scarves, mittens, underwear, handkerchiefs, candles, books and stationery, tins of condensed milk, sweets, jam, cigarettes and tobacco - indeed, there was even a 'My Lady Nicotine' bed.³⁰ One appeal in December 1916 called on people to donate old gold and silver jewellery, coins, thimbles, watches, and cigarette cases which were suitable for smelting.³¹ The *Glasgow Herald* notice listed the addresses of 16 ladies who would receive such gifts covering Glasgow and the west of Scotland.³² There were also afternoon soirées in private homes and gardens as well as evening entertainments such as Hubert Henry Davies' comedy in three acts, 'Cousin Kate' (1910), which ran for four evenings, with a Saturday matinee, in early March 1917 at the Athenaeum Hall in Glasgow.³³

Hidden Tensions

From the start, there were tensions between Edinburgh and London over the SWH. This was reflected in the responses to the death of Inglis. It was announced on November 27th 1917 at a meeting of the SWH in Edinburgh addressed by the theatre manager Sir Frank Benson. He declared that such lives were 'a fitting accompaniment to the courageous self-sacrifice of our soldiers' and both Edinburgh and London determined that she should be publicly recognized.³⁴ The Dr Elsie Inglis Memorial Fund was established by the former to finance a general hospital and a training school for nurses in Serbia after the war, as well as to endow a hospice in Edinburgh and a training centre for women medical students specialising in maternity and infant welfare.³⁵ The SWH balance sheet was published in the *Scotsman* and other papers in April 1922, showing that of the £12,470, 12s, 6d collected for Serbia, £10,000 had already been allocated to Belgrade. The committee reported a surplus of approximately £28,000, to be spent on the 'general purposes of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Home and Foreign Service' - wartime appeals had emphasised the 'foreign service' so that the inclusion of 'home' (which was in the original title) indicated that there had been concern over how the remaining funds would be spent now that the war was over. Some wanted all the money to be spent on Serbia, whereas others thought it should be divided between Belgrade and Edinburgh, with the latter being added to the Inglis Memorial Fund.³⁶

That local disagreement was minor compared to the one between London, where the NUWSS had set up its own fund in her memory, and the Edinburgh headquarters which sought legal advice about the respective positions of the two

committees. This revealed the considerable friction between Edinburgh and London which had increased in 1916 when Inglis resigned from the former committee and turned to the latter. The London committee felt that its fundraising efforts were not getting the attention they deserved from the Edinburgh committee, whereas the latter suspected that London was holding out on funds which should have been sent to Edinburgh. This reflected the practice of some donors to dedicate their contribution to a particular unit. This antagonism was successfully kept out of the public eye but privately feelings ran deep. According to Leneman, 'the final straw for the English' was at the end of the War when the Edinburgh committee opened an office in London without consultation.³⁷

It is clear that however revered she was, Inglis could also be divisive. Although she saw the SWH as her legacy it had never been a one-woman band. Around 50 % of volunteers to serve in the SWH were women from Scotland, which is remarkable for such a small country, with the other half made up of mostly English women, but including some Welsh and Irish. There were also volunteers from Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as 'working' visitors from the USA.³⁸ It was a truly international effort and, notwithstanding the friction between Edinburgh and London, it was united in its dedication to serve the war effort.

Conclusion

Fundraising within Scotland had been a national effort and not limited to the main cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and while there was considerable rivalry between the SWH organisers in these two cities, they made strenuous efforts to involve all parts of the country. The fundraisers were supporters of both the Union and the Empire, but their campaigning emphasis on Scotland echoed the pre-war home rule debate. Indeed, sometimes known as 'home rule all round', this also recalled the slogan 'Home Rule for Women' adopted by many female members of school boards (which were still elected in Scotland, although abolished in England in 1902).³⁹ Their public celebration of all the contributions, including the smallest, enhanced the perception that Scotland was pulling above its weight in this crisis. This wider context helps explain the Edinburgh committee's insistence on retaining 'Scottish' in the title. Indeed, generally, appeals for funds by charities and voluntary organisations published in Scottish newspapers emphasised their 'Scottishness': for example, the 'British Red Cross Society' was always preceded by 'Scottish Branch' in the regular major appeals in both the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Scotsman*. This might indicate a sense of defensiveness: Scotland was a partner (albeit a junior one) and should not be subsumed into a larger British or imperial entity. The SWH demonstrated that there was no incompatibility between having a strong sense of Scottish identity and being a Unionist and imperialist. In particular, the first was held to make Scotland's contribution to the Empire distinctive.⁴⁰ Hence the Scottish origins of the SWH should attest to its particular contribution to the war effort. Since hundreds of thousands of women put on uniforms during the First World War - as members of auxiliary forces, voluntary organisations, transport and factory workers as well as medical personnel - the tartan trimming and the affectionate appellation 'little

grey partridges' made the 'Scottish' women stand out.⁴¹ While only those who served in the SWH wore the uniform which had to be returned once their contract was over, the badges were treasured mementoes and the images, notably of the thistle, useful for fundraising.

The SWH and majority of its fundraisers were female, and whereas those in leading positions tended to be middle-class, there were many ordinary women among the volunteers and many ordinary people, children as well as adults, who responded to the appeals both in raising funds and donating. Peter Grant has shown that this was the case with all wartime charities across Britain, but the fact that the SWH was founded and run by women, with all the major roles, including president and treasurer, held by women who in most charities and voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross were under-represented, again made it stand out.⁴² The regular reports of how the funds were raised and what they were spent on, of the adventures and setbacks which the units in the field encountered, engaged the public and ensured a steady flow of donations which continued after the Armistice. Eva Shaw McLaren stated in 1919 that she was not claiming the SWH to be unique among organisations founded to serve the war effort, but she was proud to say that the 'vast majority' of the 'Scottish Women never cracked, and every woman pulled her weight'⁴³ That could also be said of the much greater numbers of fundraisers as of the women at the front.

Notes

1. T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (Harmondsworth, Allen Lane, 1999), 307-308.
2. Martin Pugh, 'A Nationalism Born of the Great War', *History Today* (July 2014), 6-7; Hew Strachan, 'Great War worst for Scots troops "a myth"', *Scotland on Sunday*, 10 August 2014.
3. Eva Shaw McLaren, *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1919); Leah Leneman, *In the Service of Life. The Story of Elsie Inglis and the Scottish Women's Hospitals* (Edinburgh, Mercat Press, 1994).
4. Lady Frances Balfour, *Dr Elsie Inglis* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 148.
5. McLaren, *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals*, 8.
6. Leneman, *In the Service of Life*, 109.
7. Jessie Dixon, ed., *Little Grey Partridge. First World War Diary of Ishobel Ross who served with the Scottish Women's Hospitals unit in Serbia* (Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 1.
8. See for example the *Common Cause*, 16 and 30 Oct. 1914.
9. When consulted, the SWH papers were held unclassified in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; they are now held by Glasgow City Archives (GB 243, TD1734). The records of the London Committee of the SWH are held by The Women's Library, London School of Economics (GB 106 2SWH).
10. Balfour, *Dr Elsie Inglis*, 150.
11. See Angela McCarthy (ed.), *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century* (London, Taurus Academic Studies, 2006).
12. For Burke's fundraising, see for example *The New York Times*, 26 Nov. & 24 Dec. 1916. See also Leah Leneman, 'Hale, Kathleen (1887-1958)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article63748, accessed 28 July 2014].
13. Leneman, *In the Service of Life*, 5. For the 'bicycle wheel' appeal see the *Scotsman*, 19 Oct. 1917, 6.
14. Anon., *The Call of Our Allies and the Response of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service* (Glasgow, Revised ed., 1915), 33.
15. The *Scotsman*, 11 Dec. 1915, 7.
16. The *Scotsman*, 14 Nov. 1916, 8.
17. The *Scotsman*, 7 Dec. 1927, 8.
18. See for example the letters page (3) in the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 16 Aug. & 12 Sep. 1916. I am very grateful to Sarah Pedersen for generously sharing this information with me.
19. McLaren, *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals*, 65. For Dr Ivens, see Krista Cowman, *Mrs Brown is a man and a brother: women in Merseyside's political organisations, 1890-1920* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2004), 157.
20. The *Scotsman*, 14 Apr. 1916, 5.
21. *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 29 Mar. 1915, 3.
22. The *Scotsman*, 23 Feb. 1918, 8.
23. The *Scotsman*, 21 Jan. 1919, 7.
24. Dixon, *Little Grey Partridge*, 3.
25. *Glasgow Herald*, 2 Aug. 1917, 1.
26. Jane McDermid, 'What's in a Name? The Scottish Women's Hospitals and the First World War', *Minerva* 1/1 (2007), 102-114: 106.
27. *Glasgow Herald*, 5 May 1915, 1.
28. The *Common Cause*, 3 Aug. 1915.
29. The *Scotsman*, 20 Mar. 1919, 1.
30. *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 28 Dec. 1915, 2 & 22 Feb. 1916, 3.
31. The *Scotsman*, 8 Dec. 1916, 6.
32. *Glasgow Herald*, 1 Dec. 1916, 1.
33. *Glasgow Herald*, 5 Mar. 1917, 1.
34. *Glasgow Herald*, 28 Nov. 1917, 7.
35. *Glasgow Herald*, 6 Mar. 1918, 1.
36. See the *Scotsman*, 29 Apr., 4 & 15 May 1922.
37. Leneman, *In the Service of Life*, 184.
38. Leneman, *In the Service of Life*, 218-9.
39. See Helen Corr (1990) '“Home Rule” in Scotland: the teaching of housework in schools, 1872-1914', in Judith Fewell & Fiona M. S. Paterson (eds) *Girls in their Prime: Scottish education revisited* (Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press), 38-53.
40. See Jenny Macleod, '“By Scottish hands, with Scottish money, on Scottish soil”: The Scottish National War Memorial and National Identity', *The Journal of British Studies* (2010), 49/1, 73-96.
41. Barton C. Hacker & Margaret Vining, 'Cutting a New Pattern: Uniforms and Women's Mobilization for War 1854-1919', *Textile History* (2010), 41/Supplement 1, 108-45.
42. Peter Grant, '“An Infinity of Personal Sacrifice”: The Scale and Nature of Charitable Work in Britain during the First World War', *War & Society* (Oct. 2008), 27/2, 67-88.
43. McLaren, *A History of the Scottish Women's Hospitals*, 358.

Home and Away: Politics and Suffrage in the First World War

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A commonly addressed question in the historiography of the suffrage movement is what happened to all its activity when the outbreak of war occurred in 1914. The standard narrative used to focus on the suspension of not only suffragette militancy but also of the work of 'constitutional' societies, followed by the subsequent absorption of many of Britain's working-class women into war work, with the achievement of the vote in 1918 arguably viewed more as a consequence of the latter rather than of any sustained campaigning.¹ In the last twenty years scholarship from feminist historians, notably Sandra Stanley Holton, Nicoletta Gullace and Jo Vellacott, has established a more nuanced picture, showing that suffragist women continued to organise for the vote throughout the war, while also engaging in the war effort and/or working for peace.² Since suffragists were mainly middle-class women, their war work was largely voluntary and philanthropic, arguably advancing women's public role, albeit generally in an appropriately gendered way, thus representing continuity rather than change. For example, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) quickly mobilised nationally to offer aid to refugees from Belgium.³ The organisation's support for the Scottish Women's Hospitals is another example of the way in which war work, suffrage and philanthropy were intertwined enterprises. However, as Holton, Vellacott and others have described, a split developed within the NUWSS leadership between the patriotic, pro-war president, Millicent Fawcett (and with her, the majority of NUWSS members), and the so-called 'democratic suffragists', a left-leaning, anti-war faction, who resigned en masse from the organisation's executive in 1915 in support of the women's peace conference at the Hague.⁴

Thus a picture of women more-or-less abandoning suffrage activism in favour of war work has gradually been replaced by a scenario in which suffragists mixed relief work with political campaigning, albeit deeply divided by their attitudes to war. It is evident that national suffrage leaders engaged not only with domestic politics and welfare projects but also with international issues.⁵ This article seeks to explore these themes from a local perspective, away from the politics of the national NUWSS. It presents a case-study of suffragists in the south-east England town of Tunbridge Wells in order to explore the diverse range of political reactions to the war that can be detected amongst activist women. The personal papers of some leading local suffragists in Tunbridge Wells, together with accounts in the local press, can be utilised to establish a relatively detailed assessment of individual women's political stances. Thus a micro-historical, local approach also reveals that pro- and anti-war women continued to co-operate together in war-related social work and that their local suffrage society organisation remained cohesive. Moreover, their political activism encompassed local, national and international issues: they were concerned about matters both 'home and away'.

Women's Suffrage in Tunbridge Wells

For decades the butt of jokes about reactionary colonels

signing letters with the epithet 'disgusted', the English spa town of Tunbridge Wells is now becoming the subject of some serious historical study. A series of publications commissioned and written by the Civic Society Local History Group have led the way, together with some academic work focused mainly on leading women of the town.⁶ A particular period of focus in recent work is the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the beginning of the twentieth century the town had grown far from its origins as an aristocratic inland resort, having undergone a phase of rapid expansion in Victorian times, when in common with other English spas, it became a popular choice of residence for retiring businessmen and servants of the Empire, both military and civil. The relative proximity of – and a regular train service to – London also enabled the late-Victorian town to develop as a domicile for wealthy commuters. Yet Tunbridge Wells retained something of its resort character, with many boarding-houses and hotels still in operation in the early twentieth century. The fact that the town was a relatively new one, built on the borders of two counties and three parishes and only receiving its first borough charter in 1889, meant that to some extent politics was fluid and civic institutions far from rigid. Moreover, while the average income of the area was no doubt relatively high, there were areas of the town where there was very poor housing and low living standards.

As a result of its development Tunbridge Wells had a distinctive demographic structure, in which probably the most remarkable feature was the high female to male ratio.⁷ This was largely, but not exclusively the product of the prevalence of domestic service: the town's wealthy residents needed an army of cooks, housemaids and nursemaids to look after them and their families. But a study of census returns suggests some other factors which contributed to the surplus of women residents over men. The town's genteel image, coupled with relatively modest living costs, seems to have attracted some all-female households of unmarried sisters, aunts and widowed mothers. Moreover, retiring colonial servants and army officers often postponed marriage until their (relatively) early retirement, whereupon they might marry younger women, who were likely to become widows in due course. These demographic factors contributed to Tunbridge Wells playing host to a highly active women's movement in the early twentieth century. In the county of Kent only one town had a larger women's suffrage society in 1913: the seaside resort of Ramsgate.⁸ Moreover, the town's women made a notable contribution towards the newly-formed Kent Federation of the NUWSS (which had a Tunbridge Wells woman, Gertrude Mosely as the 'Hon. Secretary') and they were at the forefront of the highly-successful suffrage 'Pilgrimage' demonstration of July 1913.⁹

Tunbridge Wells' suffrage movement was intimately connected to local philanthropic and social reform movements. In the 1890s the town was home to 'Madame' Sarah Grand, feminist and renowned author of 'New Woman' novels, and to Louisa Twining.¹⁰ The latter, pioneer of both workhouse visiting and nursing, was ostensibly retired, nevertheless she took on the duties of poor law guardian in her new home town for a period.¹¹ Wishing to retire once more, Twining looked

for a protégé, and chose an unmarried local woman in her mid-thirties, Amelia Scott. Granddaughter of a clergyman, Scott lived in an all-female household. Together with her sister, Louisa, she established a local branch of the women's philanthropic society, the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) in 1895 and set about an energetic programme of social reform, not only in her role as poor law guardian, but also in a range of new voluntary associations. Among the Scott sisters' enterprises were a 'Leisure Hour Club for Young Women in Business' established in 1900 and a women's lodging house, opened in a deprived district of Tunbridge Wells in 1913. It will be noted that many of the social changes Amelia Scott sought to bring about were connected to the betterment of the lives of women and children, so it was not a large step for her to support women's suffrage.¹²

Naturally the Scott sisters did not work on these initiatives alone. It has been possible to identify several women who participated in both social reform and suffrage movements of early twentieth century Tunbridge Wells.¹³ They belonged to a network of organisations, including charities, temperance societies, rescue and preventive societies, all with both national and local profiles. Where suffrage was concerned, Tunbridge Wells women were involved in all parts of a multi-faceted movement, including not only militants but also tax-resistors, non-militants and members of specialist groupings such as the Church League for Women's Suffrage. Four local women are on the Suffragette Roll of Honour, having served prison sentences in connection with suffrage demonstrations, but many more took part in the NUWSS's biggest peaceful demonstration, the suffrage 'Pilgrimage' of 1913.¹⁴ Undoubtedly the non-militant NUWSS was the most significant suffrage body in the town and it had a close relationship with the NUWW, with which it shared its local leadership. In addition to Amelia Scott and Sarah Grand, leading figures in the local NUWSS included Lady Matthews, wife of the former Chief Justice of the Bahamas, Lydia Le Lacheur, Guernsey-born widow of a leading City merchant, and Sarah Candler, a Quaker businesswoman. Each of these reacted politically in a different way to the war, yet they all continued to co-operate in furthering women's emancipation and the advance of social welfare in their home town.

The remainder of this article examines briefly each of these four women in turn, arranging them on a spectrum ranging from the most obviously pro-war to those with more ambiguous attitudes towards the conflict. The war-time activities of each woman are briefly outlined and the interaction between their suffrage and wartime politics is discussed.

Lady Matthews

Annette Matthews was forty-one when the war broke out. She was a relatively recent resident of Tunbridge Wells, having moved there after her marriage in 1910 to Sir John Bromhead Matthews, a retired colonial legal officer about eight years her senior. She had a strong political background: the daughter of a Leeds mayor and manufacturer and the half-sister of a Liberal MP,¹⁵ she had served as both a poor law guardian and as the Scarborough suffrage society secretary before her marriage.¹⁶ Despite having two children soon after she married, she was soon involved in Tunbridge Wells women's organisations, and she was listed as vice-president of



Lady Matthews, c. 1930, by kind permission of David Tate.

the town's large NUWSS branch in 1913. Matthews kept a war-time journal, written for her children who were too young to understand what was happening. She was fervently patriotic and strongly supported the war effort, recording the military situation in her journal, as well as repeatedly commenting on the price of food and the war's impact on domestic arrangements. When the war was not much more than a week old she and her 'household' were sewing garments 'for the poor' and on the 15 August 1914 she recorded that the suffrage society had been authorised by the mayor to collect clothing for women, children and convalescing soldiers.¹⁷ The suffrage society's office was immediately transformed into a clothing depot, supported by women across the political spectrum at a meeting during which, Matthews reported, 'the tone was grave'.¹⁸

Lady Matthews mentioned in her journal her performance of both individual and collective aspects of philanthropy during the war. She sent baby clothes to a Belgian mother and mended a soldier's torn coat as well as assisting (along with many other local women) in providing refreshments – including Christmas dinner – to the large numbers of troops stationed in Tunbridge Wells. She helped out at the suffrage society clothing depot and was also associated with a local VAD hospital. Together with her husband, she was heavily involved in military recruitment drives before the advent of conscription, supporting his public stance of 'inflexible determination to continue the struggle to a victorious end' by helping 'attest' recruits.¹⁹ But despite her obvious patriotism and support of the conflict, she expressed understandable qualms about modern warfare. In the wake of a visit to a Voluntary Aid Detachment hospital she had 'a sense of revolt' at what she called 'the unreasonableness of it all... Germans and English from the industrial classes have no

real desire to stick cold steel into each other, [and] already the origin of this war seems very remote...’, she commented. Yet she noted the nation’s determination to fight on ‘because of German brutality’ to Belgium.²⁰

Moreover, Matthews’ suffragist agenda was not displaced, overtaken or overshadowed but rather enhanced by war. In January 1916 she organised a meeting in Tunbridge Wells in support of Elsie Inglis’ Scottish Women’s Hospitals which, as McDermid discusses elsewhere in this journal, was closely connected to the NUWSS. Matthews reported that the assembly was ‘crowded to suffocation’. ‘These suffrage women, Doctors [and] Nurses, have done marvels of work in France & Serbia, [and] undoubtedly have gained the sympathy and admiration of everyone, whether for women’s franchise or not’, she commented.²¹ A few months earlier she had confided in her journal that ‘Our best blood is being spilt at the front, [yet] our women [are] still not admitted into the Nation’s Councils, their wisdom lost, [and] their experience unused... and the enemy hammering at our gates.’²² Thus repeatedly Matthews associated the themes of women’s emancipation, work and the war effort in a direct linkage. On another occasion in 1915 she expressed her deep frustration at the recruitment situation: ‘To a woman such as I am, a suffragist, who has tried to urge our Government to allow women the power of fulfilling their duties to the country... the thought that men must be cajoled... to serve their country...is repellent.’²³ Such a sentiment may have been inspired by her involvement (albeit limited) in the Women’s Volunteer Reserve (WVR) established by the most pro-war faction of the suffrage movement. The WVR was a controversial, quasi-military organisation which trained women for more active and arguably less gender-stereotyped wartime roles than the ubiquitous nursing and voluntary work.²⁴ For a seemingly conventional, conservative upper-middle class woman Matthews was perhaps surprisingly supportive of the subversion of traditional gender roles, remarking approvingly of women bus conductresses and even describing a strike for equal pay as ‘an epoch making event’.²⁵ However, her patriotic enthusiasm for winning the war may have trumped her feminism, as when she recorded the achievement of the vote, she chose to envisage women’s future on conventional, gendered lines. ‘The relief to us all is enormous. Now we can devote ourselves to our homelife [sic] because we are a recognised part of the nation even in that quiet sphere’, she remarked following the House of Commons vote in favour of suffrage, which had coincided with the birth of her third child.²⁶

Amelia Scott

Amelia Scott has left less direct evidence of her opinion of the rights and wrongs of warfare than Lady Matthews, so one has to infer rather more from her actions. Politically her actions suggest beliefs of a liberal persuasion, although she was associated with Christian Socialism as well as with the Liberal Women’s Suffrage Union.²⁷ When in 1919 she stood successfully for election to the local council, she fought under the non-party banner of the Women’s Citizens Association.²⁸ There is nothing to suggest that Scott was in any way opposed to the country’s involvement in the war, although after its end she expressed the relatively commonplace view that such a disaster for humanity should never be repeated. Scott’s godson, Hugh Chittenden was an officer in the Royal Sussex



Amelia Scott's election portrait, 1919. Image courtesy of Women's Library @LSE

regiment and the Royal Engineers, so she would have had a deep, personal interest in the war.²⁹ An Anglican, Scott had a sincere religious faith, but as already mentioned, she had a strong calling for social action, especially in relation to women and children.³⁰ Where others saw Tunbridge Wells as a prosperous, comfortable town, Scott noticed the pockets of poverty and bad housing and the consequent environmental dangers, especially for women and children.

Like so many other NUWSS members (alongside Lady Matthews, Amelia Scott was a NUWSS branch vice-president), her first war work was as part of an emergency local committee formed in October 1914 to aid Belgian refugees. Not only were the Scott sisters both on the committee (and Amelia on the executive) but they also donated £2 to the relief fund.³¹ The sisters must have played an important role in caring for the refugees as in July 1916 they were presented with a beautiful, hand-illustrated souvenir album as a ‘thank you’ from Tunbridge Wells’ Club Albert, the Belgian refugees’ union in the town. Moreover, Scott was later awarded a Golden Palm by the Belgian King.³²

Another innovation that the Scott sisters were closely associated with was the introduction of women’s police patrols early in the war. Scott had close links to the national leadership of the NUWW, which began to promote the use of women’s police patrols in the autumn of 1914. While this initiative was introduced across the country, the next innovation of the Scott sisters was more unusual. In 1915, together with local NUWW colleagues, they set up a laundry to wash and mend the clothing of soldiers billeted in the locality, apparently as a result of concerns raised by NUWW patrolwomen and the military authorities about ‘undesirable’ women hanging around army camps and offering to do washing. The Scott sisters’ roles were ‘hands on’: Amelia was the ‘hon. Manageress’ of the laundry and studied book-keeping specially in order to

undertake this role, while Louisa was one of the ladies in charge of the mending room.³³ Unemployed women were given paid work doing the washing and the profits returned to the patrols fund. Meanwhile, the Leisure Hour Club became the basis for a place where girls and soldiers could socialise in a safe, polite, supervised space, away from streets, pubs and other dangers. The NUWW branch also established soup kitchens for children in the poor areas of the town in 1917 when the price of food and shortages were hitting the inhabitants hard.³⁴

Throughout the war Scott kept up her interest in feminist and suffrage activities. Among her papers are handbills and pamphlets protesting at Regulation 40 D under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), which feminists regarded as the virtual re-enactment of the old Contagious Diseases legislation of the Victorian period. She was a regular presence at suffrage meetings and women's gatherings of all kinds. Locally, she remained an officer of the NUWSS branch, which continued to function throughout the war, despite members' energetic war work. In 1919 Scott was elected to the borough council and campaigned not only for the employment of women police but also for 'an up-to-date maternity clinic, maternity home, day nursery and hostel for children and mothers'.³⁵ In Scott's own words, the NUWW was 'not a feminist movement fighting for our own hand', rather it was 'a massed [sic] spiritual formation, to combat any forms of evil, whether by oppression, or through vice, or neglect, to any human being who is feeble, ignorant or poor'.³⁶ Scott's war work was thus inextricably connected with her religious views as well as her feminism and prioritisation of social action.

Lydia le Lacheur

While Lady Matthews and the Scott sisters were Anglicans, my final two examples were both non-conformists. Early twentieth-century Tunbridge Wells was dominated religiously by low-church Anglican congregations, but there were several, thriving non-conformist chapels in the area as well. Lydia le Lacheur was born in Guernsey in 1843 where she married John, only son of Guillaume le Lacheur, a sea captain who had established a profitable coffee business trading with Costa Rica. The family were committed Congregationalists and supported financially the building of chapels in Costa Rica and Tunbridge Wells as well as many other charities, including the Leisure Hour Club for young women.³⁷ They were very wealthy as well as socially important: John was Costa Rica's Consul-General, and his growing family settled into a grand dwelling in Tunbridge Wells' so-called 'millionaires' row' shortly before the 1881 census. Lydia gave birth to at least eleven children, eight of whom were girls. She was widowed in her early sixties, and became active in the Tunbridge Wells NUWSS. In 1913, now aged seventy, she was treasurer of the local NUWSS and frequently acted as 'hostess' for meetings and 'at homes'.³⁸ She also supported the Women's Tax Resistance League and several of her daughters were active suffragists/suffragettes.

Like the Scott sisters, the le Lacheur family were quickly involved in efforts to support Belgian refugees in Tunbridge Wells. Lydia and one of her daughters were members of the Mayor's emergency relief committee established in October 1914.³⁹ Historian Peter Cahalan, commenting on the reception of Belgian refugees, remarks that it was a rare issue that brought together people who were otherwise politically divided: across the spectrum from left to right could unite

in expressing sympathy with the 'poor' Belgians and offering them hospitality.⁴⁰ Regardless of where one stood on questions of warfare and international relations it was unthinkable not to feel horror and revulsion at the stories of German atrocities in Belgium, and it is important to remember that Liberal politicians such as David Lloyd George tended to 'sell' British involvement in the war as being motivated by solidarity with such a small but violated state. Therefore it is unsurprising that suffragists of all political persuasions worked together in offering practical assistance to the refugees.⁴¹

Cahalan also revealingly points out that the NUWSS played a pivotal role in offering assistance to the refugees nationally, being the first organisation to form relief committees. It is therefore not surprising to see leaders of the Tunbridge Wells branch playing such a vital role in offering asylum. In early October 1914 it was announced that the first group of refugees were to be received by le Lacheur – two full weeks before the Mayor's official committee was formed.⁴² As Cahalan comments the early phase of refugee reception had much in common with household management, thus 'women were the real driving force' of efforts.⁴³ Her hostess role was of course reminiscent of the part she had played in so many of the suffrage society 'at homes'.

After the initial show of unity around assisting refugees, by 1915 divisions were emerging among local – as well as national – NUWSS activists, between those who supported the continued prosecution of the war and those who wanted women of the world to unite for peace. In the summer of 1915, Percy Alden, a Quaker Liberal MP who worked for the Belgian Relief Committee in London, and had represented the British government as commissioner to the Belgian refugee camps in the Netherlands, visited Tunbridge Wells under the auspices of the Council for the Study of International Relations. Once again, le Lacheur performed a hostess role, when one of the meetings was held at her house.⁴⁴ It is likely that she was interested in the ideas Alden was propagating, which included the establishment of a supra-national peace-keeping body at the end of the war, but one can only speculate on where she stood on the big issues of war and peace. However, it is worth noting that alone among the women considered here she had family members in the forces. At least one of her sons was in the armed services, as was a son-in-law, who was killed at the Dardanelles.⁴⁵ Interestingly his wife, one of Lydia's suffragette daughters, later proclaimed her support for the Women's Peace Crusade.⁴⁶ Another daughter left money in her will to the Peace Pledge Union, so there is strong evidence of a family interest in the peace movement.⁴⁷

Sarah Candler

Like Lydia le Lacheur, Sarah Candler was a member of the non-conformist minority in Tunbridge Wells. She was actually a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), the religious group who are perhaps most associated with anti-war sentiment in First World War Britain.⁴⁸ Unlike the other women discussed here, Candler (born in 1857) was a businesswoman, the proprietor of a commercial steam laundry in partnership with her sister, Phyllis. The Candler sisters (including a third, Lucy) were also financial backers of the Leisure Hour Club.⁴⁹ Candler was a staunch Liberal, a strong supporter of the Women's Liberal Association, in which she argued for women's suffrage, and she was clearly a woman of principle: as late

as 1916 she had refused to pay rates in connection with her opposition to the 1902 Education Act.⁵⁰ Some of Candler's war work must have kept her in close association with Amelia Scott and she had a similar focus on the protection of young women. For example, at the 1918 Annual meeting of the Tunbridge Wells NUWW (the organisation which, under Scott's leadership, organised much of women's voluntary war work in the town) the 'Misses Candler' were thanked for their efforts for the Leisure Hour Club and the provision of canteens.⁵¹ As Lee points out elsewhere in this journal, Candler also volunteered for the NUWW women's police patrols.

But Candler's religious faith and peace politics took her into other activities. When Alden made a second visit to Tunbridge Wells in September 1915 he spoke to the Women's Liberal Association and study groups were formed to discuss international relations, one run by Candler herself.⁵² Like Alden himself, the debate over conscription in early 1916 found Candler placed in opposition to the government, and probably also many of her fellow women social activists. She emerged as one of the town's chief supporters of conscientious objectors, a highly controversial stance indeed. In 1916 she became president of the Tunbridge Wells and District Council against Conscription (the local branch of the No-Conscription Fellowship).⁵³ Later that year she found herself in trouble for claiming allegedly at a temperance meeting that soldiers were given rum to drink before they charged to 'arouse their animal passions'. Comparing soldiers to animals horrified the town's dignitaries and, while she insisted she had been misquoted in the press, Candler was forced to apologise for 'the anxiety and trouble which my words have caused'.⁵⁴ Candler's liberal principles were again on display at the war's end when she chaired a meeting of a local branch of the Council for Civil Liberties. Like Scott, she was highly critical of DORA.⁵⁵

Sarah Candler died in 1919, but it is worth noting that Tunbridge Wells' women's organisations, especially the National Council of Women (NCW, the renamed NUWW) strongly supported the League of Nations during the post-war period, and that her surviving sisters were members of the local Women's League for Peace and Freedom branch in the 1920s.⁵⁶

Concluding Analysis

Although somewhat fragmentary, the historical evidence explored above suggests that all four women remained committed to suffrage politics during the war, and in the case of Scott and Matthews, to feminist activism for years to come (Candler and Le Lacheur both died soon after the war). Moreover, the local NUWSS remained cohesive and continued to hold regular meetings in wartime, although its office was used as a collection point for charitable donations.⁵⁷ In terms of their political priorities, at least three of the four women featured in this article were vocal supporters of women police, an issue which united Matthews and Candler as much as conscription divided them. During the war years Matthews, Candler and Le Lacheur all displayed a good deal of interest in international relations, although their precise perspectives differed markedly. While welfare work was a field in which the featured women could clearly co-operate, they were nevertheless divided politically. Whereas before the war all four had broadly liberal politics, Lady Matthews left her brother's party and became a Conservative activist after 1918,

a move which took place in tandem with the electoral demise of the Liberal Party nationally.⁵⁸ Scott's relatively extensive archive does not contain any material on her views on foreign affairs, and as already mentioned she did not join any political party, but she was a pressure group activist at a national, as well as a local level, holding office from 1913 to 1930 as the secretary of the NCW Public Service Committee.⁵⁹ After the war Scott and Matthews continued to work together locally in the NCW, where the former was secretary and the latter president of the branch.

This examination of the war work of suffragists in Tunbridge Wells has attempted to demonstrate that if we look at suffrage, war, women's work and politics before, during and immediately after the First World War at a local level, we can appreciate a complex web of alliances among suffragists who continued to co-operate in welfare projects and feminist action, while diverging into separate paths over some political issues. At the start of the war the women came together, using their well-honed philanthropic skills to help refugees and provide soldiers with refreshments. However as the country moved towards conscription in 1915 and 1916 there appeared a more pronounced dividing line. Matthews and Candler were seemingly poles apart, the former was enthusiastic not only about getting men to join the fight but also determined that women should be allowed a military role, while the latter prioritised liberty of conscience and expressed public doubts about militarism and warfare. Yet there were still many objectives around which even these two women could unite, the necessity for women police patrols being a particularly obvious and concrete one, and the desire for the creation of a permanent peace being perhaps a less tangible example, since Matthews joined her suffragist colleagues in support of the idea of a League of Nations. Above all, they shared their desire for the franchise. As the war ended the Tunbridge Wells suffragists could come together again and celebrate not only the restoration of peace, but also the attainment of the vote, and were able to share their hopes for future international stability. Thus on general election day 1918, when women were able to cast their ballots for the first time, Matthews and Scott joined 'Madame' Sarah Grand in a 'procession of women electors, with artistic banners' from a local park to the Town Hall.⁶⁰

However differently they viewed political issues, all the women examined in this article took a lively interest not only in local and domestic issues, but also matters of national and international importance, at home and away. Their political engagement was a retort to anti-suffragists who had claimed that women's role should be confined to local and domestic issues. Matthews and Candler took different positions on the hugely controversial issue of conscription, but this did not negate or detract from their support for suffrage. Throughout the war the featured women maintained their interest in the vote, and importantly as the quotations from Matthews' diary above suggest – they were able to conceptualise war work as an integral aspect of the suffrage struggle. The campaign for the vote was therefore not abandoned when war broke out, but it simply moved into a different phase, adapting with the circumstances. We can see that at a local level there was no automatic subjugation of suffrage politics by wartime issues or by welfare work. Tunbridge Wells' suffrage society headquarters may have been temporarily turned into a depot for charity clothing collections, but the spirit of suffrage was

not closed down in its members' minds.

Notes

1. For example, Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us* (London, Virago Press, 1978), 252-3. See also Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement 1914-1959* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992).
2. Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days* (London, Routledge, 1996), 205-26; Nicoletta Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons": Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002); Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: the Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2007).
3. Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief 1914-1929* (Bern, Peter Lang, 2010), 20.
4. Holton, *Suffrage Days*, 216-7. However, as Vellacott points out, the roots of the split were to be found in the division between pre-war supporters and opponents of the Election Fighting Fund: Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*.
5. *Ibid.*
6. John Cunningham, ed, *The Shock of War: Tunbridge Wells Life on the Home Front, 1914-1919* (Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society, 2014); Anne Logan, "'Lady Bountiful' or Community Activist? Amelia Scott (1860-1952)", *Women's History Magazine*, 62 (2010), 11-18.
7. 'Inspiring Women: Edwardian Tunbridge Wells', [www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/ladystown/index.html, accessed 2 November 2014].
8. Women's Library (hereafter WL), 2/NWS, NUWSS Kentish Federation First Annual Report, 1913. Tunbridge Wells had 165 full members to Ramsgate's 191, but the former branch also had 278 'Friends', who were working-class supporters of suffrage.
9. *Ibid.* Mosely died during the war, and therefore is not featured in this article.
10. Jane Eldridge Miller, 'McFall, Frances Elizabeth Bellenden (1854-1943)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39086, accessed 2 Nov 2014].
11. Janet E. Grenier, 'Twining, Louisa (1820-1912)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004). [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38083, accessed 2 Nov 2014].
12. Logan, 'Lady Bountiful'.
13. See www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/biogs/index.html for a selection.
14. 'Inspiring Women: The Women's Suffrage Campaign', [www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/suffrage/index.html accessed 2 Nov 2014]
15. I am indebted to Lady Matthews' grandson, David Tate, for additional information about his family.
16. Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), 09/36/1, 'Notes for obituary'.
17. IWM 09/36/1, War Diary, 15 August 1914.
18. *Ibid.* 17 August 1914.
19. *Ibid.* Words of a resolution at a recruitment meeting addressed by Sir John Bromhead Matthews on a handbill for the meeting pasted into his wife's diary, 22 July 1915.
20. *Ibid.* 16 July 1916.
21. *Ibid.* 31 January 1916.
22. *Ibid.* 22 July 1915.
23. *Ibid.* 5 September 1915.
24. For the subversion of gender in the Great War, see Janet S. K. Watson, 'Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy's Sisters: Gender and Class in First World War Britain', *International History Review* 19/1, (1997) 32-51. For the WVR, see Krisztina Robert, 'Gender, Class and Patriotism: Women's Paramilitary Units in the First World War' *ibid.*, 52-65; Lucy Noakes, (2005) 'Eve in Khaki: Women Working with the British Military, 1915-18' in Krista Cowman and Louise Jackson eds *Women and Work Culture, Britain c. 1850-1950*, (Farnham, Ashgate, 2005), 213-28.
25. IWM 09/36/1, War Diary, 1 September 1918.
26. *Ibid.* 26 August 1917.
27. For the LWSU, see E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: a Reference Guide* (London, Routledge, 2000), 343. Scott's correspondence with the LWSU which she subscribed 1/- to dates from the first half of 1918. It was said to be 'practically no longer in existence' by its secretary, Margaret Hitchcock, later an official of the NFWI.
28. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 8 August 1919.
29. Harry Williams, 'Captain and Mrs HF Chittenden of Newlands School, Seaford', [www.whoisgeorgemills.com/2011/06/capt-mrs-h-f-chittenden-of-newlands.html, accessed 8 May 2015].
30. Logan, 'Lady Bountiful'.
31. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 16 October 1914.
32. The album and medal can both be found in the WL archive, 7ASC.
33. WL, 7/ASC/2/1/2 'Some War Work in Tunbridge Wells, May 1915-April 1918' (n.d.), 6-10.
34. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 8 February 1918.
35. WL, 7/ASC/3/2/1, election speech, c.1919.
36. *History of the National Council of Women in Tunbridge Wells for the Last 35 Years* (Tunbridge Wells NCW, 1931), 14-15.
37. 'Inspiring Women: Leisure Hour Club', [www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/workingwomen/leisurehourclub.html, accessed 2 November 2014].
38. 'Inspiring Women: The Le Lacheur Family', [www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/biogs/lelacheur.html, accessed 2 November 2014].
39. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 16 October 1914.
40. Peter Cahalan, 'The Treatment of Belgian Refugees in England during the Great War' (Unpublished thesis, McMaster University, Canada, 1977), 28.
41. Cahalan also refers to the importance of non-conformist communities in helping the refugees. *Ibid.* 173.
42. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 2 October 1914.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 30 July 1915. For Alden, see M. C. Curthoys and Tim Wales, 'Alden, Sir Percy (1865-1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39606, accessed 2 Nov 2014].
45. Edward le Lacheur had a temporary commission in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. See *The Times*, 22 September 1915.
46. *Women's Who's Who* (London, Shaw Publishing, 1934).
47. *The Times*, 8 October 1947.
48. See Thomas C. Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: a history of the No-Conscription Fellowship 1914-19* (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1981).
49. 'Inspiring Women: The Candler Sisters', [www.womenshistorykent.org/themes/biogs/candler.html, accessed 2 November 2014].

50. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 25 February 1916.
 51. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 25 January 1918.
 52. *Tunbridge Wells Advertiser*, 24 September 1915; 28 April 1916.
 53. *Ibid.* 25 February 1916.
 54. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 6 October 1916.
 55. *Ibid.* 15 November 1918.
 56. See, for example, question to election candidates from the NCW branch: 'Are you in favour of a League of Nations for the prevention of war and settlement of international disputes?'

- Kent and Sussex Courier*, 22 November 1918.
 57. *Ibid.* 14 December 1917.
 58. IWM, 09/36/1, 'Notes for obituary'.
 59. Anne Logan, *Feminism and Criminal Justice: a Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008), 26.
 60. *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 20 December 1918. Le Lacheur and Candler are not mentioned in this article, but they may have been present as only the names of the procession leaders were given.

'Quietly and without parade': women patrollers in South-East England during the First World War

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In October 1914, a resident of Chatham, home to one of Kent's largest military installations, wrote to the local newspaper deploring the:

large number of girls, the majority between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, who are permitted by their parents and mistresses to roam about and form acquaintances as they please. Without any thought of wrong, these girls go out of their way to attract the attention, and get into the company, of men in uniform, complete strangers to them, and apparently no-one warns them that their conduct may imperil their souls and bodies.¹

This reference to the phenomenon that came to be known as 'khaki fever', an epidemic that accompanied the movement of troops around the country in the early months of war, typifies the tone of contemporary discourse surrounding the topic. The arrival of thousands of uniformed men into a district attracted immediate general interest; in Tunbridge Wells on the Kent/Sussex border, for example, the announcement that the town had been selected as the temporary home of between five and six thousand territorials from the north of England and Scotland apparently rendered the local residents 'agog with excitement'.² Small crowds assembled in the vicinity of the railway station on the anticipated arrival day, said to be 'in a state of expectancy'. As Angela Woollacott has demonstrated, however, and as illustrated by the Chatham letter, this general interest very soon came to be understood and articulated specifically in gendered and sexual terms as an excitement uniquely characteristic of girls and young women.³

The letter-writer was, nevertheless, premature in the supposition that 'no-one warns' the girls of the peril to which they were commonly believed to be exposing themselves. Only two weeks prior to the letter's publication, delegates to the National Union of Women Workers' (NUWW) national conference, being held that year in Bristol, had voted to establish a Woman Patrol Committee to address the problem.⁴ Its objective was 'influencing and, if need be, restraining' the behaviour of the women and girls who were attracted to the vicinity of the camps being established across the country.⁵ The tipping point between influence and restraint, judging from the evidence, was contentious, variable, and provoked

considerable contemporary comment.

The inherent tension between feminist agency and women's roles in this regulation of other women's sexual conduct has generated much debate amongst historians such as John Carrier who famously employed the term 'poacher turned gamekeeper' in exploring the ambiguities involved.⁶ Others have similarly pointed to the seeming paradox that feminists should have taken such a prominent role in the surveillance and repression of women's moral behaviour. Lucy Bland has argued persuasively that the key to understanding this paradox lies in the ideology and language of social purity with which the women's movement challenged the sexual double standard.⁷ Philippa Levine, however, points to the breadth and diversity within the early twentieth-century women's movement to argue for the articulation of 'alternative voices' in addition to those of social purity.⁸ The NUWW patrols have usually been discussed and understood alongside the emergent Women Police Volunteers in the broader context of women's entry into policing employment. Indeed, Woollacott has argued that middle-class women made use of contemporary concern over khaki fever as an 'opportunity to claim authority to carry out "women's" policing'.⁹ The parallel development of the WPV (an enterprise of the Women's Freedom League) and the two groups' subsequent collaboration in a training school at Bristol has, however, often obscured their very different origins and stated motives. Alison Woodeson, however, reminds us that these were 'distinct and very different organisations'.¹⁰

These distinctions are most usefully appreciated from a close-up perspective and this article therefore takes a small-scale and local focus, placing the individual patrollers and their community networks at the heart of the enquiry, contributing to a more nuanced understanding, both of individual women's motivations and of local difference. It uncovers the involvement of a small number of the women who made up the grassroots membership of the patrol movement in the south-east of England and locates their patrol work in the context of their local networks, affiliations and previous and subsequent political, civic and philanthropic activities.

Khaki fever and its remedy

In the early years of war volunteers poured into the South-East and to its military installations for training prior

to being sent to the front. In an example of what *The Times* described as the 'quartering of masses of troops on many towns', Tunbridge Wells became one of the area's 'tented cities' almost immediately.¹¹ 'Never', the local newspaper pronounced, 'in the history of the borough, has the military proportion of the population been so heavy; the interest and excitement aroused by the visit is natural'.¹² The skating rink, public halls, parish rooms and numerous uninhabited private houses were commandeered as billets and eventually soldiers were also encamped on the common. At the other end of the county of Kent, thousands of recruits to the cavalry regiments were similarly arriving at the Canterbury barracks, more quickly, apparently, than they could be supplied with uniforms.¹³ Open spaces such as the cattle market, Dane John Gardens and the St. Lawrence cricket ground were taken over by the military and recruits were additionally billeted with householders all over the city.¹⁴ One of these so-called 'rookies' wrote of being housed in one of the backstreets with a kindly landlady who, 'for a consideration, cooks and generally looks after us'.¹⁵ Comparable scenes were taking place in Hastings on the south coast. Six thousand troops arrived in a single day in December 1914 and, on their first evening, there were 'soldiers to be seen everywhere' including in the theatre and picture palaces.¹⁶ As in Tunbridge Wells, the novelty of their presence drew crowds of spectators, particularly as the troops carried out drills in the main streets and squares.

Under these circumstances, reports of the 'giddy' behaviour of young women in areas where troops were stationed began to fill the press and outbreaks of 'khaki fever' were immediately reported. It was said that in Tunbridge Wells, on the nights when drafts left for the front the local girls were seen to march 'in the ranks with their arms round the men'.¹⁷ In another district the problem was felt to be sufficiently serious for the military authorities to have considered taking the men out on route marches from eight o'clock until midnight to keep them occupied.¹⁸

The NUWW (later the National Council for Women), as has been seen, passed a resolution at its national conference to establish a Woman Patrol section. Founded in 1895, the

organisation had initially directed its philanthropic efforts to three principal areas: girls' clubs, preventative and rescue work, and the welfare of working women. On the declaration of war, these three areas neatly coalesced into patrolling for the professed purpose of safeguarding young women against the perceived dangers posed by soldiers. The organisation's 1914/15 Annual Report noted that, in the patrol movement, it had reverted 'to its original object to befriend young girls'.¹⁹ Having obtained the official sanction of the Home Secretary and of the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the NUWW patrols took to the streets almost immediately in the early months of war. Volunteer branch members undertook to patrol in their locality at least twice a week, for two hours at a time in the evenings, always in twos. In Folkestone, for example, patrolling was carried out on two beats, each of which was patrolled twice every night, and each individual patroller undertook two patrols per week.²⁰ They wore no uniform except an armlet with a small shield with the initials NUWW, and carried a card signed by the local chief constable testifying to their authority. They were trained in their duties by organisers from London, who visited for two weeks free of charge in return for hospitality.²¹ By the end of December *The Times* was able to report that the movement had been commended for its good work by police and military authorities. The value of the patrollers, it was reported, was that they acted 'quietly, and without parade'.²² Their strategy, according to an organiser in Surrey, consisted of the 'patrolling of secluded spots and the quiet word to girls loitering about the places where soldiers are to be met'.²³ The 'quiet word' and 'quiet but efficient watch' are common themes in NUWW accounts.²⁴ The organisation hoped that the patrol movement would have the additional benefit of 'opening up fresh awareness of the usefulness of women'.²⁵

It is evident from local sources, though often obscured by top-down accounts, that individual NUWW patrollers tended already to be involved in local networks of charitable, political and civic activism. A process of nominal record linkage, the tracing of named individuals over time between sources, allows a picture of the women's pre- and post-war



'Troops encamped on Tunbridge Wells Common, 1914'.

Credit: Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

activities to be constructed, thus providing a fuller context for understanding their war-time patrolling. Individuals' positioning within local networks of activism varied from location to location and was influenced by personal and wider local circumstances.

The Tunbridge Wells branch of the NUWW, one of only two in Kent, was quick to respond to its parent organisation's calls for members to become involved in voluntary patrolling as a response to exceptional war-time conditions. Thanks to the private papers of Amelia Scott, Tunbridge Wells NUWW secretary, the names of the first thirty-three volunteers who took to the streets for the first time in October 1914 have, unusually, been recorded.²⁶ Their stated aim was to 'make friends with the young and excited girls', to persuade them away from the streets at night and so protect them from the perceived moral dangers represented by the soldiers.²⁷ Many of the women had had a wide range of political, civic and philanthropic organising experience prior to taking on their patrolling roles. In the years before the war, when Tunbridge Wells had witnessed an exceptionally active women's movement many individuals were involved in networks of political and philanthropic activity.²⁸ They included Sarah Candler who was one of the proprietors of the Woodlands Laundry. Candler was a Quaker, treasurer of the Tunbridge Wells Women's Liberal Association and member of the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union.²⁹ She had given the vote of thanks at the meeting at which the LWSU pledged not to work for any Liberal candidate who did not support the cause of women's suffrage.³⁰ She was described as one of 'a wonderful trio of sisters' by war-time conscientious objector George Dutch in his memoirs and her allegiance to this cause was borne out when she later became president of the Tunbridge Wells and District Council against Conscription.³¹ Fellow patrollers included Ethel Beecroft, the daughter of a local JP, who was associated with the Wesleyan Sunday School, and Margaret Fenn, joint secretary of the local branch of the Christian Social Union, who each achieved the distinction of patrolling throughout the entire period of the war and were decorated afterwards for their service.³² Another, Catherine Plowright, became the secretary of the local branch of the League of Nations Union after the war.³³ Margaret (Daisy) Masterman, sister of the Liberal MP Charles Masterman, head

of the War Propaganda Bureau, was chair of the Tunbridge Wells Women's Liberal Association.³⁴ She was joint secretary, with Fenn, of the local branch of the Christian Social Union and she helped, in 1925, organise a regional Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship (COPEC).³⁵ She was involved locally with the Domestic Service Committee, the YWCA and the St John's Girls' Club.³⁶ In the early 1900s she had assisted her brother in running holidays for disadvantaged children for the Children's Country Holiday Fund.³⁷ These women, who reflect a wide spectrum of political, religious and philanthropic backgrounds, did not, however, see themselves as substitutes for women police officers. The NUWW branch was vociferous and tireless in pressing the Watch Committee to appoint paid women police officers and when, in May 1918, the Tunbridge Wells Watch Committee finally made the decision to do so, the NUWW patrollers pledged to work 'in perfect harmony' with them.³⁸

In contrast, in Canterbury, with no existing NUWW branch to act as a catalyst for forming a local patrol committee, the initiative had originated with the chief constable of the city police.³⁹ The clergy had been asked to nominate appropriate members of their congregations who might wish to become involved, thus the movement had moral and public order associations from the outset. The Canterbury patrol was smaller in number than in Tunbridge Wells and was led by 42 year-old Leila Prentice, wife of a local doctor and police surgeon. Prentice had been involved in fund-raising for the local Women's Social and Political Union branch and was also active in raising funds for the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, where her husband was employed, and for the French relief fund.⁴⁰ Significantly, in the context of her interest in women's patrol work, she was also active in the local branch of the NSPCC.⁴¹ In 1918 Prentice became the first chairwoman of the newly-formed Canterbury branch of the Women's Citizens' Association; she went on to become the first woman to be elected to the city council and subsequently served on the Canterbury District Education Committee.⁴² Her deputy patrol leader, Lucy Wells, was also secretary to the local branch of the NSPCC and was one of the other first women elected to Canterbury City Council in 1919.⁴³ Their fellow patroller Dorothy Gardiner, wife of Canon Thory Gardiner, the chaplain



*'Volunteers leaving Tunbridge Wells, August 1914'.
Credit: Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society*

to the Archbishop of Canterbury, joined when the couple moved to Canterbury in 1917. She later spoke at the meeting to establish the local WCA branch and was the third of the three women elected to the city council in 1919. Like Prentice, Gardiner went on to sit on the Canterbury District Education Committee.

Across the county border in Hastings, NUWW patrols were not established until the spring of 1917. They were the initiative of poor law guardian Isabel Dymond, were led by Mrs. Stewart Murray and included Alice Ellman and Mabel Underdown, who undertook the duties of committee secretary.⁴⁴ Ellman was active in the Primrose League (a broad-based and popular Conservative organisation) and was secretary of its Hastings and St. Leonards habitation for 26 years.⁴⁵ Underdown was secretary to the Hastings and St. Leonards and East Sussex Women's Suffrage Society, secretary and treasurer of the Tackleway Girls' Training Home and treasurer of the war-time campaign to fund a hospital bed in Salonica.⁴⁶ She was later to sit on the Hastings and Bexhill Advisory Committee for Juvenile Unemployment alongside Ruth Kenyon, justice of the peace and candidate for the council seat of the St. Helens' ward.⁴⁷

The partial reconstruction of these local network systems is facilitated by the mass digitisation of local newspapers, which allows nominal searches and a process of nominal record linkage. This methodology helps highlight the social contexts in which the women's roles as patrollers can be better understood, thus leading to a more nuanced interpretation of motivation than those offered by the repression/emancipation or the care/protection dichotomies. Many of the women had feminist and women's suffrage leanings, implicitly through their membership of the NUWW and, in some cases, more explicitly through a record of suffrage activism. Others had forged networks through a range of political, civic, religious and philanthropic activism that constituted the immediate social context for their work as patrollers. Further light is often cast by their post-war activism and their responses to the call to citizenship represented by the partial enfranchisement of 1918. Whether war-work as patrollers was a reflection of, or an inspiration for their drive for public service is, however, less clear.

The ambivalent nature of the relationship between the NUWW Women Patrols and rescue and preventative work reflects both the tensions surrounding feminism (as discussed earlier), as well as local variation. Philippa Levine has argued that the NUWW leadership was eager to distance its patrol branch from rescue work as a means of throwing off the association with philanthropy.⁴⁸ Any such distancing is, however, more beneficially understood in terms of the NUWW's articulation of its core mission to work with young girls (those 'hanging about idly') whom it saw as its client group, as distinct from so-called 'fallen' women, who were not. In the words of one of its spokeswomen, the aim was 'not to rescue the fallen but to prevent the ignorant from falling'.⁴⁹

An integral part of this aspect of the organisation's work was the provision of recreational facilities as an alternative to the street, which locates the NUWW patrols at the social work, rather than criminal justice, end of the regulation and control spectrum. It is in the discourse surrounding the local campaigns to establish clubs and recreational facilities that expressions of the philanthropic motivations for patrol work are to be found. Echoing their leader Louise Creighton, whose

observation that, whilst the young could not be kept from the streets, the streets should certainly be made safe for them, local workers often pointed to the lack of recreational provision for young women.⁵⁰ In promoting the cause for the girls' club set up in Tunbridge Wells, Margaret Emson the Mayoress expressed similar sentiments to Creighton's in stating that: 'There is no counter-attraction to "Tommy", nor is it desirable that there should be; but there is, and should be, a counter-attraction to the streets at night for our young girls'.⁵¹ The realities of life for many young working women, as an officer from the Girls Patriotic Clubs observed, were that they lived away from home and usually had only a bedroom to call their own. Their only amusement was to 'walk up the street and down the street'.⁵² The clubs encouraged members to invite soldier guests since, as Jessie Heesom, patrol organiser in Redhill, explained, 'No sane twentieth century social worker would endeavour to keep girls and men apart'.⁵³ In Hastings, 'The Open Door' club was opened only in the aftermath of war, reflecting the recognition that there was a need to maintain the resource in peacetime. Girls were allowed to invite men friends on Sunday because, otherwise, 'the streets constituted the only meeting place for a large proportion of the girls and young men of the town'.⁵⁴

A final but important aspect of NUWW patrolling that is obscured when viewed from the perspective of women's long-term entry into formal policing is that it was promoted very much as an aspect of war work and as an opportunity for women to contribute to the war effort on the home front. Mrs James Gow of the NUWW, at Folkestone to promote patrol work and recruit patrollers in 1915, spoke of 'patriotic war work' and when the Redhill and Reigate branch of the NUWSS reported on its war work initiatives, patrolling was mentioned in the same sentence as invalid kitchens and the care of Belgian refugees.⁵⁵ By 1918 the Tunbridge Wells patrol organiser, Violet Harris, was being afforded the title 'patriotic organiser' and local patrol committees were each invited to send two representatives to the garden party thrown by the King and Queen at Buckingham palace in 1919 to acknowledge the contribution of some 10,000 war workers.⁵⁶

In drawing tentative conclusions from the evidence of this small-scale investigation, Driver and Samuel's comments about local history's ability to 'de-centre orthodox histories, offering a view of the past ... radically distinct from the view at the centre [and] highlight the distance between established versions of national, public history, and its local others, celebrating the heterogeneous, the obscure, the irrational, the private' comes to mind.⁵⁷ These women's wider networks and records of philanthropic, civic and political activism suggest that their interest in women's and girls' welfare work is best viewed as an expression of their sense of citizenship. The discourse through which their aims were articulated locates their project in the field of emergent youth work and social work, shaped by the exceptional conditions of wartime. For these women, patrolling appears to have been one additional aspect of their commitment to local activism, and to have represented a contribution to the war effort on the home front, rather than a first step on the road to a career in policing. This local and small-scale focus highlights the heterogeneity of the women patrollers and offers an alternative view of their place in women's history.

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21. *Dover Express and East Kent News*, 4 May 1917.
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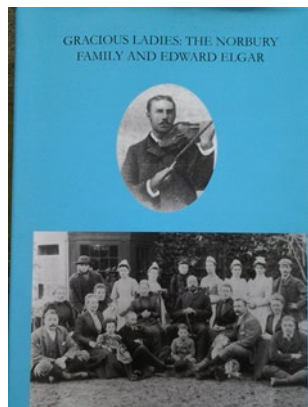
Book Reviews

Kevin Allen, *Gracious Ladies: The Norbury Family and Edward Elgar. A Chronicle with Documents. Volume One: Genius Has Its Own Rank*

Alverstoke, Hampshire: Kevin Allen, 2013. £25, ISBN 978-0-9531227-6-9 (hardback), pp.v + 957

Reviewed by Cheryl Law

Independent Scholar



Evidently consumed with a passion for the mystery that surrounded the English composer Edward Elgar (1857-1934), Kevin Allen has published extensively on Elgar's life and music. In his lifetime, many stories circulated about the women, known and rumoured, in Elgar's life, and for our purposes it is significant that Allen features the lives of the women in the Norbury family

and their social circle. This 957-page tome is the first volume of *Gracious Ladies*; the second part will provide the index for both volumes, a distinct disadvantage when trying to negotiate this first convoluted volume. The book is self-published and follows the tradition of subscription publishing that originated in the 18th century that may partly account for its lavish size, and the generous number of photographs. Self-publishing also affords Allen the freedom to abandon the constraints, but also the discipline, of length, usually dictated by publisher and editor.

Allen does not explain in this volume that the primary link between Elgar and the Norbury family lies in the initials 'W.N.' that Elgar attached to the eighth of his fourteen *Variations for Orchestra Op.36*, more famously known as the *Enigma Variations*, which referred to Winifred Norbury. Each of the fourteen *Variations* were named for Elgar's wife, his friends and lastly, himself. Allen does recount that Elgar wrote that Winifred's family home, Sherridge, had 'suggested' this particular Variation. Allen sets out to document a biography of the Norbury family from the marriage of Gertrude and Thomas Norbury in 1828 through the birth and childhood of their five daughters and three sons, whilst paralleling the childhood of the young Edward Elgar until he made incursions into the Norbury household's orbit. Using this structure, Allen is able to weave the separate social spheres using music as the sustaining thread. Elgar apart, this book stands as a painstakingly researched and recorded account of the social history of a Victorian upper middle-class family. It also contributes to the history of women's participation in regional music making during this period; for whilst ranked as 'amateurs', the dedication, knowledge and proficiency of the women included here seems impressive. Much of the book consists of substantial extracts from the letters and diaries of the massive archive of the Norbury family, apparently an under-researched source for middle-class women's social and domestic history.

Allen sketches a portrait of Gertrude Norbury as a somewhat enlightened matriarch, ensuring that her children

enjoyed regular musical experiences, attending the concerts of Worcester's Three Choirs Festival, as well as the Cathedral's offerings. Significantly, she also allowed her daughters greater physical freedom than was the norm, and they sometimes accompanied their mother on London visits to their Aunt Fanny (Frances-Arabella O'Grady) who was to become a suffragette. Yet the two central figures in the narrative, Winifred (1861-1938) and Florence (b.1858), were to eschew radicalism, although they were politically active for the Conservative party in the 1885 and subsequent elections. Education was a priority for Gertrude's daughters. At fifteen, Winifred took part in her first public concert, singing and playing the piano, a prelude to 'the beginning of a lifetime of all kinds of music-making...and service to music in her community' (p.254). As a violin teacher, composer and conductor at local events, Elgar drifts in and out of the Norbury narrative. But his presence increases in relation to his success when the author traces the Norbury women's lives and Elgar's in parallel, until by 1897 with Elgar's success, they conjoin.

Whatever letters, diaries, autobiographies and newspapers Allen investigates, the minutiae of his characters' lives is picked over and laid before us as a continuous narrative, without the benefit of either selection or prioritisation in relation to its contribution to the central subject. Dental difficulties and dead ducks receive as much attention as an Elgar composition. A reader might feel the need to be one of the Norbury leisured ladies to possess sufficient time for Allen's peregrinations. Immersion may have been Allen's intention, but without an introduction to delineate his purpose, it is difficult to judge, although the title is *A Chronicle*. The reader is left to isolate the material of interest and use, such as the focus on the 1896 bicycling craze taken up so fervently by the Norbury sisters and their circle. Also, recounting every step in Elgar's career does inculcate an appreciation of what a protracted and soul-sapping journey his rise to success was, as well as an understanding of how the barrier of his lower class denied him swifter recognition and access to essential social connections such as the Norbury family. For although Winifred and Elgar moved in the same musical circles for many years, and Winifred had 'taken tea' with his wife who was from a higher rank, by the end of this considerable volume they seem not to have been 'introduced'. In the style of the best serials, we are left to anticipate this connection, as Volume I concludes with a group of influential county ladies instigating a new Musical Society and deciding to invite Edward Elgar to be its conductor. To be continued...

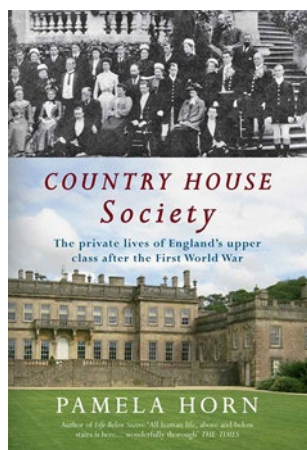
Pamela Horn, *Country House Society: the Private Lives of England's Upper Class after the First World War*

Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013. £20, ISBN 978-1-4456-0318-6 (hardback) pp. 254

Reviewed by Maggie Andrews

University of Worcester

The First World War affected the upper classes in a number of significant ways. Many of their sons joined the armed forces, and as officers leading their men into battle suffered



injury and death. Many women involved themselves in charitable work and turned their homes into convalescent hospitals. This social group's attempt to reconstruct their lives in the post-war world has been the focus of a range of literary and media outputs, most recently *Downton Abbey* (2013-14). Pamela Horn's well-researched, accessible and thoughtful exploration of this area of twentieth century social history is both timely and an interesting read, which I

thoroughly recommend.

Beginning with a discussion of some of the consequences of the war for the upper classes, the book discusses its initial aftermath and the conflict's influence on sporting activities and past-times, domestic affairs, social rituals and even the antics of those 'Bright Young People' whose lives in the 1920s were focussed primarily on pleasure-seeking fun. There are some familiar narratives included here: flappers, jazz clubs, scavenger hunts, and wealthy men and women enjoying themselves by undertaking a range of activities, such as running canteens and snipping railway tickets during the General Strike.

This book also uncovers less familiar histories, including a range of strategies that men and women engaged in to cope with financial crises caused by death duties, economic depression, the fall in rental income of rural estates and stock market crashes. A new cost-consciousness entered the housekeeping arrangements of many country houses while some wealthy women displayed genuine ingenuity when faced with the need to earn an income. Lady Diana Cooper was paid to endorse cosmetics; Nancy Mitford took up journalism; Lady Victor Paget ran an 'intimate shop' in Grafton Street; Syrie Maugham and Lady Colfax took up interior designing. Thus trade, as Pamela Horn argues, was brought into society in a number of ways.

There is a tendency for the text to be rather urban based - despite the title - and it is strongest on the countryside in the chapter entitled 'Community Responsibility and Sporting Pursuits'. This charts the roles wealthy families were expected to play within the counties, taking on ceremonial roles, supporting charities and developing organisations. Lady Trevelyan, for example, was involved in the development of the Women's Institute in Northumberland whilst Lord Crawford was particularly active in the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Many of the featured aristocrats, predictably perhaps, spent a significant amount of their leisure engaged in hunting and shooting in the UK and beyond.

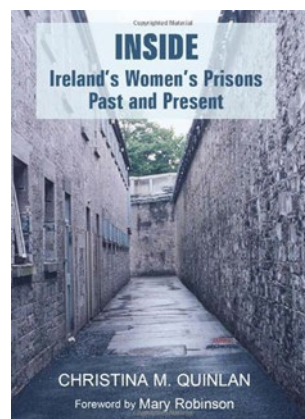
At times, perhaps because of the book's attempt at covering such a wealth of material concisely, there is a tendency to reproduce some of the familiar tropes of histories of the First World War, such as the 'conspiracy of silence' by those who returned from the front and the shortage of servants (despite this remaining the highest employer of women in wartime). Nevertheless it is a well-researched and thorough book which in focusing on the wealthy has the inevitable drawback of excluding other social groups and the complexity of power relations between the classes. Pamela Horn's many

other books, written throughout her long and distinguished career, have however already shed much light on some of these areas.

Christina Quinlan, *Inside Ireland's Women's Prisons, Past and Present*

Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2010. £45, ISBN 978 0 7165 3046 6 (hardback), pp xiv +272.

Reviewed by Anne Logan
University of Kent



Quinlan's work, really a hybrid of history and sociology/criminology eschews the usual approach of a short 'history' chapter as a brief prelude to a lengthy discussion of contemporary issues. Instead, her 'historical perspective' chapter occupies a mighty sixty pages at the start of the book.

This attention to the historical background is not only praiseworthy, it is central to her thesis concerning continuity in

the impact of imprisonment upon women in Ireland. Quinlan points out that in the past and in the present the Irish prison system plays host predominantly to women who are poor, vulnerable, marginalised in society, frequently with problems of addiction, and who have been convicted overwhelmingly of petty offences related to their low status in society. Yet imprisoned women do not lack agency: as Quinlan points out (p.35), prison could in fact be a survival strategy for such women.

Particularly satisfying to the reader with historical interests, is that Quinlan pays sufficient attention to the twentieth century in her survey of Ireland's past imprisonment of women, rather than jumping from the Victorian era to the 1980s as some other texts do. The statistical trends are covered, namely a drop in the proportion of the Irish prison population who were women from one-third in 1914-15 to just 16 per cent by 1950 (p.46), within a prison system that was contracting overall. However Quinlan does mention that prisons were not the only site of confinement for Irish women in the twentieth century, as the so-called 'Magdalen homes' continued to operate until the 1970s and women were also detained in lunatic asylums and lock hospitals. These institutions were, she argues, all part of 'Ireland's peculiarly female carceral archipelago' (p. 66) which was designed to confine and discipline women. Quinlan concludes her historical survey with an examination of the upswing in prison numbers since the 1980s (associated with drug offences) and the opening of the Dublin's new women's jail, the Dóchas Centre, within Mountjoy prison in 1999. She argues that 'women's experiences of prison in Ireland were and are patriarchal' (p. 66).

The remainder of the book is devoted to a range of contemporary perspectives on women's imprisonment in Ireland. Chapter Three focuses to an extent on press discourses about the subject, while Chapter Four is entitled

'the Women's Perspectives'. Quinlan has undertaken some interesting interviews with incarcerated women, but she also draws extensively on work from other scholars, sometimes for comparative purposes, and sometimes for theoretical support. These include – in no particular order – Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Pierre Bourdieu, David Garland, Pat Carlen, Anne Worrall, and Mary Bosworth. There is even a chapter (Chapter Five) devoted entirely to 'the Scholar's Perspective'. I felt that the book got a little less interesting at this point and began to resemble a doctoral thesis for which various supervisors had insisted that a particular theorist should be discussed. However, the next chapter, 'Space and Identity in the Women's Prisons' once again contained stimulating and original material, including some photographs of women prisoners' cells and rooms.

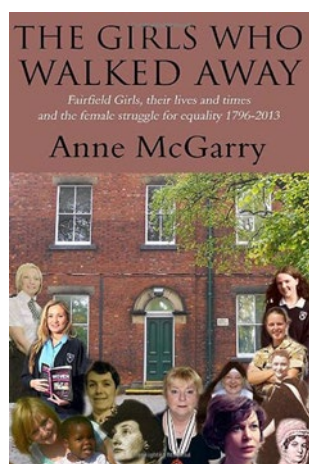
Overall, this is an interesting book on a relatively neglected subject. The parallels with research findings on the experiences of women in the jails of England and Wales were obvious to anyone who has investigated this subject – past or present. For me, as a historian, rather than a sociologist, the book was perhaps a little too heavy on the theory side. Moreover, while the theories were often outlined in some detail, they were rarely critiqued. However, the history chapter and the material from the author's own ethnographic research provide a revealing picture of the lives of women 'inside', and support the author's contention regarding the continuity between past and present.

Anne McGarry, *The Girls who Walked Away. Fairfield girls: their lives and times and the female struggle for equality*

Leicestershire: Matador, 2014. ISBN 978-1783062-546, pp. xiv + 248

Reviewed by Michele Cohen

Richmond University, London



Not many girls' schools – unlike boys' – can boast to have been established over two hundred years ago. Fairfield High School for Girls is one, and *The Girls who Walked Away* is its story and that of its pupils' journey towards educational, social and economic equality since 1796. The book is structured chronologically, with ten chapters each focusing on a specific historical period. McGarry is careful to frame her narrative within both the history

of the times and the opinions of a few contemporary women who helped change society's perspective on female education – from Wollstonecraft to Emily Davies. As its title indicates, the book's main aim is to describe how Fairfield girls contributed to the struggle for women's equality after they left the school. However, because of the scarce data about leavers until the school was taken over by the Lancashire Education Committee in 1919, the narrative about the earlier years focuses largely on information about the school's organisation, curricula,

discipline and occasionally relations between teachers and pupils.

Fairfield Girls' Boarding school was set up in 1796 by group of deeply religious people belonging to the Moravian Church, who had established a Settlement they named Fairfield in Droylsden, a small village east of Manchester. Because of Moravians' long standing commitment to education – the 'Father of Modern Education', Amos Comenius, was a Moravian (p.8) – the school offered a 'serious' curriculum: 'not only basic reading, writing and arithmetic but also literature, geography, history, French and German' as well as music (p. 11). Plain clothing was a requirement, and the school discipline was strict, mirroring that of Moravian homes. The first role models for the girls were Moravian missionaries who travelled all over the world, like Mary Smith who attended Fairfield in the early nineteenth century and 'spent fifty years in Africa' supporting her missionary husband (p. 15).

Starting with seven boarders (p. 9) in 1796, by the 1840s, the school had expanded to fifty boarders and twenty day pupils, all drawn from well-off families as the fees now cost at least £40 per year (pp. 34-5). By then, the curriculum, though still serious, placed greater emphasis on 'accomplishments' in line with other girls' schools in the second half of the 19th century. By then too, both teachers and pupils came from widely different parts not just within the United Kingdom but of the world, in part because Moravian missionary parents sent their children home to English Moravian schools to be educated. In 1903, three Fairfield girls entered Manchester University, attesting to the continuing excellence of the school's educational standards.

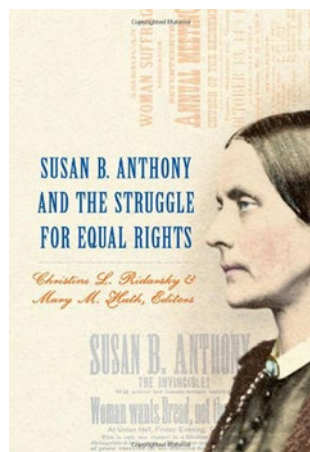
The twentieth century saw the most radical changes to the school. In 1919, after the Lancashire Education Committee took over it started providing up to twenty five per cent of free places. The original religious school motto 'Our Lamb has conquered let us follow him' was replaced by a more secular 'The Utmost for the Highest' (p. 85); in the 1960s, the school was no longer connected to the Moravian Church (p. 184); and finally the first male Headteacher was appointed in 1990. No reasons are given for any of these changes nor are any of their implications discussed. On the other hand, by the twentieth century, the book shifts increasingly to biographies of the numerous Fairfield girls who contributed to two war efforts and achieved successful careers in the public world, thus actively promoting the struggle for equality.

The Girls who Walked Away does not address female inequality and education critically. It presents a variety of comments and opinions but not the arguments constituting the powerful debates about girls' nature and education rampant throughout the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries. Since McGarry's (unsupported) claim is that the education at Fairfield was superior to that in other girls' schools (pp. 11, 34), some attempt to analyse how Fairfield dealt with these debates would have been interesting. Essentially, the book's aim is to map change over time, not to explain it, and Fairfield pupils' biographies stand as sufficient testimonies of the power of its education in their struggle for equality. McGarry's extensive research in the archives of the Moravian Church and in the school's own small archive provides fascinating detail about early schooling for girls. Her use of diaries and oral histories from pupils themselves, such as Harriet Ford, a day pupil at the school in 1861, who wrote to the school when aged 93, in 1946, comparing school life when she was a girl to that of the

present day (p. 42-3), produce a lively narrative. As such, it is a useful contribution to the history of girls' education.

Christine L. Ridarsky and Mary M. Huth, editors,
Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights
Suffolk and New York: Boydell and Brewer
Limited and University of Rochester Press, 2012,
£50.00, ISBN-13: 978-1-58046-425-3 (hardback),
p.p. x + 245

Reviewed by Jocelynn A. Scutt
University of Buckingham



Albeit the title of this book places Susan B. Anthony centre stage, *Susan B. Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights* is not limited to this indefatigable Women's Movement activist's work. Rather, it features Anthony alongside contemporary campaigners, particularly her close confederates Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joselyn Gage. Neither is it hagiography: it allows for exploration of differences between Anthony and her fellow activists, some of

whom she disagreed with perennially, others (particularly Joslyn Gage) confirming women's capacity for working together despite disagreement. Controversy and arguments for women's rights and the forces ranged against this struggle for justice over the period of Anthony's engagement are well-covered. Anthony lived long, her entire life bound up in the notion that women's rights are human rights, rendering women's entitlements to dignity, respect and rights immutable.

Five sections, 'Constructing Memory', 'Anthony and Her Allies', 'Broadening the Boundaries of the Equal Rights Struggle' and 'Reconstructing Memory', comprise *Susan B. Anthony*. Nine contributors are historians, the tenth being associate professor of English with expertise in American literature, women's studies, and Native American literature. Their collective scholarship is testament to the broad reach of the American Women's Movement over Anthony's lifetime. Far from being a 'middle-class' movement – as too often asserted by those having no grasp of the evidence – women campaigners crossed class, racial, ethnic and age lines, and women's campaigns for rights, including suffrage, incorporated demands for the eradication of slavery and liberation of women from discrimination based in birth.

Some chapters of the book concentrate on Anthony, whilst others set her at the margins. This is so, for example, in Laura F. Free's chapter - "'To Bury the Black Man and the Woman in the Citizen'" which extracts Stanton's 1867 New York Convention speeches - Anthony's participation gains passing reference only. Some, such as Kathi Kern's "'I Pray with My Work'" underscore philosophical differences, in this instance between Stanton, a secularist, and Anthony, true to her Quaker roots. Some, such as 'Frances Watkins Harper and the Search for Women's Interracial Alliances', attest to divisions in strategy - Alison M. Parker reflects upon Stanton,

Anthony and NWSA's opposition to the 15th Amendment as promoting black male rights to the exclusion of women's rights, in contrast to African American activist Harper's belief that her citizenship rights encompassed not only women's rights, but were bound up in the African American men's struggle, too. Further chapters cover conflict, confluence and contradiction relative to suffragists and the 'Indian Problem' (Melissa Ryan), and women's rights campaigners and the Labor Question (Tara M. McCarthy).

The collection emanates from a University of Rochester conference held under the book's title in 2006 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Anthony's death. Often, conference collections can suffer from variation in scholarship or lack of cohesiveness. *Susan B. Anthony* suffers from neither, so long as the reader comes to it understanding that it is not a biographical collection focused on Anthony. That the collection honours other women who fought alongside (and sometimes against) her falls well within Anthony's philosophy. Although to some she was a tartar, she was simultaneously a mentor dedicated to the idea that success of the Women's Movement was not up to individuals working alone, but to women banding together. Although she was self-assured and certain that her approach to winning the struggle was 'right', she also recognised the existence of other women working for the same goal and that they had a right to a voice. Argument was a strength: this was true of her relationship with Stanton and a lasting legacy to women. She recognised that avoiding conflict will not advance women's cause, even (or particularly) when it is conflict within the ranks.

Susan B. Anthony brings home the vital importance of researching with an open mind, without ideological blinkers and in the knowledge that however diligent, imaginative and exhaustive research might be, how do we fairly assess women of history? Assuredly, history has not been fair to women. Yet when can we be certain that individual women are fairly represented in feminist historical work? Is the search for certainty itself misplaced?

In the introductory chapter Lisa Tetrault addresses the 'politics of writing history' against the backdrop of Anthony and her work. The concluding chapter, 'Knowing Susan B. Anthony' sees Ann D. Gordon addressing this problem as a reflection upon 'the stories "we" tell of life'. As they and the book as a whole shows, the search for 'the truth' about women, women's history, women's activism and the struggle for women's rights, is elusive. Yet the effort is worth it. *Susan B. Anthony* is a positive contribution to history and herstory, uncovering women as individuals and as part of a collective movement.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALL FOR REVIEWERS

The following titles are available for review, so if you like to review any of the titles listed below, please email me, Jane Berney, at bookreviews@womenshistorynetwork.com. 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 and write interestingly about it is the most important thing. Any suggestions for books to review are also welcome - just email me as above.

Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (ed) *Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd)

Darlene Abreu-Ferreira, *Women, Crime and Forgiveness in Early Modern Portugal* (Ashgate Publishing)

Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *Agent of Peace. Emily Hobhouse and her Courageous Attempt to end the First World War* (The History Press)

Mary Dockray-Miller, *The Books and Life of Judith of Flanders* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd)

Penny Lawne, *Joan of Kent. The First Princess of Wales*

Elizabeth Norton, *England's Queens - vol 1 From Boudica to Elizabeth of York* (Amberley)

Elizabeth Norton, *England's Queens - vol 2 From Catherine of Aragon to Elizabeth II* (Amberley)

Tamara C. Ho, *'Romancing Human Rights: Gender, Intimacy & Power between Burma and the West'* (University of Hawaii Press)

Yoshiko Furuki, *The White Plum: A biography of Ume Tsuda, Pioneer of Women's Higher Education in Japan.* (University of Hawaii Press)

Elizabeth Norton, *Elfrida: the First Crowned Queen of England* (Amberley)

Valentine Yarnspinner, *Nottingham Rising: the Great Cheese Riot of 1766 and the 1831 Reform Riots* (Loaf on a Stick Press)

Ji-Eun Lee, *Women Pre-scripted. Forging Modern Roles through Korean Print* (University of Hawaii Press)

Kimberley B. Stratton with Dayna S. Kalleres (eds), *Daughters of Hecate. Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press)

Deborah Shamoon, *Passionate Friendship. The Aesthetics of Girls Culture in Japan* (University of Hawaii Press)

Tamara C. Ho, *Romancing Human Rights. Gender, Intimacy and Power between Burma and the West* (University of Hawaii Press)

Laura Nenzi, *The Chaos and Cosmos of Kurosawa Tokiko. One Woman's Transit from Tokugawa to Meiji Japan* (University of Hawaii Press)

Susan E. James, *Women's Voices in Tudor Wills, 1485 - 1603. Authority, Influence and Material Culture* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd)

Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller, *Awakening Four Lives in Art* (Wakefield Press) - 4 Australian women who made their reputation in the arts outside of Australia in the first half of the 20th century.

Tim Reinke-Williams, *Women, Work and Sociability in Early Modern London* (Palgrave Macmillan)

Marlene Wagman-Geller, *Behind Every Great Man: The Forgotten Women Behind the World's Famous and Infamous* (Sourcebooks)

Nicola Wilson, *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd)

WHN Community History Prize sponsored by The History Press

An annual £500 prize for a Community History Project which has led to a documentary, pamphlet, book, exhibition, artefact or event completed between the 1st of January 2015 and 31st May 2016.

To be eligible for the award the project must focus on History by, about, or for Women in a local or community setting. Candidates must submit both evidence of the project in written or photographic form and a 500-1,000 word supporting statement explaining the aims and outcomes of the project.

Individuals or groups can nominate themselves or someone else by 31 May 2016; for further guidance or advice on the application process email Professor Maggie Andrews maggie.andrews@worc.ac.uk

WHN Book Prize

An annual £500 prize for a first book in women's or gender history

The Women's History Network (UK) Book Prize is awarded for an author's first single-authored monograph that makes a significant contribution to women's history or gender history and is written in an accessible style. The book must be written in English and be published in the year prior to the award being made. To be eligible for the award, the author should be a member of the Women's History Network (UK) and be normally resident in the UK. The prize will be awarded in September 2016.

Entries (books published during 2015) should be submitted via the publisher by 31 March 2016.

For further information please contact June Hannam, chair of the panel of judges.

Email: bookprize@womenshistorynetwork.org

Getting to Know Each Other



Name Anne Logan

Position I am a Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at the University of Kent. I have just finished a four-year term as a member of the editorial team of the *Women's History* magazine, where I edited the book reviews section. But I am still working for WHN, helping to organise the 2015 conference!

How long have you been a WHN member?

I can't remember exactly, but probably about twelve years. I joined not long after I finished my PhD at the University of Greenwich where I was supervised by Professor Angela V John.

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?

I have loved history since I was a small girl and it was by far my best subject at school! Growing up in the seventies, I was also a feminist by the time I reached my mid-teens. I suppose it was inevitable that these two things would come together eventually. I remember being captivated by the TV series about the suffragettes *Shoulder to Shoulder*, which was broadcast when I was a teenager and as an undergraduate I read Simone de Beauvoir and joined the feminist society. Later, when I was teaching in further education, I used to slip bits of women's history into whatever period I was

teaching. I snapped up the Virago history titles whenever I was in a bookshop, such as the reprints of Maud Pember Reeves' *Round About a Pound a Week*, and Ivy Pinchbeck's *Women Workers in the Industrial Revolution* and used them in my teaching. Jill Liddington and Jill Norris' *One Hand Tied Behind Us* was also an inspiration. Eventually, when I got to design my own modules for a degree programme, I produced two modules just on women's history!

What are your special interests?

My interests are quite wide really. As a deeply political person, I am interested in women in politics: I did stand for election to parliament myself once! My PhD was on the first women magistrates, many of whom were suffrage supporters and deeply interested in politics. This took me by accident into an interest in women and crime, because magistrates deal with 95 per cent of criminal cases. My first book, *Feminism and Criminal Justice* was an exploration of the commitment of feminist women to the politics of criminal justice, especially concentrating on the decades between 1920 and 1970 when feminism was supposedly in abeyance. Of course I found that women continued to campaign on criminal justice issues throughout the period. I am now working on a biography of Margery Fry, who created both the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Magistrates' Association almost single-handedly. But I continue to be interested in the politics of suffrage and women's politics during the First World War and after. I have worked on some local history projects in Kent too, and I am interested in women's work, including voluntary work, which is so often overlooked.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

I suppose I really ought to say Margery Fry, since I am writing a book about her! But really she was one of a number of women magistrates who toiled so hard in order to make a difference to the world. Another was a close friend of Fry's, Clara Dorothea Rackham, a former suffragist who went on a CND march in her nineties! I am not sure I would have the energy for demonstrations now and I am not even sixty yet! All the women who worked so that future generations would have proper civil rights are my heroines, and of course this work still goes on today. I expect we will hear of many heroines at this year's WHN conference, since the theme is 'Agency, Activism and Organisation'. I would like to be able to hear all the conference papers!

Committee News

The Steering Committee met on Saturday, 14 February 2015 at the IHR, University of London. The treasurer, Aurelia Annat, reported that the organisation's finances were good, in fact low meeting costs and high membership means figures are healthier than last year. There was a long discussion about the magazine costs. There was general consensus that moving to PDF would be a big saving, but the general agreement was that while all members should have a PDF copy by default, there would be an opt-in mechanism for those who prefer hard copy. The change of title to *Women's History* has gone ahead. Katie Barclay is stepping down as chief editor, having served four years. Anne Logan and Emma Robertson are also stepping down from the magazine committee. They will all be sorely missed and were thanked for all their hard work. Kate Murphy will be temporarily taking over chief editorship for a few months until Catherine Lee steps in.

Membership numbers (as of 9 February) stand at 399 (compared to 408 in November, 2014). Of these we have 365 UK members, 28 international members and 6 institutional members, of which 2 are international. In contrast there are 1100 subscribers to the WHN Newsletter - substantially higher than WHN membership. There was a report on the progress of the next WHN conference, which is being held at the University of Kent on 4-6th September this year, on the theme 'female agency, activism and organisation'. The three keynote speakers are Mary Evans, Pamela Cox and Clare Midgley. A conference dinner at Café du Soleil had been arranged (at £25 for 3 courses, which seems a very good deal) and an outing for international delegates (and others presumably) on Sunday afternoon to Smallhythe Place (a 16th century house where the actress Ellen Terry used to live). The second call for papers closes on 10 April. It was proposed that abstracts of accepted papers would be considered for inclusion on the WHN blog, should the author consent. The committee agreed to allocate £2000 in bursaries for post- graduates wanting to attend the conference. We hope to run a membership drive and a publicity drive for Gift Aid at the Kent conference as part of a check and update of membership details.

The possibility of increasing the number of regional WHN

groups was discussed. June Purvis proposed that there should be an annual £500 competition for teaching / research staff to mount a one-day regional conference; it was suggested that this be launched at the Kent 2015 conference, with subsequent advertising on website, in Magazine, Newsletter and social media. The next IFRWH conference is in Jinan, China, 27-29 August 2015. Early Bird registration ends 1 March 2015. For further details see the conference website: <http://congress.ichschina2015.org/dct/page/65554>. For the programme see January 2015 issue of the Federations' newsletter. If anyone is interested in being nominated to the IFRWH Board, go to: <http://www.ifrwh.com/id146.html>.

There was a report-back from The Women's Library. Modern books and journals that were available in the reading room at the library in Aldgate are now on open access again. An Education Officer is starting in March 2015, to set up an education and outreach programme for LSE Library collections including TWL@LSE. The post is funded by HEFCE for two years. Currently they are recruiting an archivist to catalogue the papers of the Movement for the Ordination of Women and related archives in TWL@LSE collection. This project is funded by HEFCE for two years, and is expected to start in May/June 2015. Exhibition space is nearing completion, and an inaugural exhibition is expected to open in March 2015.

June Purvis suggested we reduce the number of steering committee meetings from 4 to 3 per year (including the AGM / committee meeting), as a way to reduce expenditure on travel costs, cut down on repetition and to make us more efficient. Any queries etc that arose between meetings could be settled by email. The committee agreed with this proposal, and meetings will take place in November, late April and at the September annual conference, to take effect from November 2015. It was suggested that the November meeting might give precedence to affirming new members of the steering committee, the presentation of the budget and the agreement of bursaries for the annual conference.

Women's History Network Contacts

Steering Committee Officers:

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*or write to Ms Felicity Cawley, Postgrad Research Student,
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*To submit books for review please email the book reviews editor
with details of the book to be reviewed.*

For magazine back issues and queries please email:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

*To join the WHN just go to
www.womenshistorynetwork.org and follow the instructions.
Payments and Gift-Aid declarations can all be
accessed online as well – see panel on page 8 for further details*

What is the Women's History Network?

The WHN was founded in July 1991. It is a national charity concerned with promoting women's history and encouraging women interested in history. WHN business is carried out by the National Steering Committee, which is elected by the membership and meets regularly several times each year. It organises the annual conference, manages the finance and membership, and co-ordinates activities in pursuit of the aims of the WHN.

Aims of the WHN

1. To encourage contact between all people interested in women's history — in education, the media or in private research
2. To collect and publish information relating to women's history
3. To identify and comment upon all issues relating to women's history
4. To promote research into all areas of women's history

What does the WHN do?

Annual Conference

Each year the WHN holds a national conference for WHN members and others. The conference provides everyone interested in women's history with a chance to meet and it has become an exciting forum where new research can be aired and recent developments in the field can be shared. The Annual General Meeting of the Network takes place at the conference. The AGM discusses issues of policy and elects the National Steering Committee.

WHN Publications

WHN members receive three copies per year of the *Women's History*, which contains: articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history; reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions; and information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities.

Joining the WHN

Annual Membership Rates

Student/unwaged	£15	Overseas minimum	£40
Low income (*under £20,000 pa)	£25	UK Institutions	£45
High income	£40	Institutions overseas	£55
Life Membership	£350		

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