Women's History Today

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Summer 2023

Articles by:
Jane Berney
Jaime Reynolds

Three Book Reviews
In Profile
Doing History
From the Archives

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EDITORIAL

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

In this open issue, we bring you two academic articles. The first contribution, from Jane Berney, entitled ''Equal pay for equal work'? The 1944 Royal Commission on Equal Pay and the Accountancy Profession', proffers a previously unexplored evaluation of the equal pay debate by concentrating the discussion on female accountants employed by firms and practices holding Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICEAW) membership. Berney shares her preliminary research findings on the value of women's work between the 1920s and the 1950s, using Hansard, ICAEW reports and other primary sources to explore this fight for equal pay and equality of opportunities. The second contribution, from Jaime Reynolds, 'Missing from the Picture: Why are the first women mayors absent from the history of the women's movement in Britain?' explores the largely invisible histories of women who served as mayors between 1908 and 1939. Here, she considers the historical imbalance that she believes has focussed on women's involvement in 'national and parliamentary politics', rather than on women who engaged in provincial and local civic life. Reynold's article provides both an historiographic platform as well as highlighting the many and various research avenues that remain uncharted.

Regular features are also included within this edition. The 'In Profile' segment introduces Norena Shopland, who is the Women's History Network's Diversity Officer. Norena is a Welsh historian and writer who specialises in LGBTQ+ history and research. Our 'Doing History' feature focusses on Monumental Welsh Women. Here Angela V. John guides us through the campaign, by a voluntary women's group, to have notable Welsh women of the past recognised in public artworks. In 'From the Archive', Mireille Fauchon provides a fascinating insight into her innovative interdisciplinary research concerning Katie Gliddon's suffragette diary, held by the Women's Library @LSE. We also have three book reviews, and a list of books awaiting review – please do consider reviewing for us.

We hope that you enjoy this Summer 2023 issue.

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

Contents

Women's History Today is always open for contributions. Whether this be submitting an article on any aspect of women's history for peer review or by contributing to our regular features. These include *Spotlight on Funded Research*, which showcases funded research projects; *From the Archives*, about using archives to explore women's history and *Doing History*, which highlights community/public history projects with a focus on women's and gender history. We are also always open to ideas for ‹special› themed issues. If you are interested in contributing to the journal in connection with any of the above, please contact: editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

Cover Image
Composite of images from Doing History: Monumental Welsh Women

Images courtesy of Julie Nicholas, Monumental Welsh Women and Ruth Cayford

'Equal pay for equal work'? The 1944 Royal Commission on Equal Pay and the Accountancy Profession

Dr Jane Berney
Independent Scholar

In 1936, in a debate on equal pay in the Civil Service, Sir Kenneth Pickthorn, the Conservative MP for Cambridge University, observed that whilst he agreed with the principle of equal pay for men and women, he thought, 'the decision as to what is equal is sometimes more difficult than some of the champions of that principle are willing to admit'.[1] That such a view was not uncommon at this time, and that it was not addressed until the Equality Act 2010 (EA2010), is the starting point for this article.[2]

Based on the submission of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) to the 1944 Royal Commission on Equal Pay (hereafter the 1944 Commission) which related to the accountancy profession, and the contemporaneous parliamentary debates around 'equal pay for equal work', the article will discuss how historic attitudes to female employment and remuneration have been based around gendered notions of the value of female work that persist today. The frequent parliamentary debates on equal pay, primarily for civil servants and teachers, during the interwar years and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War will provide the setting for, and reaction to, the 1944 Commission. The specific focus on the pay of, and attitudes towards, female chartered accountants employed by ICAEW member firms as reported to the 1944 Commission, will provide a hitherto unexplored perspective on the debate as a whole.

The demand for equal pay in the interwar period was not a new phenomenon. In 1904 an Equal Pay League was set up within the National Union of Teachers (NUT), although the principle was not universally accepted by all NUT members.[3] Helen Glew argues that from the 1890s onwards, particularly within the Civil Service, equal pay was part of the discourse surrounding female employment but remained unresolved. Glew, however, also notes that while the First World War may have increased the number of women employed in total and in traditionally male occupations, it did not have a positive effect on the claim for equal pay in the public service sector.[4] It did, however, become a focus for many campaigners and the subject of much debate in the interwar period.

The passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 (SDRA) may have offered a glimmer of hope for those arguing for equal pay as it prohibited professional bodies from refusing women entry simply on the grounds of their sex.[5] This proved to be a false hope. Mari Takayanagi has observed the legislation was merely an enabling act as employers could still dismiss women on the grounds of their sex and it did not mandate any enforcement mechanisms.[6] It did, however, represent a significant volte-face, particularly with regard to those professional bodies such as ICAEW, who previously had fiercely resisted female members. Even so, it was only a small step forward as it did not result in women gaining unfettered access to professions such as law or accountancy but, more insidiously, it also did not mean that female professionals had to be treated in the same way as their male counterparts. Equality of entry did not mean equality of opportunity and the new legislation did not guarantee, enforce or even consider equal pay. It took until the 1970s for legislation to make equal pay for equal work a legally enforceable right whether in the public or private sector and another forty years before the concept of equal pay for 'comparable' work was enshrined into law.[7] Even so, as gender pay gap reporting illustrates, inequalities still persist.[8]

The notion of 'comparable' work is defined in Chapter 3, Section 65, of the EA2010 as follows:

> The work of A is equal to that of B if it is:
>
> (a) Like B's work in the sense that they are broadly similar or any differences that do exist are not of practical importance;
> (b) Rated as equivalent to B's work, or
> (c) Of equal value to B's work.
>
> If, however, A's work is not like B's, it can still be classed as 'equal' if the effort, skill or decision-making responsibilities are comparable.[9]

This was not just a legal nicety but an important step forward in the quest for equality. As the discussion below will illustrate, much of the debate on equal pay pivoted on the difficulty in determining what was equal work. This was based on gendered notions of work – some jobs were only for women, some only for men – but crucially female-only jobs were considered as less valuable, to employers, the economy and to society as a whole, and so worthy of less pay. As this article will argue, it was due to such societal views on the value of women's work, that equal pay was seen as a contested issue rather than a given right, and also why the demand for equal pay took so long to achieve. Even the trade unions, as Sarah Boston has argued, frequently questioned the value of female work and as a result 'equal pay, or rather the absence of it, has dogged the relationship between men and women workers since the early nineteenth century'.[10]

Although the SDRA meant that women could demand equality of access to the professions, it did not guarantee workplace equality or equal pay. Teaching and the Civil Service were two such professions where equal pay was not a given and in the interwar period, the righting of this wrong became, for many, a central plank of the

debate on sex equality in general. To the advocates of equal pay, this inequality was incomprehensible as teaching and the non-industrial and administrative roles within the Civil Service did not rely on brute strength or any other 'manly' attributes and so, arguably, the work, skills and effort involved were not dependent on sex. Moreover, the Civil Service had (and still has) a hierarchical pay structure based on grades and ranks which facilitated an exact comparison of the work performed by men and women. Even so, female civil servants at all grades were routinely paid less than their male counterparts. This inherent injustice was debated in Parliament as early as 1920 when it was resolved that it was 'expedient' that 'women in the public services should be given equal pay'.[11] This resolve of MPs was not matched by government action and, in fact, the government and many government departments and bodies actively resisted any attempt to impose equal pay. In 1931, for example, the Treasury claimed, as one of the many reasons it advanced to deny equal pay, that equal pay for equal work was all very well but women were more likely to resign than men and, because of the high cost of training new staff as replacements, this meant it was more expensive to employ women.[12]

It is worth noting that there were some exceptions to this general rule including the BBC and women MPs. This did not stop MPs and successive governments from refusing to extend the principle to other public servants throughout the public sector including employees of the parliamentary estate.[13] As the MP Alice Bacon observed in 1952, during one of many debates on equal pay in the House of Commons:

> On 25th July 1945, I was a teacher. On the next day, 26th July 1945, I became a Member of Parliament. In both cases I held the same responsible position as my male colleagues, but up to 25th July 1945, I was paid four-fifths of the men's rate and since I became a Member of Parliament, I have received equal pay with my men colleagues. I cannot say that on any of these occasions I did any less work or had any less responsibility than the men with whom I worked.[14]

Another notable exception to the general rule of unequal pay was that of doctors, due to lobbying by the British Medical Association (BMA). As the Conservative MP Irene Ward observed, a powerful organisation such as the BMA could persuade the government or rather, in this case, the Ministry of Health, to accept equal pay because the BMA 'would not have it otherwise'.[15] Even so, female doctors were still subject to the same detrimental rules regarding pensions, national insurance contributions and taxation as other female workers. The earnings of married female doctors, for example, were included in the taxable earnings of their husbands as for any other married female.[16]

As previously mentioned, the Treasury argued that the retention of women was lower than that of men, making women more expensive to employ as a whole. While many disputed the validity of this, others reminded the government that some professions, such as teaching and the civil service, enforced a marriage bar, as did many individual companies, even as late as the 1960s.[17] By imposing a marriage bar, professions and organisations were forcing women to leave or as Ellen Wilkinson MP, speaking in 1936, put it:

> Another point that is made is that women are on the whole less valuable to the service over a period of years because of what is termed marriage wastage. Is it not rather hard lines on the women to use this argument against them. After all retirement on marriage has been made compulsory by the Treasury itself, and therefore to blame the women for it is just going on the usual principle of blaming the women for anything anyhow.[18]

The marriage bar was dropped for teachers in the 1940s, even though equal pay was still refused on the grounds of expediency. The then-Conservative Education Minister, R.A. Butler, confirmed in the debate introducing the 1944 Education Act, that such was the shortage of teachers, married women were required.[19] Even so, one MP noted that dropping the marriage bar did not cost the government anything.[20]

The issue of cost was often repeated by the government – irrespective of their political hue – as they defended their reluctance to pass equal pay legislation or even to grant equal pay to public servants. In a parliamentary debate in 1952, the MP Douglas Houghton, a long-time supporter of equal pay, pointed out the inherent contradictions in the refusal of successive governments to adopt equal pay:

> In the last 32 years we have had inflation and deflation, booms and slumps, unemployment and full employment, high wages and low wages, high cost of living and low cost of living, war and peace. We have had Budget surpluses and Budget deficits. We have had Conservative Governments, Coalition Governments, National Governments, and Labour Governments. We have had a dozen different Chancellors… and the answer has always been the same. We have had every conceivable variation of economic, political and financial climate in this country, but every Chancellor has returned in substance much the same answer.[21]

Some MPs exhorted their own government to take the lead by paying its own employees the same, whilst others pointed out that it was dangerous not to enforce equal pay across the board as lower wages for women would inevitably mean lower wages for men.[22] The continued reluctance of successive governments to act on the issue thus provides a lens through which to view the concept of the value of female work. Opponents of equal pay frequently cited the responsibility of a man to provide for a family which meant that, by implication, as women had no dependents, they were just working for 'handbag money'.[23] This same logic was not applied to women who did have dependents nor to unmarried men without dependents. In numerous debates MPs highlighted the inherent unfairness of this. In 1929, for example, one MP

cited the case of an ex-serviceman who had to give up his job in the Ministry of Labour due to a war injury and so 'his wife had to take on the job at exactly £1 a week less'.[24] Others pointed out the absurdity of the argument. The MP Elaine Burton rather wittily asked, 'whether any Member of the Government Front Bench thinks that his wife or any women in this country goes into a shop and gets something more cheaply because she is a woman'.[25]

It is clear from the parliamentary debates that the issue was not whether women could not or should not work. Indeed, by allowing women to join professional bodies on the same terms as men, the SDRA tacitly acknowledged that, as far as the professions were concerned, women could, and would in future, perform the same tasks as men. The arguments both for and against equal pay were not, therefore, confined to a debate on the rights and wrongs of female employment – although for some, encouraging female employment in particular after marriage was still a matter for disquiet – but instead, on what 'equal pay' actually was, and whether it was affordable. In many respects such arguments were just delaying tactics, but the acceptance of the argument that it was too expensive to pay women equally, not just in absolute terms, but in terms of the potentially inflationary effect on the economy, were – and are – a reflection of the value of women's work. As was pointed out in a Commons debate in 1935, women have always worked but, 'it is only when women work for gain that the question of her work ever arises'.[26] This was particularly the case when unemployment rates were high.

The numerous and repetitive parliamentary debates on the issue of equal pay in the interwar years could be construed as indicative of the dominance of the issue in feminist circles at the time. It is worth noting, however, that the enthusiasm with which it was pursued varied over time. The issue was side-lined in the late 1920s when the unemployment rates soared and the bargaining power of workers, including professionals, was hampered by the threat of unemployment. It is, however, as Paula Bartley illustrates in her study of women's activism in the twentieth century, disingenuous to view female activists as an homogeneous group.[27] Even within what could be construed as an homogenous group, the London and Women's Society for National Service (LWSNS), a variety of causes were pursued. Their annual reports show the variety and number of campaigns undertaken by their members, all under the general umbrella of equal opportunity.[28] These included international campaigns on the enfranchisement of women in India, national investigations into maternal health, working hours in industry and campaigns for women to be responsible for their own debts and torts under English law.

Glew argues that the election of women MPs meant equal pay and other feminist issues could take centre stage in parliamentary debates.[29] It must be remembered, however, that the issue did not divide along gender lines: not all women MPs (the Duchess of Atholl, for example) supported equal pay and not all male MPs opposed it. Many of the most vociferous supporters in Parliament were men, as shall be seen below. Harold L. Smith argues that the coming together of MPs (of either sex) and feminist campaigners was more of a tactical ploy to expose the double standards involved.[30] If, so the argument goes, it is clear that teachers and civil servants on the same grade do exactly the same work, then there is no argument against equal pay either specifically for teachers and civil servants or women in general. Whilst this may have been the ploy, a review of the parliamentary debates from 1920 onwards reveals that the discussion continued to pivot around two seemingly intractable difficulties: what was equal pay (sometimes expressed as the rate for the job) and could the country or industry afford it. As Duff Cooper put it in 1935:

> Very often a slogan is extremely misleading, and the words "Equal pay for equal work" are misleading because they imply what appears to be an obvious justice, namely that two people doing exactly the same work should receive exactly the same remuneration whatever their sex. I would suggest that we should get nearer to the truth and we should be able to form a muster conception of the whole problem, because it is a problem, if instead of saying "Equal pay for equal work" we said, "Equal pay for equal value".[31]

As such, the debate never got much further forward than a circular discussion, with even a Royal Commission in 1931 on the Civil Service concluding that whilst there should be 'a fair field and no favour', it could not resolve the issue of equal pay.[32] In 1944, however, the appointment of another Royal Commission specifically to consider equal pay did suggest a new commitment on the part of the government to the settle the issue.

The 1944 Royal Commission on Equal Pay was set up under the wartime coalition government but did not report until 1946 when a Labour government was in power, although it was not a debate that divided along party lines. The chair was Justice Asquith and consisted of eight members, four men and four women.[33] The terms of reference for the Commission were as follows:

> To examine the existing relationship between the remuneration of men and women in the public service, in industry and in other fields of employment; to consider the social, economic and financial implications of the claim of equal pay for equal work; and to report.[34]

The wording of these terms of reference demonstrates the underlying assumptions that coloured the outcome of the review. It is the 'claim' of equal pay for equal work that is to be considered, not the right or the principle. The Commission was specifically asked to consider the 'economic and financial implications', as so many of the previous parliamentary debates on equal pay for women had centred on the notion that it was unaffordable and/or inflationary. In 1929, for example, Winston Churchill, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that 'the present state of the country's finances will not admit of the great expenditure involved in the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women in the Civil Service.'[35] It

was a claim that was repeated in all subsequent debates. In a similar vein, the instruction to consider the social implications of equal pay reflected concerns about the impact it would have on society, employment and family life. The issue of equality in its purest sense was therefore a secondary consideration, but again it is indicative of the attitude to the value of the work of women.

In October 1944, the Commissioners wrote to the ICAEW President asking if ICAEW would submit a memorandum expressing the views and experiences of its members. The President duly convened an emergency meeting of the Council (ICAEW's governing body) and an emergency committee of four Council members and the ICAEW secretary (R. W. Banks) was set up. At the meeting it was agreed to focus only on those members in practice – that is those members who provided audit and accountancy services to clients – but not to canvass the opinion of members who worked in industry. A questionnaire was drafted and sent out to the six largest firms within each district society on 27 November 1944, with reminders sent on 5 December. The questionnaires were to be anonymous. The Secretary complied a summary of all the responses and an initial draft memorandum was prepared by the Vice President for discussion at a meeting of the Emergency Committee held on 14 December 1944. Further meetings took place before the final memorandum was submitted to the Commission on 27 January 1945. The minutes of the meetings are not in the public domain, but the questionnaires and the draft memoranda are.[36] Also in the public domain are the papers of Ethel Watts who, along with Sylvia Knowles, was invited to attend the emergency committee meeting on 14 December.[37] Ethel Watts was the second female to be admitted to ICAEW, in 1924, and was a leading member of the London and National Society for Women's Service (LNSWS).[38] Sylvia Knowles was another early member of ICAEW. As Watts' papers show, she was a keen advocate of sex equality both in general and in the accountancy profession.


n April 1st, 1925, in which

Newspaper image of Ethel Watts, source and date unknown. Courtesy of The Women's Library @ LSE

A review of the questionnaires and letters returned provide a glimpse into prevailing attitudes. Many of the replies said it was either 'not their policy' to employ women or that they only employed women out of necessity due to the shortage of men in the war.[39] Numerous questionnaires said women were employed only at a junior level because they were unable to do more advanced or demanding work. The assessment of women's abilities can be summed up by the following comment: 'We find that women either cannot or will not grasp the theoretical principles underlying our work and cannot be given work of a more advanced nature.'[40] It is worth noting, however, that the ICAEW records from the time show that the women who applied to join were more likely to have university degrees than men and had better success rates than men. As the signatories to the Memorandum of Dissent attached to the final report of the 1944 Commission observed, "much evidence was 'unsupported by concrete evidence' and they suspected were based on 'opinion''.[41]

Many of the respondents spoke of the impracticalities of sending women to work on clients' premises and one even claimed that women were less likely to get on with clients than male colleagues or to be 'forceful' enough with clients.[42] Other reasons for not employing women included clients not wishing to have a female accountant, the belief that women were only seeking a temporary role rather than a long-term career and the belief that women had more time off for sickness or other reasons.[43] One respondent suggested women could only audit clients who provided services for women such as dress shops and another suggested women could only work with clients who had female employees.[44]

The Emergency Committee meeting on 14 December discussed the draft and it is clear from later correspondence that Watts and Knowles were less than happy with it, possibly because it included the many reasons why women were unsuitable to be chartered accountants as outlined above. The committee did allow them to redraft the report, a copy of which was sent to the Secretary on 28 December. This draft appears to have been accepted as the final draft.[45] However Watts and Knowles also asked that a letter they had drafted explaining what they meant by equal pay was also submitted to the Commissioners.

The tone of the final memorandum is suggestive of the unease surrounding the whole debate. Equal pay was hard to deny in principle but was resisted in practice and justified because of the peculiarities of the accountancy profession and female employment norms. Thus, ICAEW notes that the fees earned by accountancy firms were subject to negotiation with clients and, equally, the terms and conditions of those employed in the firms were 'arrived at by individual negotiation', thus justifying pay differentials on the grounds of financial reality and prudence.[46]

According to the report, by 1944 there were only 102 female members of ICAEW out of a total membership of over 13,000; a similar proportion to solicitors. Or, as the report noted, 'it is evident that the accountancy profession, as a career, is one which few women have adopted'[47]. This comment was an amendment drafted by Watts, as the draft discussed on 14 December was phrased in a rather less flattering way: 'probably the nature of the profession is such that it will attract only women whose outlook is unusual compared with women generally'[48]. This echoes the belief that certain jobs were for men only; a view expressed by numerous organisations as reported in the final report of the 1944 Commission. The British Employers' Confederation, for example, agreed with the Trades Union Council that 'the field in which men and women are employed in precisely the same work and under identical conditions is very limited'[49].

The memorandum was also at pains to point out that most of the women employed in accountancy firms were either not qualified or were trainee chartered accountants (i.e., current or future ICAEW members):

> Many women employed in the offices of practising accountants are engaged in typing, filing and similar work in which women only are usually employed. The question of 'equal pay for equal work' cannot arise in respect of these women, because there is no comparable employment of women. Further, in recent years considerable use has been made of women as calculating-machine operators, who are able to do more rapidly work which had to be carried out by men. Like typing, such machine operating is an occupation which has been adopted by women and … there is no comparable employment for men.[50]

The reference to women as 'calculating—machine operators' is telling and indicative of the gendering of female employment. Such views were commonplace at this time and meant it was easier to stifle the equal pay debate by arguing that it was not applicable to the majority of women. In essence 'equal pay for equal work' was irrelevant, as most female employees in accountancy firms, or indeed in any business or profession, were not equal. That men would have been employed in accountancy firms in roles other than as qualified or trainee chartered accountants (i.e., ICAEW members) was conveniently overlooked.

ICAEW's memorandum also reflects the way that opponents to equal pay employed economic arguments to deny equal pay to women. The threat to male employment was often cited, particularly in periods of economic depression and high unemployment. As the 1930 LNSWS Annual Report observed, after the First World War there was much 'bitterness' regarding the employment of women in general, and the 1936 report noted 'the recrudescence in the press throughout the county of attacks on women to any paid employment whatsoever'.[51] In a similar vein, ICAEW pointed out that the employment market in 1944 was affected by the war but that this was unlikely to continue post war. The suggestion was that women were only employed out of necessity and that once more men were available, then men should have priority in the jobs market. Others went further. In response to the economic depression in the 1930s, the Police Council 'when invited to suggest possible economies in their service, recommended that the recruitment of women constables should be suspended'.[52]

ICAEW's memorandum reveals that while 'some' accountancy firms considered the work performed by their male and female employees to be the same, only two thirds of these firms paid men and women the same. Of the third that paid women less, this was due to various factors such as 'experience, ability and responsibility, length of service and age'. The submission concluded that the problem was one of definition – what is equal work? – and moreover that 'the claim of "equal pay for equal work" opens up a very wide field and invites considerations that are highly contentious and political'.[53]

The ICAEW memorandum that was submitted to the Commission in January 1945 concluded, somewhat lamely, that: 'The Council does not feel entitled to express a view on these matters on behalf of all its members'. It also noted that many ICAEW's members 'hold important executive positions in industry and commerce'.[54] Such a comment can, at best, be interpreted as an acknowledgement that pay and conditions varied across business sectors, public and private, but it was also a tacit admission that equal pay was not a worthy goal in itself. This failure to consider the issue as a serious one – an inequality that had to be addressed – was repeated

Comptometer model WM. Mechanical calculator produced by Felt & Tarrant Manufacturing Company during World War II. Public Domain Image

in the parliamentary debates once the Commission had published its findings.

Watts and Knowles were clearly frustrated by the Council's view and also by the President's earlier comment that he found the expression 'equal pay for equal work ambiguous'.[55] To counter this, Watts and Knowles were allowed to attach a letter to the ICAEW submission that expressed, as the report said, 'their personal views' on what was meant by equal pay.[56] Their letter suggested there were four possible definitions of equal work:

1. Work of equal merit in the eyes of the employer;
2. Work which calls for equal efforts on the part of employees;
3. Work which results in equal output; and
4. Work undertaken by persons conforming to a common minimum standard of skill.

Watts and Knowles stated that Definition 4 was the most apposite definition for members of a profession. More importantly they also stated that, in contrast to the view of ICAEW, it was straightforward to apply Definition 4 to resolve the issue. Or, as the letter concluded:

> In professions a man or woman must be regarded as standing on a similar footing as regards fitness for work on the grounds of their common qualification. In this sense and in this connection, we think the phrase 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' has relevance to members of a profession.[57]

Watts also gave evidence to the Commission in her role as an Executive Committee member of the LNSWS. Her evidence covered the employment terms of all female workers, not just accountants, and was based around the premise that if the work and the conditions were the same, then unequal pay was an injustice. She argued that even though women represented a minority in the workforce, particularly amongst professional and higher paid occupations, that this was changing and their experience should not be considered 'negligible'. Moreover, the issue should be considered as a long term policy not a quick fix.[58]

The Treasury had frequently argued that paying men and women the same would be inflationary, as increasing women's wages to the same level as men's would result in increasing prices. Neither the government, nor industry, nor the country as a whole could afford this. This argument was rarely challenged as, on a very simplistic level, it was hard to refute. The cost of increasing salaries would have to borne by someone, but for supporters of equal pay the economic cost was not the whole issue, rather it was the social cost. As supporters of equal pay argued, the issue was not more pay for women but justice.

In the letter attached to ICAEW's memorandum submitted to the 1944 Commission, Watts observed that if men and women were equally qualified as accountants (i.e., could perform the same tasks with the same degree of skill) then paying women less should logically mean wages would fall as why pay a man more?[59] When giving evidence to the 1944 Commission, she was asked the same question. Her explanations were habit and the preconceived notions of employers with regards to the suitability of applicants. She recalled how one local authority considered girls to be unsuitable for a bookkeeping role because they would be unable 'to carry heavy ledgers'.[60] Other campaigners, such as the Conservative MP Mavis Tate, a vociferous supporters of woman's rights including equal pay, argued, in a 1935 Commons debate that focused on the expense of paying men and women the same, that this was not the real issue; the government and the Treasury should instead focus on the impact on overall living standards if pay inequality persisted. She observed that the 'inequality of payment between men and women will … inevitably lower the standard of life of the people if allowed to continue.'[61]

Much to the frustration of many, the 1944 Commission did not report its findings until two years after it was set up and, even then, only concluded 'tentatively' that equal pay may be appropriate for teachers and civil servants but, if applied to all employees, would be inflationary.[62] Many campaigners were disappointed by this and three of the commissioners refused to endorse the conclusion, submitting a minority report. In reality, the Commissioners had not been empowered to make recommendations, merely to review. The response of the government to the Commission's findings was to acknowledge the justice of a claim for equal pay for the public sector, but that implementing such a policy was out of the question because of the cost and the attendant risk of inflation. As Hugh Dalton (the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer) put it, 'in making proposals to Parliament for incurring additional expenditure … the government must be the judge of priorities'[63]. He sought to soften the blow by saying women received more from the government in terms of social policy initiatives, such as family allowances and the National Health Service. The Labour MP Barbara Castle somewhat sarcastically critiqued her own party thus:

> While the women affected … fully appreciate the economic difficulties which face the country, they will be deeply disappointed by the suggestion that they and they alone should be expected to forego any satisfaction of a just claim, so long as inflationary pressures last.[64]

Other MPs were equally scathing. When one MP pointed out that the issue was really one of low pay in general, Dalton replied, 'that illustrates the possibility that we attach undue importance to the principle under discussion'.[65] In one brief sentence Dalton demonstrated that, as far as he and many others were concerned, equal pay was not a 'real' problem because it was, in reality, a problem only for professional women. For many, irrespective of sex, poor pay and working conditions were far more pressing. Yet even in the factory and employment legislation that was passed in the first half of the twentieth century, a gender divide was apparent. The *Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920* is one case in point; another is the 1948 debate around clause 13 of *The Factories Bill*, which considered together the employment of women and young people.[66] The fact that women

were considered alongside young persons was a clear indication that the employment of women was reasoned to require separate treatment from that of men. As one MP said in the debate:

> Women have been associated with young persons in legal matters of this kind because women have never been considered worthy of adult status in the factory. If that were the case, they would have received pay equal to that of men.[67]

Another requested that the government:

> Consider that women are grown up and not exactly equivalent to young persons of either sex in regard to how they can work, what they can work at and what they can and cannot do in factories.[68]

The LNSWS' view on earlier Factory Acts was that because they gave additional or special protection to women, particularly with regard to hours, it resulted in legislation:

> On the old lines in which men are not sufficiently protected, the women are restricted in opportunity by being classed with young persons and the young person (sic) are interfered in their development by being classed with women.[69]

By the time of the 1944 Royal Commission there was a broad consensus that equal pay was an issue that needed resolving, however, it was not seen as a right that women should expect. This attitude can also be seen in the government's response to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 24.9 states that 'women shall work with the same advantages as men and receive equal pay for equal work'[70]. Even though the UK government signed up to the declaration, nothing was done to enshrine equal pay into law. As the Earl of Perth said in the Parliamentary debate on the declaration in 1948, it was 'a great principle and His Majesty's Government will probably agree with that point of view though in our present economic position it is hardly practical to give effect to it'.[71] The case for equal pay legislation was once again dismissed as a luxury the country could simply not afford. The right to equal pay was barely considered.

As has been mentioned, the views for and against equal pay did not divide along party lines. This was thrown into sharp focus when the Labour Party announced in 1947 that a commitment to equal pay would not be included in its manifesto at the next election. Watts, as well as being an ICAEW member and a committee member of the LNSWS, was also an active member of the Labour Party, and was so furious at this betrayal that she wrote to her MP, Edith Summerskill, threatening to leave.[72] Once again, the reason given was the country could not afford it. In a surprising move, the 1951 Conservative party election manifesto did include a commitment to equal pay, a move spearheaded by R.A. Butler in a possibly cynical move to garner female votes although, as ever, the commitment would not be honoured until the country could afford it.[73] In 1952, the Commons once again debated equal pay and resolved:

> That this House reaffirms its belief in the principle of equal pay for equal work asbetween men and women; supports the doctrine universally accepted in the trade union movement of payment for all work at the rate for the job irrespective of sex; recognises, however, that the economic position of those with family responsibilities must be assured, which can be, and is being progressively achieved by a combination of family allowances and other social services, and tax reliefs; that therefore, in the opinion of this House there is no justification for continuing the 32 years' delay in implementing the Motion passed on the 19th May, 1920, which declared that it was "expedient" that women in the public services should be given equal pay; and it now calls upon Her Majesty's Government to announce an early and definite date by which the application of equal pay for equal work for women in the Civil Service, the teaching profession, local government and other public services will begin.[74]

Once again it came to nothing and the debate rumbled on, although equal pay was awarded to teachers in 1952 and to Civil Servants in 1955, albeit it with a six year implementation period.

Equal pay was finally enshrined into law in 1970s. As shown in the parliamentary debates here discussed, together with ICAEW's submission to the 1944 Commission and the latter's conclusions, the notion of 'equal pay for equal work' was not contested as such. What was contested, rather, was the value of women in the workplace; the underlying assumption being that women did not perform work of equal value. In the accountancy profession, this manifested itself in the observation that women only performed more junior roles, even though they had followed the same route as their male colleagues to qualify as chartered accountants. In factories, women were restricted in the hours they could work. In the Civil Service, women could not join the Foreign Office or work abroad. The Civil Service even created lower paid grades specifically for women.

The aim of the 2010 Equality Act was to protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Most relevant to this discussion was the fact that it allowed claims for pay discrimination not based on the same job but based on a comparable job.[75] However, even though the Equality Act is a significant change in approach, much like the SDRA it is just a step forward. As the Gender Pay Gap Reports published by UK businesses show, women remain over-represented in the lower pay quantiles and under-represented in the upper pay quartile in every sector. The campaign for equality of opportunity continues.

Notes

1. Hansard HC DEB vol. 310, c.2046, 1 Apr. 1936. [Online] [accessed 31 Jan. 2023]. Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

2. This paper is part of my research into the value of women's work in the period from 1920 to the 1950s. I am grateful to the WHN and the reviewers for allowing me to share my preliminary findings in this edition of the journal.

3. Alison Oram, *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics 1900–1939 (*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

4. Helen Glew, *Gender Rhetoric and Regulation: Women's Work in the Civil Service and London County Council, 1900-1955* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

5. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act *1919;* 9&10 Geo.5 c.71 (hereafter the SDRA).

6. Mari Takayanaki, 'Sacred Year or Broken Reed. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919', *Women's History Review,* 29/4 (2020), 563-82.

7. The Equal Pay Act, 1970.c.41, The Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 c.65, The Equality Act, 2010 c. 15. (Hereafter EPA 1970, SDA 1975 and EA 2010, respectively).

8. The first Gender Pay Gap reports in the UK were for the year ended 5 April 2017, although the legal requirement was mandated by the EA 2010. Companies and organisations employing over 250 employees have to produce an annual report stating, *inter alia*, the median average hourly pay of its female employees compared to that of its male employees. The median average pay gap in 2022 was 8.3%, meaning for every £1 paid to a male employee, on average a female employee was paid 83p.

9. EA 2010 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/65.

10. Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2nd edition 1987).

11. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 129, c. 1539, 19 May 1920 [online] (accessed 30 Oct. 2022) Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

12. Harold L. Smith, 'British Feminism and the Equal Pay issue in the 1930s', *Women's History Review,* 5/1 (2006), 97-110, 99.

13. Mari Takayanagi, 'The Home Front in the Westminster Village: Women Staff in Parliament during the Second World War', *Women's History Review,* 26/4, 2017, 608-20.

14. *Hansard* HC DEB vol. 500, cc. 1765-1857, 16 May 1952 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

15. *Hansard,* HC DEB, vol. 480, c. 383, 2 Nov. 1950 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

16. A detailed discussion on the different treatment of women with regard to taxation, National Insurance and pensions is beyond the scope of this paper but the issue was explored and deplored by Ethel Watts and the LNSWS as another example of the unequal treatment of women. See Watts papers in Women's Library @LSE, 7 ETW FL393.

17. Including many of the largest accountancy firms.

18. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 310, c. 2019, 1 Apr. 1936 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

19. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 397, cc.2369-2395, 10 Mar. 1944 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

20. Charles Pannell, MP (Conservative*), Hansard,* HC DEB, vol. 500, cc. 1765–857, 16 May 1952 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

21. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 500, cc. 1756-1857, 16 May 1952 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

22. See for example the contributions from the conservative MPs Mavis Tate and Colonel Clayton Brown – both were members of the LNSWS' parliamentary committee. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 302, cc. 2211-2220, 7 Jun. 1935 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

23. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, William Morrison MP (Conservative) suggested that women only worked for 'pocket money – or should I say handbag money' to make the point that women did not have dependents and so did need to be paid the same as men. *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 310, c2064, 1 Apr. 1936 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

24. William Mackinder MP (Labour), *Hansard*, HC Deb vol. 500, c. 1029, 31 Jan. 1929 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

25**.** Elaine Burton MP (Labour) *Hansard,* HC DEB vol. 480, c. 1392, 2 Nov. 1950 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

26. Mavis Tate MP (Conservative) *Hansard* HC DEB vol. 302, c. 2211, 7 Jun. 1935 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023]. Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

27. Paula Bartley, *Women's Activism in Twentieth Century Britain. Making a Difference Across the Political Spectrum* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2022).

28. LSE Digital library, LNSWS annual reports [online] (accessed 2 Feb. 2023). Available from https://digital.library.LSE.ac.uk.

29. Helen Glew, 'In a Minority of Male Spaces: The Networks, Relationships and Collaborations between Women MPs and Women Civil Servants, 1919 – 1955', *Open Library of Humanities* 6/2 (2020), 15.

30. Harold L. Smith, 'British Feminism and the Equal Pay issue in the 1930s', *Women's History Review* 5/1 (2006), 97-110.

31. *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 302, 7 Jun. 1935 [Online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk. Duff Cooper MP (Conservative) was the Financial Secretary to the Treasury at the time.

32. Report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 1929-1931 (1931), Parliamentary Papers, 10, Cmd. 3909, HMSO (London 1931).

33. The National Archives (TNA*)* T189/19, 'Royal Commission on Equal Pay 1944 (Asquith Commission)' Cmd. 6937.

34. *Hansard*, HC DEB, vol. 403, c. 1961, 12 Oct. 1944 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.

35. *Hansard*, HC DEB, vol.224, c. 1130, 31 Jan. 1929 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https:// www.Parliament.uk.
36. The ICAEW archives are held at the London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA*),* [CLC/B/124]. Full Council meetings minutes from the period are embargoed until 2027. LMA CLC/B/124, MS28435/15 contains all the questionnaires returned, letters from some firms in lieu of a returned questions, drafts of the memorandum (but not the final draft), correspondence between the secretary and the committee members and the Final Report of the 1944 Royal Commission.
37. Ethel Watts' Papers are held at Women' s Library @ LSE (hereafter WL) – 7ETW FL 394.
38. For a brief overview of the career of Watts see the ICAEW publication *100 Years. Celebrating women in Chartered Accountancy*, which also covers the campaign for women to be admitted as members. Available from https://icaew.com.
39. LMA, CLC/B/124, MS28435/15. See for example letter dated 2 Dec. 1944 from Armitage and Norton (re: policy) and Questionnaires: Serial Numbers 30 and 43 (re: wartime measure only).
40. LMA, CLC/B/124 MS28435/15, Questionnaire: serial number 68.
41. 1944 Commission Final Report 187, para 1.
42. LMA, CLC/B/124 MS28435/15, Questionnaire: serial number 85.
43. Ibid.
44. LMA, CLC/B/124 MS28435/15, Questionnaire: serial number 65 and Questionnaire: serial number 58.
45. WL 7 ETW 394/3.
46. WL 7ETW 394/3 ICAEW memorandum.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. TNA, T189/19, 1944 Commission Final Report47, paragraph 142.
50. Ibid.
51. LSE Digital Library (LSE Digital*),* LNSWS 1936 Annual Report [online] (accessed 2 Feb. 2023). Available from https://digital.library.LSE.ac.uk.
52. LSE Digital, LNSWS 1930 Annual report, [online] (accessed 3 Feb. 2023). Available from https://digital. library.LSE.ac.uk.
53. WL 7 ETW 394/3, ICAEW Memorandum.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. WL ETW, 394/3 Letter to Watts from President dated 14 Dec. 1944 and her reply dated 28 Dec. 1944
57. WL ETW 394/3 EW and SK Letter attached to the ICAEW final submission.
58. WL ETW *394/3* LNSWS evidence to 1944 Commission – 10th day, Fri. 15 Jun. 1945.
59. WL ETW 394/3 EW and SK Letter attached to the ICAEW final submission.
60. WL ETW *394/3* LNSWS evidence to 1944 Commission – 10th day, Fri. 15 Jun.1945.
61. Tate, *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 302, cc. 2217-2220, 7 Jun. 1935 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.
62. TNA T189/19 Report of the Royal Commission, Cmd. 6937.
63. Dalton, *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 438, c.1069, 11 Jul. 1947 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https:// www.Parliament.uk
64. Castle, *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 438, c. 1072, 11 Jul. 1947 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https:// www.Parliament.uk.
65. Dalton, *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 438, c. 1075, 11 Jul. 1947 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www.Parliament.uk.
66. Employment of Women, Young Person and Children Act,1920, c. 65 (Regnal. 10 and 11 Geo 5); this became the Factories Act 1948 *c*. 55.
67. Philip Piratin, MP (Communist Party of Great Britain), *Hansard*, HC DEB vol.453, c.750, 9 Jul. 1948 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https:// www.Parliament.uk.
68. Malcolm McCorquodale, MP (Conservative), *Hansard*, HC DEB vol. 453, c.749, 9 Jul. 1948 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www. Parliament.uk.
69. LSE Digital, LNSWS AGM 4 Nov. 1937, 200 [online] (accessed 1 Feb. 2023). Available from https://digital. library.LSE.ac.uk.
70. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available from https://www.un.org.
71. Earl of Perth, *Hansard* HL DEB vol. 155, c. 649-654 [online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https:// www.Parliament.uk. The Earl of Perth had previously been Secretary General of the League of Nations.
72. WL, ETW 393.
73. Harold L. Smith, 'The Politics of Conservative Reform: The Equal Pay for Equal Work Issue, 1945 – 1955', *The Historical Journal*, 35/2, (1992), 401-415.
74. *Hansard* HC DEB vol.500 c.1857, 16 May 1952[online] (accessed 31 Jan. 2023). Available from https://www. Parliament.uk.
75. EA2010, chapter 3, section 65.

MISSING FROM THE PICTURE

Why are the first women mayors absent from the history of the women's movement in Britain?

Dr Jaime Reynolds
Independent Researcher

In January 1928 a meeting took place in Liverpool. Nine mayors from a variety of English and Welsh boroughs were entertained by the new Lord Mayor of Liverpool. The gathering attracted wide attention in the press and a newsreel was shown in cinemas.[1] Why such interest? Because the Lord Mayor and her nine guests were *women*. Two decades before, in 1908, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson became the first female mayor ever when she was installed as the chief citizen of Aldeburgh in Suffolk. In the intervening years the position of women had been transformed by war and social change and Garrett Anderson had been followed by some thirty women-mayors across the country. Nevertheless, the notion of a woman taking the role of first citizen was still seen as a novelty and was met with a mixture of pride, curiosity, bemusement and occasionally hostility. By its very nature the Liverpool event was a feminist statement, and was intended as such, though it was certainly not described in these terms. It signalled clearly that after more than fifty years' of pressure women had arrived at the top level of local government. They had passed another milestone in the long march towards full equal citizenship.

THE MISSING WOMEN MAYORS

Altogether from 1908 until the outbreak of war in 1939, 159 women served as mayors (or in Scotland, provosts) of the towns and cities of Britain. Many more participated in local government as councillors. A minority of these entered the local government elite as chairs of committees, aldermen, or local party leaders. Not all of these became mayors: some declined the offer, some were never asked, some were blocked and/or had their careers terminated by electoral defeat. Nevertheless, the 159 who were appointed as mayor included a significant proportion of the females who rose to the top in civic life in this period. They provide an obvious place to start in order to understand the role of women in local government in the first decades of the twentieth century, an analysis that should certainly be extended to women borough councillors generally—probably about 3,000 in number during this period—as it becomes increasingly viable to access and interrogate the data.[2]

One would expect that the careers and achievement of the first women mayors would be recognised and recorded in the vast and ever-expanding literature on the attainment of equal citizenship and the development of the

Fig. 1: The women-mayors aboard the White Star Line's Atlantic Union. Margaret Beavan is third from the left. Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Libraries.

women's movement in the interwar years. For a woman to make a mark in local politics in this period was not easy. Far fewer women than men were elected as councillors and only about five per cent of these reached the position of mayor.[3] Not only did they need to win election in the first place to become councillors, but they also then had to secure the backing of their—overwhelmingly male—colleagues on the council in order to be chosen by them as mayor. As a feminist journalist pointed out in 1928, '... women are only made mayors when, by outstanding personal merit, they have disarmed a load of prejudice'.[4] It is surprising then to discover how little trace of these women can be found in the literature.

With rare exceptions they have vanished from the scene. They are among the most invisible of the forgotten women of the story. As individuals and even more so as a group, these trailblazers are missing from the abundant accounts on women's break-through into political life. This article considers this puzzling omission. Why are the most successful women local politicians absent from the picture when other groups—women national politicians, writers and feminist activists, organisers and campaigners of various kinds, quite minor figures in the suffrage movement and even fascist women—given so much greater attention?

One factor is that the local stage has long been considered to be of far lesser importance than the national. This is reflected in the excessive focus on Whitehall and Westminster in writings on British political history in general. Philip Williamson, in the context of his study of Stanley Baldwin, has aptly described this biographical tradition as 'remarkable for its lack of serious curiosity, its condescension towards the non-political and non-metropolitan activities'.[5] This indifference to the local extended to the careers of those who dedicated themselves to work in local bureaucracies and grassroots politics—both men and women. It was one aspect of the widespread and growing apathy towards local government and its possibilities that women local politicians railed against. Unjustified as these prejudices were, it is not surprising that they were unconsciously reflected by many historians.

More substantively however, structural historiographical issues have also got in the way of exploring this area. One of these concerns data: its nature, availability and accessibility. The other concerns selection: what historians are interested in and what evidence they consider is salient in order to understand the processes they choose to examine. The history of the twentieth-century women's movement was, for a long time, in the grip of a pervasive 'top-down' approach which focused on processes, events, organisations and personalities operating at the centre and recognised local manifestations of the movement, and the individuals involved, only when they contributed to this story. Local activity and individuals that did not fit this framework were generally overlooked. Women operating in local government and its related apparatuses for health, education, justice and public assistance, or in local voluntary, political and religious organisations, were prominent among the victims of this side-lining.

ECLIPSED

The women-mayors were already victims of the general indifference to the female contribution to history that afflicted wide swathes of the literature until recent decades. The major references for biographical material, such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *Who's Who,* carried this exclusion of women to an extreme degree. In her analysis of the *DNB* published in 1994, Gillian Fenwick found that while 'in theory, here are the lives of all British women worthy of note from the beginnings of history until the late twentieth century', in practice there were only 1518 women included, compared with 34,533 men.[6] While there has been a great improvement in the representation of women since then, and the *DNB* now includes entries on a number of the best known women mayors, it continues to omit the great majority including many of the most prominent. *Who's Who/Who Was Who* suffered from the same bias. It also focused heavily on the traditional elite such as the aristocracy, the armed services, colonies, the civil service and the church, paying very little attention to local politics, whether referring to men or women. The multivolume *Dictionary of Labour Biography* includes only two of the women mayors among over a 1000 key individuals of the Labour movement, overwhelmingly male.[7]

If there has been some progress in correcting this imbalance and restoring women to the historical record, both in the academic and more popular literature, the same blind spot remains as regards the local dimension. Thus, a biographical dictionary of 1000 British women that focused specifically on 'those who sought to expand women's involvement in public affairs', included only two women mayors who are remembered for other reasons.[8] Cheryl Law's *Women A Modern Political Dictionary* includes the biographies of only three of them.[9] Valuable resources such as the Women's Library's list of press cuttings (a fund of records pertaining to several thousand women, collected since the 1920s and described as a 'particularly useful resource for finding information about lesser known women active in public life') includes less than a dozen of the women mayors. The most extensive source of biographical information on the first women mayors is now *Wikipedia,* which, at the end of 2022, had pages for twenty-five of them. This still leaves 134 unrecorded. Similarly, biographies and autobiographies are few and dated.[10] Graham Taylor's excellent life of Ada Salter, the first Labour woman mayor, is the only substantial modern political biography to be published on an early female local politician, focussing fully on the local dimension.[11]

The lack of material on women local politicians as individuals is paralleled by a lack of analysis of their role as a group. The only significant published study of the first women in civic life is Patricia Hollis's *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865-1914,* which appeared as long ago as 1987. However, this very largely focused on the period before women could be elected to and reach positions of influence on borough councils, so it has almost nothing to say about women mayors.[12] Anne Baldwin's unpublished 2012 PhD thesis traces the growth in the election of women as councillors in the interwar period, but is confined to county councils and county and

London boroughs, omitting the large number of small and medium-sized provincial towns—the source of the majority of the women mayors.[13]

The contrast between this meagre coverage of women local politicians and their national counterparts is striking. All the standard histories of the development of the women's movement describe and analyse in depth the experience of women as parliamentary candidates, MPs and holders of government office, although the numbers and duration of service of the latter two groups are very small. Martin Pugh, in *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain* (various editions), notes that the careers of most of those who were elected to the Commons were short: 'few women members enjoyed a long experience in parliament between the wars. Most of the thirty-six sat for periods of one to three years' and he observes that only a couple (Ellen Wilkinson, Florence Horsbrugh) followed the typical male career path from backbencher through junior office to Cabinet minister. Just a handful of others (notably Nancy Astor, Eleanor Rathbone, Margaret Bondfield, Susan Lawrence, Megan Lloyd George and the Duchess of Atholl) made much impact. Reflecting the meagre results of women's efforts to establish their presence in parliament, Pugh titles his chapter 'the Political Containment of Women'.[14] Pugh provides a small section on local government in his book with some statistics and an account of the somewhat ephemeral attempts to establish a 'women's party' on some authorities after 1918, but little else. Olive Banks's contemporaneous *The Politics of British Feminism 1918-1970* is similarly tightly-focused on parliamentary politics and the London-centred feminist milieu.[15]

This set the pattern followed by more recent studies. Despite its broad title, *Women in British Public Life 1914-50* by Helen Jones pays hardly any attention to women in local government or local public life generally after 1914 and frames their experience up to then as a kind of apprenticeship, 'cutting their teeth' for their future role in national public life.[16] Other histories such as Cheryl Law's *Suffrage and Power*, Krista Cowman's *Women in British politics* and the collective work edited by Julie Gottlieb & Richard Toye *The Aftermath of Suffrage* signal the importance of the local angle, but, in practice, focus heavily on Westminster.[17] Law has some interesting things to say about the growth of the Labour Party Women's Sections but does not examine local government and the 'non-political' associations. Cowman's account relies on Patricia Hollis's book and has little information on local government after 1914. Gottlieb and Toye's study does include an important chapter on the local angle by Karen Hunt and June Hannam, which we will come to.

Apart from such general histories there are numerous biographies, autobiographies and collective studies on parliamentarians. While these pioneers certainly merit attention, not least because they constituted the most conspicuous outcome of the great struggle for the parliamentary vote, it seems as if their story has entirely eclipsed that of their counterparts in local politics. An illustration of this fixation with Westminster in Pugh's book is his single mention of 'a Miss Beavan' as an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate in 1929, omitting to say that this is the Margaret Beavan of the Liverpool meeting, 'the little mother of Merseyside' and perhaps the most celebrated voluntary social worker of the period who had served the year before as Lord Mayor of Liverpool, 'the second city of the Empire'.[18] Mussolini was so intrigued by a woman in this role that he invited her to a personal audience when she visited Italy. When she died in 1931 the King and Queen sent their condolences and crowds lined the streets for her funeral procession. Her abortive parliamentary bid was just one brief episode in her long and illustrious public career, but it seems to be the only one that catches the attention of historians.

THE UNCHARISMATIC SPECIES?

In her book *Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather*, Tessa Boase draws a vivid avian comparison between Emmeline Pankhurst, leader of the suffragettes, and Etta Lemon, founding figure of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Birds (and hence a forerunner of the modern animal rights movement). Emmeline Pankhurst is the:

> … charismatic species: plumed, elegantly-attired, silver-tongued. She is a genius at self-publicity, a theatrical revolutionary who grasped brilliantly how to use the media. Next to this splendid bird of paradise, Mrs Lemon fades into obscurity. She is the uncharismatic species … Teetotal, evangelical, conservative, anti-suffrage …[19]

In general, the women mayors had more in common in style and character with the dogged, proper, conventional Etta Lemon than the disruptive martyr for the cause Emmeline Pankhurst (although coincidently both of them were active in local government at some stage). Many of them were indeed teetotal, evangelical and conservative. Some were also anti-suffrage. Like Mrs Lemon their achievements were, for a long time, forgotten. It is also true that a substantial number of them resembled the stereotype of 'excellent women': respectable middle-class ladies, many of them spinsters or widows, busily engaged in a host of voluntary, religious and other good causes, active in the women's movement not as ideological feminists, but in the sense of active citizens and as advocates for mothers and children, in the forefront of such bodies as the Women's Institute, the Mothers' Union, the Nursing Associations and the Girl Guides. Many were non-political or found their natural home in the Conservative Party, which was by far the dominant political organisation in most areas during the interwar period and the default choice, especially for middle-class Anglican women.[20] Often they were 'big fish' in very small ponds.

Despite retaining all the pomp and paraphernalia of chartered boroughs, some authorities were indeed tiny. Thirty-two of the women mayors presided over boroughs with a population of less than 5,000, little more than parish councils. But this is hardly a reason for ignoring them, rather the opposite. In many ways they embodied the mainstream of the women's movement in the first half of the twentieth century which, as numerous studies have confirmed, was not typified by the elite feminist groupings and intellectual currents of Bloomsbury, but flourished in

the infrastructure of women's social and voluntary work in the provincial towns and villages of middle-England. As Caitriona Beaumont has observed, such women's voluntary organisations:

> endorsed the domestic role of women and were united in their desire to sustain and protect traditional family life … All this activism and agency on the part of women involved in voluntary women's organisations has at times been overlooked. This omission has been based on the assumption that housewives' associations dominated by middle-class sensibilities and eschewing feminism do not merit inclusion in the history of the women's movement. [21]

As Beaumont contests, the women first elected to local councils—and particularly the most prominent ones—can be seen as the vanguard and lynch pins of this mobilisation of women in community life across the country.

It would certainly be mistaken to dismiss them as dull local worthies. Even among the tiny communities there were numerous impressive, striking and colourful figures. At least one of them, Juanita Phillips, eleven times mayor of tiny Honiton in Devon (population 3000), was a significant feminist figure regionally and nationally, an ex-suffragette later prominent in the Open Door Council and the Six Point Group. Beatrice Cartwright, seven times mayor of even smaller Brackley in Northamptonshire (population 1,200) 'an enthusiastic and aggressive politician' was for many years a pillar of the Conservative party in the county, a member of the national leadership of the Conservative & Unionist Women's Franchise Association, and leading light of a host of local committees and initiatives across north Oxfordshire and west Northamptonshire. Grace Prescott, just qualified as a barrister, was the youngest mayor in the country when she was elected in Godmanchester (population 2000) in 1931 (see Fig.3). One could also mention the exotic Edith Olivier of Wilton (population 2200), who shared her time between the Church, the Women's Institute, the Conservative party, and her civic duties, on the one hand, and her writing career and entourage of male 'bright, young things': Rex Whistler, Stephen Tennant, Siegfried Sassoon, William Walton and Cecil Beaton, on the other.[22] Moreover, membership of even the diminutive authorities was frequently combined with or led to other roles. Thus, Beatrice Cartwright served on a County Military Appeals Committee during the Great War, one of the very few women to do so. Lavinia Malcolm's position as Provost of Dollar, Clackmannanshire (population 2500), from 1913-19, entitled her to participate in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, generally as the only woman among hundreds of men, where she led work on child health. It was very common for women councillors to serve on parallel bodies that managed the Poor Law, schools, hospitals, or (from 1920) as magistrates. It was not unusual for women borough councillors to combine their role with membership of county councils.

Most women mayors led larger authorities: 72 had populations between 20,000 and 100,000 and 33 were more than 100,000 including major cities such as Liverpool, Southampton, Stoke-on-Trent and Sheffield as well as densely populated London boroughs. The larger the authority the greater the weight of responsibility on the mayor. For many it was an arduous full-time job. 'Who is England's busiest woman?' asked a journalist in 1933, continuing:

> I suggest that Mrs. George, the Mayor of Bermondsey, is well in the running for the title. I called upon her at the Mayor's Parlour at the Bermondsey Town Hall, and found her little black-clad figure, dwarfed behind her enormous official desk. All the time she talked to me she was unfolding papers and documents, and her face wore the faintly harassed expression of a woman who had known hard work all her life. "I have to attend 33 committee meetings a month," she said with a little sigh. "Most women would call one of my Housing Committees a day's work, but it is only a drop in the ocean of my day. I have to start at seven each morning if I am to get through with work. I try to get finished by 11.30 at night, but sometimes I am working long after midnight. You see," she explained to me, "I do all my own housework and the cooking for the three of us".[23]

The name of Emily George is not to be found in any of the literature on women's breakthrough into public life in interwar Britain; like so many others her career has been entirely overlooked.

'THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE'

A further explanation for such neglect is the idea that local government was simply not a very significant arena of activity compared with national politics. In other words, that it occupied much the same limited and secondary role in the first decades of the twentieth century as it does today. In fact, the opposite is true: this was the period when local government reached the zenith of its power, prestige and importance in British politics—as witnessed by two books that trace the rise and fall of civic life in Britain. The first, published in 1935—a volume brimming with pride and contributions from the most eminent administrators and political scientists of the time—entitled *A Century of Municipal Progress 1835-1935* described the wide-ranging and fundamental role that local authorities played in the governance of the country and the delivery of services.[24] The second, published in 1985 with the title *Half A Century of Municipal Decline 1935-1985,* describes how the status, resources and functions of local government were progressively stripped away over the next fifty years.[25] As these books confirm in the mid-1930s local government, far from being a side-show, was of central importance in British life. The cities and towns of Britain were the focus of social, economic and political life supported by a rich underpinning of community, religious and charitable networks, presided over by locally-based elites of wealth and class, and informed by a flourishing local and regional press. The

rise of national media, party organisation and business were only beginning to challenge this order. Moreover, many of the expanding functions of government were loaded onto local authorities, which still enjoyed wide autonomy in how they exercised their powers in this period. The process of centralising these services under the modern welfare state—for example the dismantling of the apparatus of the Poor Law—initially transferred more responsibility to local councils; it was only from the later 1930s and especially after 1945 that the institutions of national government, notably the National Health Service, took over these roles. British politics in the first four decades of the twentieth-century was to a large extent a matter of local politics aggregated into national politics.

It is no accident that many of the most prominent national politicians of the period were steeped in local government. Stanley Baldwin followed his father as a Worcestershire County Councillor, chaired a parish council and was a Justice of the Peace for 50 years.[26] Neville Chamberlain, the driving force of reform (much of it focused on local government—in the Conservative and National governments of the 1920s and 30s) also followed in the footsteps of his father, Joe, as Lord Mayor of Birmingham. On the other side, successive leaders of the Labour party—George Lansbury and Clement Attlee—served as mayors of London Boroughs. Attlee, like his fellow Labour heavyweight Herbert Morrison, leader of the London County Council, wrote influential books on local government.[27] Eleanor Rathbone, one of the most important feminist politicians of the period, sat for many years as a councillor in Liverpool, and other women MPs such as Ellen Wilkinson and Susan Lawrence had local government experience too.

Other significant women national politicians also served as a mayor. Violet Markham for decades moved freely in the Whitehall corridors of power, held a series of senior official positions and ended up as vice-chair of the Unemployment Assistance Board, the powerful quango that centralised the functions of the old Poor Law from the mid-1930s. In the early 1920s, Violet decided not to pursue parliamentary politics, but to focus on local government. As she put it, 'I turned with thankfulness from a maze that led nowhere to the practical concerns of Chesterfield and its municipal affairs. Here at least there was something concrete to be done'.[28] She prioritised her civic duties over many of her myriad other activities; from 1927-28 serving as Mayor of Chesterfield, and for a half-century leading and subsidising an educational settlement in the town.

That one of the foremost feminist writers of the interwar period, Winifred Holtby, should set her famous novel *South Riding* in the context of local government was therefore less surprising than it might seem to us now. It was a familiar world for Holtby, whose mother was a county alderman in Yorkshire, and a natural enough backdrop for a story that explored power, class, social conditions and gender roles. The civic framework was central to the novel, which is organized into eight parts, each marking an area of local government activity. Taken together, they provide a pretty good sample of the sprawling functions of local authorities in the 1930s: education, highways and bridges, agriculture and small-holdings, public health, public assistance, mental deficiency, finance, housing and town-planning, though it missed out some, such as policing and public order.[29]

At the pinnacle of the local power structure sat the mayor. David Cannadine, writing of the period up to 1945, observed that:

> The office of mayor assumed particular importance at this time. He embodied the unity and the greatness of the community; he must be able to carry off the social and ceremonial side of his duties with dignity and panache, and he must have the resources to entertain lavishly, and to subscribe generously to charities, clubs and associations … in addition the mayor should be a man of ancient lineage, high social standing and impeccable connections.[30]

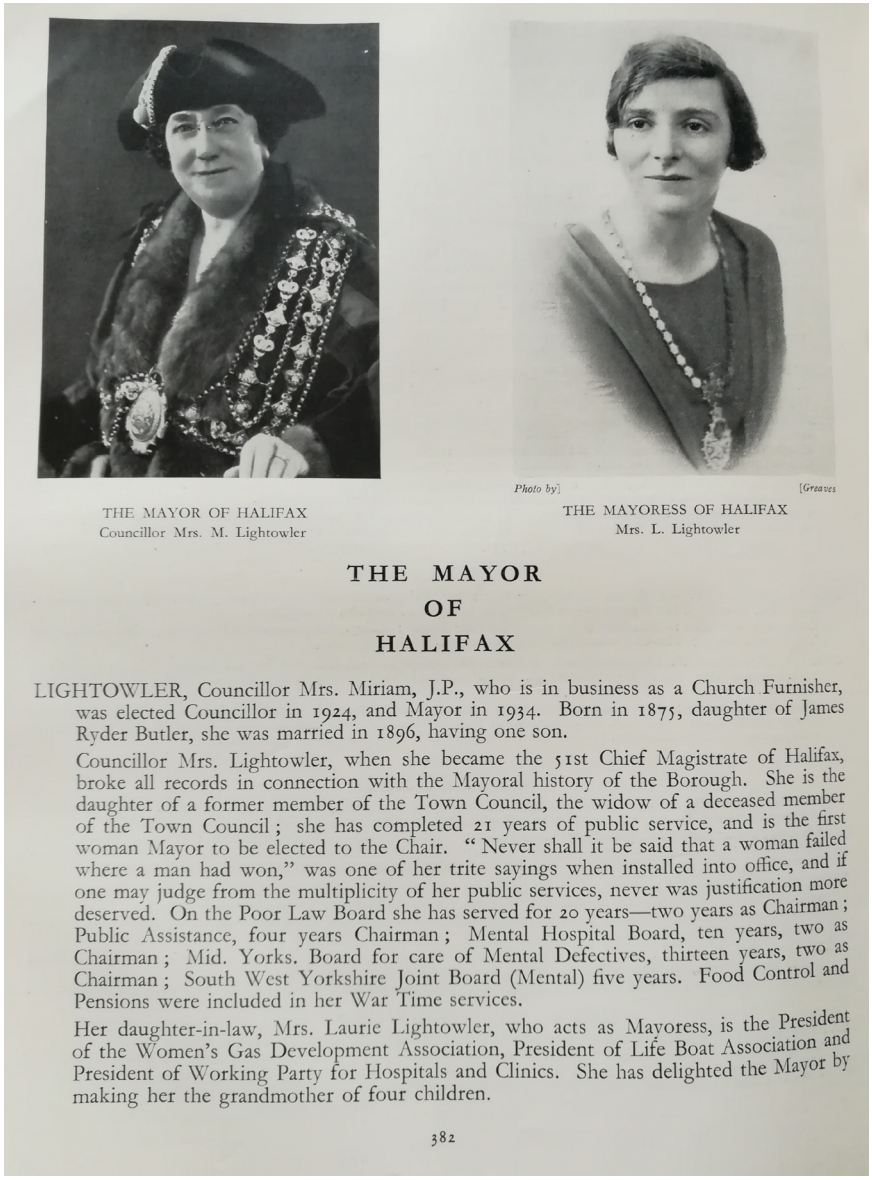
In referring only to men, Cannadine reflected the default assumption of the time—that males were singularly qualified to fill such a post. It would indeed be no exaggeration to say that the mayors of the towns and cities of Britain were regarded as a back-bone of the constitutional order of the state. A large tome published in 1935 to celebrate the Jubilee of King George V proclaimed the prestige and importance of the office of first citizen by gathering and presenting portraits and biographical details of the mayors (and their mayoresses) of all the boroughs throughout the kingdom.[31]

With its central role in the civic machine, the mayoralty carried with it real effective power too. Catherine Williamson, mayor of Canterbury in the late 1930s explained that:

> It is quite impossible to obtain a complete picture of Municipal life before the topmost goal has been reached and filled. In working as a Councillor or Alderman one is apt to take a one-sided view of Municipal activity and while in a large Authority it may be essential to make a close study of a few departments of Municipal life, it is possible in a small Authority like Canterbury to be conversant with the whole and this ground can only be effectively covered by serving in the office of Mayor. The Mayor has the right of attending every Council meeting and all Committees, during his year or years of office. To a new member of Local Government, the position of Chief Citizen appears to be difficult and intricate, and indeed this is certainly so. But having once reached the position of Chairman of the Council one has, as it were, a panoramic view of Council work, so making the chairmanship very much easier.[32]

According to the *Daily Mail*, Williamson 'is a very industrious, experienced public woman. And she certainly rules the council with a rod of iron'.[33]

The importance of local government leadership did not need to be explained to contemporaries. Winifred Holtby memorably described its primacy in relation to the problems of everyday life, 'local government (is) in essence the first line of defence thrown up by the



THE MAYOR OF HALIFAX
Councillor Mrs. M. Lightowler

Photo by] [Greaves

THE MAYORESS OF HALIFAX
Mrs. L. Lightowler

THE MAYOR
OF
HALIFAX

LIGHTOWLER, Councillor Mrs. Miriam, J.P., who is in business as a Church Furnisher, was elected Councillor in 1924, and Mayor in 1934. Born in 1875, daughter of James Ryder Butler, she was married in 1896, having one son.

Councillor Mrs. Lightowler, when she became the 51st Chief Magistrate of Halifax, broke all records in connection with the Mayoral history of the Borough. She is the daughter of a former member of the Town Council, the widow of a deceased member of the Town Council; she has completed 21 years of public service, and is the first woman Mayor to be elected to the Chair. "Never shall it be said that a woman failed where a man had won," was one of her trite sayings when installed into office, and if one may judge from the multiplicity of her public services, never was justification more deserved. On the Poor Law Board she has served for 20 years—two years as Chairman; Public Assistance, four years Chairman; Mental Hospital Board, ten years, two as Chairman; Mid. Yorks. Board for care of Mental Defectives, thirteen years, two as Chairman; South West Yorkshire Joint Board (Mental) five years. Food Control and Pensions were included in her War Time services.

Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Laurie Lightowler, who acts as Mayoress, is the President of the Women's Gas Development Association, President of Life Boat Association and President of Working Party for Hospitals and Clinics. She has delighted the Mayor by making her the grandmother of four children.

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Fig. 2: Miriam Lightowler's page in the compendium of portraits of the Mayors and Provosts prepared for King George V's Silver Jubilee 1935 (in the author's possession).

community against our common enemies—poverty, sickness, ignorance, isolation, mental derangement and social maladjustment'.[34] Feminist organisations placed great weight on increasing female participation in civic life. This was the key objective of the Women Citizens' Associations established in many areas. The National Council of Women campaigned to increase the number of women magistrates and throughout the 1920s the organ of the Women's Freedom League, *The Vote*, reported assiduously on the activities of women in local politics. It also regularly featured on its front page lengthy portraits of 'Our Women Mayors'. The national and provincial press paid much attention to the doings and sayings of the women-mayors too. For instance, the *Daily Mirror* regularly celebrated the election of Labour ones, though as an extension of their traditional gender role, not as a challenge to it (see Fig.4). The *Ladies' Who's Who* published in 1938 contained a special section on women councillors and magistrates with nearly 400 entries.[35]

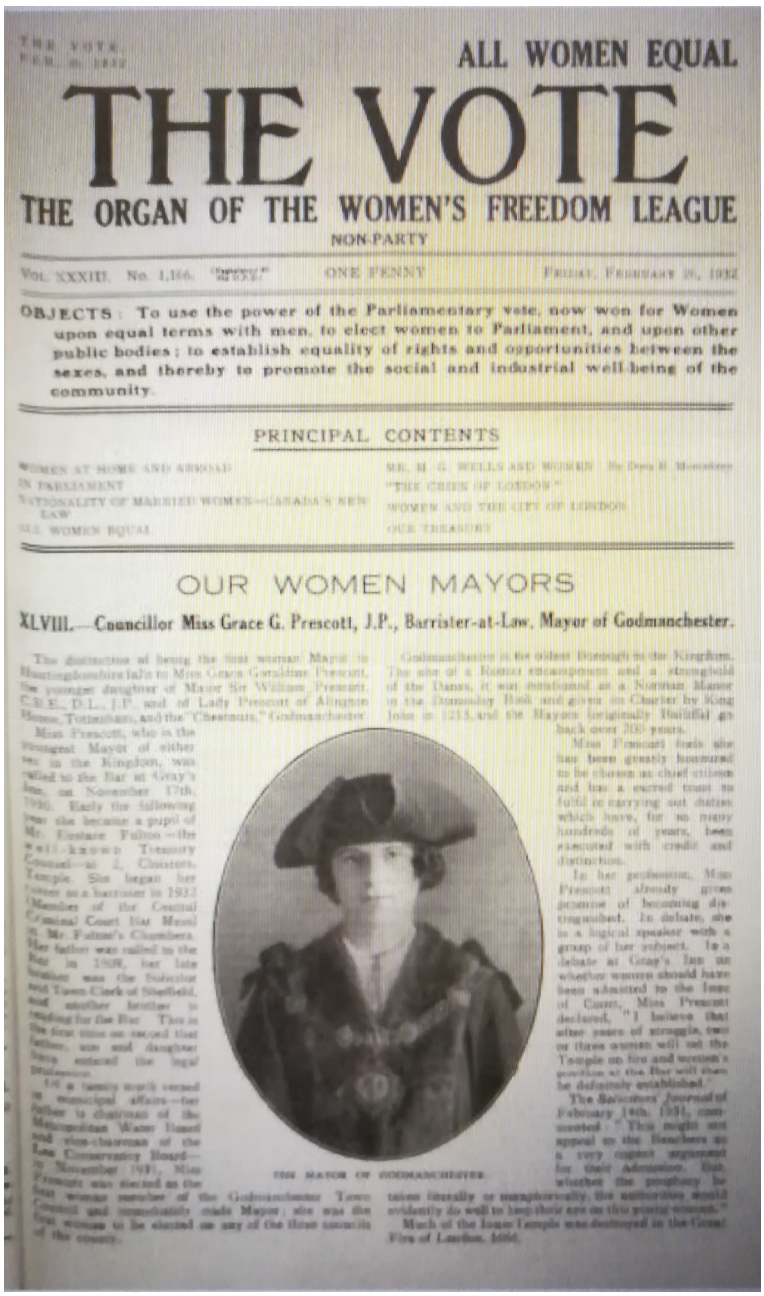
The high status of local government was illustrated by an event in 1947. A banquet was held in Shoreditch Town Hall to pay tribute to the careers of 'two great citizens', Henrietta Girling and her husband, Bill, who together dominated Shoreditch politics and the Labour-controlled council for decades. The guest speakers at the banquet were not only the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, but also the deputy-Prime Minister, Herbert Morrison. It was a celebration of the centrality of civic leadership in the ascent of the Labour party.[36] 'Auntie Hettie' was a remarkable working-class, socialist woman who sat as a council member from 1919 to 1965, served as mayor and mayoress on numerous occasions, and produced twelve children, nine of whom survived into adulthood. The achievement of Henrietta Girling is unrecorded anywhere in the literature whether of the women's or the labour movement, the common fate particularly of many of the early Labour women-mayors.

'PARTIAL, PATCHY AND EVEN DISTORTED'

If the local sphere played a major role in interwar British politics and it is no secret that considerable numbers of women were coming to the fore in this arena, their neglect must be due to other factors.

In their important contribution to Gottlieb and Toye's book mentioned earlier, 'Towards an Archaeology of Interwar Women's Politics: the Local and the Everyday', Karen Hunt and June Hannam argued that the results of the aftermath of suffrage should be assessed not only in the well-trodden realm of national politics, but 'in the place where the new woman citizen went about her everyday life: her local neighbourhood'. They called for 'a new archaeology of women's politics', a conceptual and methodological reframing, shifting the focus of research to 'how women understood and 'did' politics at the local level'. This would require mapping and 'a meticulous search of the spaces in which women carried out and developed their politics' at the grassroots where 'the majority of women (and men) engaged or encountered politics'. They concluded:

> The creation of this archaeology of women's politics will pose challenges for existing explanations of what happened after the vote was won but also how we understand politics more generally. We are not claiming that stories of women's politics can only be told when anchored with local political cultures but without this we only have a partial, patchy and even distorted national



ALL WOMEN EQUAL

THE VOTE

THE ORGAN OF THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE

NON-PARTY

VOL. XXXIII. No. 1,166. ONE PENNY FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1932

OBJECTS: To use the power of the Parliamentary vote, now won for Women upon equal terms with men, to elect women to Parliament, and upon other public bodies; to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes, and thereby to promote the social and industrial well-being of the community.

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

OUR WOMEN MAYORS

XLVIII.—Councillor Miss Grace G. Prescott, J.P., Barrister-at-Law, Mayor of Godmanchester.

THE MAYOR OF GODMANCHESTER

Fig.3: The Vote 'Our Women Mayors' series: feature on Grace Prescott, Mayor of Godmanchester, 1931-32. Source: British Newspaper Archive.

> picture. The national story of women's politics will change when it is rebuilt out from the neighbourhood—from the local and the everyday.[37]

In the decade since Hunt and Hannam issued their call, there has been rather mixed progress towards implementing this 'bottom-up' approach. As the case of the women mayors testifies there are still gaping holes in our knowledge of some aspects of the local dimension of the women's movement. While growing numbers of historians are exploring this approach, the number of published local studies is still meagre.[38] A prerequisite is the availability of the required data to reconstruct the lives and activity of local activists. In her recent study of Black Country women, Anna Muggeridge—one of the first to apply and develop the Hunt-Hannam methodology to women in local politics in a systematic way—confronted this issue.[39] She did not use:

> personal sources, such as diaries, letters, memoirs, or oral histories, as such sources are not available for the persons or organisations explored in this thesis. This is not a local phenomenon: contemporaneous letters, diaries or other personal papers are rarely deposited in public archives by those outside of the "great and the good''.[40]

This lack of the staple ingredients for historical research not only limits our view of the great majority of women, but it tends to shine the spotlight on the rare individuals who did leave such material and have become icons representing the wider, unseen population of local activists. Two of them crop up routinely in the literature: Hannah Mitchell and Selina Cooper. Mitchell's memoirs were published in 1968 as *The Hard Way Up: the Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, suffragette and rebel*.[41] Her life is undoubtedly interesting as she was a working-class militant suffragist, a feminist and a socialist who struggled against class, gender and domestic constraints to pursue her career as an activist and later as a local politician—she was a councillor and magistrate in Manchester. Selina Cooper was another working-class radical suffragist—of the non-militant variety—a feminist and a socialist who was elected as a Poor Law Guardian and was later involved in local politics in Nelson, Lancashire. Her story, based partly on the testimony of her daughter, featured prominently in Jill Liddington and Jill Norris's *One Hand Tied Behind Us* published in 1978. This book specifically aimed to the get away from the received interpretation of the movement which 'told the suffrage story in terms of middle-class, London-based leaders—especially the Pankhursts and the suffragettes' by focusing on the local campaign in Lancashire and especially the substantial working-class element much of which was linked not to the Pankhursts' WSPU, but to 'the giant non-militant' National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.[42]

This corrective to one aspect of the historiographical imbalance in our understanding of the development of the women's movement seems however, to have led to another. Mitchell and Cooper have come to be regarded as *the* reference points for the involvement of women in local government in the period. For instance Pamela Graves, in the short section she devotes to local government in her standard work on women in the Labour party, relies heavily on the experience of Hannah Mitchell.[43] Olive Banks's *Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists* includes only two women involved in local government: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Selina Cooper.[44] In fact Mitchell and Cooper are ubiquitous in the literature. However, they were not at all typical of women active at local level, even the Labour ones. Selina Cooper was a Poor Law

Guardian for a time and later a magistrate, but she never sat as a councillor, although she once stood for election. Hannah Mitchell was a Manchester councillor from 1924-1935 and a magistrate, however her outspoken and radical feminism and socialism made her an isolated figure on the authority and even within the Labour party. Her first loyalty was to the left-wing Independent Labour Party and in the 1930s she sat as an ILP councillor not a Labour one. She held views that must have limited her influence—for example she was opposed to Labour taking the chair of council committees until it had complete control of the authority. Cooper was also a leftist and, like Mitchell, a pacifist; she broke from the Labour party in the late 1930s because of her sympathies with the communist-led anti-fascist movement.

Fortunately, the paucity of personal sources is compensated by other types of material, which have become steadily more accessible in recent years: census and similar sources of the type used extensively in family history research; digitalised, searchable newspaper archives, which now include an enormous range of the local and women's press. Along with archival records of organizations, these were the main sources that Anna Muggeridge drew on in her research. Such sources provide a vast amount of personal data on individuals—social and economic status, occupation, marital and family situation, sometimes education and religious affiliation—as well as on their context in terms of civic career, organizational links and activities, offices held, political and other connections and opinions. With various other supporting information, this allows us to gain an understanding of the lives and careers of many local women activists at a considerable level of detail. The massive expansion of the possibilities of historical enquiry through digitalisation enables researchers to unlock previously largely unexplored topics—such as the role of women in grassroots politics and community life—amongst many others.[45] However, it is important to underline that research into the women mayors—or women in local government more generally—has not hitherto been *prevented* because of lack of data. Much data has been available, certainly enough to begin the analysis, and one or two historians such as Patricia Hollis have exploited it using traditional research methods to illuminate aspects of the topic. It was rather the sheer labour-intensity of gathering large amounts of fragmented material that was the challenge, as well as the unconscious assumption that other areas of research would be more fruitful for understanding the development of the women's movement.

CHANGING THE STORY

Correcting the imbalance in the attention historians give to the local and national dimensions also requires adjustment of received narratives of the development of the women's movement: as Hunt and Hannam put it, 'the national story of women's politics will change when it is rebuilt out from the neighbourhood'. For example, the view that the women's movement suffered a general retreat in the interwar period, based on the meagre progress of women in parliament and government, the limited size and impact of the feminist societies and the disappointment of many feminists with the results of suffrage is shaken by work—notably that of Maggie Andrews and Catriona Beaumont—revealing the wide extent and vitality of the 'non-political' women's organisations rooted in local communities.[46] Even if they 'never questioned traditional gender roles, nor did they ever envisage themselves as feminist' such middle-class housewives associations were the principle site of the social and citizenship activity of large numbers of women in the 1920s and 30s.[47] Beaumont argues that our understanding of the breadth and ideological variety of the women's movement should accommodate such flourishing local organizations. Similarly, the assumption that women's public engagement after suffrage can be measured by their involvement in national and parliamentary politics is called into question by Anna Muggeridge's research. This brings out the relatively low level of engagement of Black Country women in Westminster-centred politics and their much greater and more intensive participation in the three other areas she looked at: housewives' associations, voluntary health organisations and local government. For 'ordinary women' these locally-centred fields were where they were able to engage in the 'practical politics' that interested them most deeply and provide the most fertile territory for understanding better the reality of the interwar women's movement.

Where do the women-mayors stand in this? Many of them were not 'ordinary women', in the sense that they were, by definition, members of local civic elites and often they had connections with other elites, local and national, whether of class, wealth or politics. Nevertheless, their careers strongly confirm the picture of intense involvement in community associations and structures and the practical issues that they concerned themselves with. To give just one example, Miriam Lightowler's portrait (see Fig.2 above) lists her service:

> … on the Poor Law Board she has served for 20 years—two years as Chairman; Public Assistance, four years Chairman; Mental Hospital Board, ten years, two as Chairman; Mid. Yorks. Board for care of Mental Defectives, thirteen years, two as Chairman; South West Yorkshire Joint Board (Mental) five years. Food Control and Pensions were included in her War Time service'.

Such commitment to a host of statutory as well as voluntary bodies was typical of the women-mayors many of whom were unmoved by national political issues and very few of whom identified explicitly with the feminist cause. However, it was certainly more common amongst the women mayors to be connected with national politics: quite a number were married to or closely related to MPs and two were the daughters of Labour party leaders: Nan Hardie (Keir Hardie) and Dorothy Thurtle (George Lansbury), who were also both married to MPs. Several stood for parliament or were invited to become candidates and a significant number of them were prominent in political parties at local and sometimes national level. The few feminists included nationally-prominent figures in the movement, such as Eva Hartree, Florence Keynes and Juanita Phillips. It is also worth noting that amongst


THE DAILY MIRROR

HER A THIEF—NOW
ORK

TO LEAD THEIR BOROUGHS' CORONATION CELEBRATIONS

Alderman Mrs. Daisy Parsons, to be Coronation Mayor of West Ham, will be her borough's first woman mayor and youngest civic head. She is forty-six and once worked in a cigarette factory.

Reading is also to have a woman as mayor in Coronation year. She is Alderman Mrs. A. Jenkins, seen engaged in the no less important duty of making tea for her railwayman husband.

Fig.4 A press feature on two of the new Labour women mayors in 1936: Aldermen Daisy Parsons of West Ham and Alice Jenkins of Reading; the caption reads that Mrs Jenkins, the new mayor for Coronation Year, is pictured 'engaged in the no less important duty of making tea for her railwayman husband'. Daily Mirror 2 Oct. 1936. British Newspaper Archive.

the very many who were active in church, chapel or synagogue, several were involved in the national governance of their faiths including Catherine Hunt and Clara Winterbotham (Anglican), Catherine Alderton and Margaret Hardy (Non-conformist) and Miriam Moses (Orthodox Jewish). All this goes to underline how odd is the eradication of this important intermediary group from the history of the women's movement.

'DIFFICULT WOMEN?'

The paradigm of the activist for the women's cause as a feisty, forthright, uncompromising fighter—the image particularly associated with the suffragettes—remains potent, especially in the popular literature. Helen Lewis's recent book *Difficult Women* explored this phenomenon. In her history of feminism 'in eleven fights', Lewis sympathises with the view that progress demands struggle, that 'campaigners have to be disruptive. They cannot take No for an answer'.[48] It is often assumed that feminism goes together with a generally left-wing, or at least liberal progressive, outlook. Radical socialist feminists such as Hannah Mitchell and Selina Cooper were rediscovered and lionised by left-wing second-wave feminists of the 1960s and 70s. They and their experiences and views spoke directly to the feminist concerns of that time. Mitchell in particular assailed the drudgery and constraints of the traditional domestic role of women.

However, this vision of the women's movement is challenged by a focus on the local which shows how far Mitchell and Cooper were outliers among the mass of women active in civic life and the wider 'non-political' women's movement. These were not disruptive or 'difficult' in the sense described by Lewis. They were typically pragmatic and persistent builders of consensus rather than seekers of confrontation. As Eleanor Rathbone put it, 'we knew when it was necessary to compromise … we acquired by experience a certain flair which told us when a charge of dynamite would come in useful and when it was better to rely on the methods of a skilled engineer'.[49] These 'prudent revolutionaries', in Brian Harrison's phrase, focused on practical 'bread-and-butter' issues and sought incremental improvement in the conditions and opportunities for women and children.[50] And as June Purvis has emphasised, 'nor is feminism 'owned' by the left'.[51] The majority of civically active women were Tories or at least conservatives with a 'small c'. Even the Labour ones were frequently strong supporters of the traditional family and took positions on issues like female employment that would surprise us today. For instance, Daisy Parsons—who was on the left: she had been a member of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation and was heavily involved in Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes—saw domestic service as a good career for women and was mainly interested in raising its status:

> "I am as proud of the fact that I was a domestic servant as I am of being Mayor," said Mrs. Daisy Parsons, the woman Mayor of West Ham. This, from a successful woman, is likely to be of encouragement to domestic workers, and even housewives who do all their own work … Mrs. Parsons knows something of all sides because she has worked in service, in a factory, and is a

> mistress in her own home. She believes that domestic service will soon be recognised as a career, and therefore maids should treat it as such and be proud of their job. "Don't jib at wearing a uniform," she says, "it is your badge of office." Mrs. Parsons believes that domestic service is far better than plenty of office jobs. For instance, it has no dashing to the office, wasting time travelling in trains, etc. "When the office girl's expenses are paid she is no better off than you are," declared West Ham's Mayor to maids.[52]

In order to obtain a clear and complete view of the politics of the interwar women's movement, its variety and multidimensionality needs to be recognised. Excluding or ignoring voices that seem dissonant with or irrelevant to established or favoured understandings leads to the 'partial, patchy and even distorted' vision that Hunt and Hannam warn against. Restoring the first women chief citizens to the picture is just one step, but a necessary one to integrating the local into the story of interwar women's politics.

Extensive information on the lives of the women mayors and provosts between 1908 and 1939 will be made available on Jaime Reynolds's website First Citizens *(to be launched in the second half of 2023)***.**

Endnotes

1. The newsreel can be viewed here: https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/62468/.
2. Anne Baldwin in 'Progress and Patterns in the Election of Women as Councillors 1918-38' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2012) identifies some 950 women who were elected to London and County Borough councils between 1919-38. Perhaps another couple of thousand were elected in the Municipal Boroughs in England and Wales and the Burghs in Scotland, making an estimated total of some 3,000 in total in the interwar period.
3. Jaime Reynolds 'Madam Mayor—the First Wave of Liberal Women in Local Government Leadership', *Journal of Liberal History*, 89/9 (Winter 2015-16).
4. *The Common Cause*, 27 Jan. 1928.
5. Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 88.
6. Gillian Fenwick, *Women and the Dictionary of National Biography: a Guide to DNB Volumes 1885-1985 and Missing Persons* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), 1.
7. Various *Dictionary of Labour Biography, vols 1-15* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan 1978-2019). The two were Alice Arnold and Agnes Hardie.
8. Ann Crawford (ed), *The Europa biographical dictionary of British women: over 1000 notable women from Britain's past* (London: Europa, 1983) includes Elizabeth G. Anderson and Violet Markham.
9. Cheryl Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2000); the three are Agnes Hardie, Christiana Hartley and Juanita Phillips.
10. Notably: Ivy Ireland, *Margaret Beavan of Liverpool—Her Character and Work* (Liverpool: Henry Young & Sons, 1938); Jo Manton, *Elizabeth Garrett Anderson* (London: Methuen, 1965); Violet Markham, *Return Passage: the Autobiography of Violet R Markham CH* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); Edith Olivier, *Without Knowing Mr Walkley: Personal Memories* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938); Catherine Williamson, *Though the Streets Burn* (London: Headley Bros, 1949). Anna Thomasson's, *A Curious Friendship: The Story of a Bluestocking and a Bright Young Thing* (London: Macmillan, 2015), which is about Edith Olivier, is more a literary and social biography than a political one. Helen Jones (ed) *Duty and Citizenship—the Correspondence and Papers of Violet Markham, 1896-1953* (London: Historians Press, 1994) and Penelope Middelboe, *Edith Olivier from her Journals: 1924-48* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989) are also useful, as is Julia Neville's self-published monograph, *Viva Juanita: Juanita Phillips: Champion for Change in East Devon Between the Wars* (2012) and Cathy Hunt's 'Alice Arnold of Coventry: trade unionism and municipal politics 1919-39' (unpublished PhD thesis, Coventry University 2003) and 'Everyone's Poor Relation—the Poverty and Isolation of a working-class woman local politician in interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 16/3 (2007).
11. Graham Taylor, *Ada Salter: Pioneer of Ethical Socialism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2016).
12. Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
13. Baldwin, *Progress and Patterns*.
14. Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), chapters 3 and 6.
15. Olive Banks, *The Politics of British Feminism, 1918-1970* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993).
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17. Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: the Women's Movement, 1918-1928* (London: I B Taurus, 2000); Krista Cowman, *Women in British Politics, c.1689-1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010); Julie Gottlieb & Richard Toye *The Aftermath of Suffrage—Women, Gender and Politics in Britain 1918-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013).
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21. Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 33-4.
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23. *Gloucester Citizen*, 29 Mar. 1933.
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33. Ibid, 128.
34. Holtby, *South Riding*, v-vi.
35. *The Ladies' Who's Who—Who's Who For British Women* (London: Pallas, 1938-39).
36. The newsreel may be viewed at: https://britishpathe.com/asset/69229.
37. Karen Hunt and June Hannam 'Towards an Archaeology of Interwar Women's Politics: the Local and the Everyday (2013)' in Gottlieb & Toye *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, chapter 7.
38. Among the historians exploring this approach besides Karen Hunt and Julie Hannam themselves, are Cathy Hunt, both for her work on Alice Arnold of Coventry (see footnote 10) and material on her website: https://cathyhunthistorian.com/; Ruth Davidson 'A local perspective: the women's movement and citizenship, Croydon 1890s–1939, *Women's History Review*, 29/6 (2020) and Julia Neville who is leading the project 'Devon in the 1920s' and has co-authored *Devon Women in Public and Professional Life, 1900–1950* (University of Exeter Press, 2021). Diana Urquhart's *Women in Ulster Politics 1890-1940: A History Not Yet Told* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000) deserves mention as a precursor of this approach.
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41. Geoffrey Mitchell (ed), *The Hard Way Up: the Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, suffragette and rebel* (London: Faber, 1968).
42. Jill Liddington & Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us—the Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1978), 11-13. See also Jill Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946* (London: Virago, 1984).
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Making Space for Women: The Monumental Welsh Women Campaign.

Angela V. John

The newly unveiled statue of Cranogwen. Image courtesy of Julie Nicholas.

On 10 June 2023 the main road leading down to the sea was closed in the tiny West Wales village of Llangrannog. It soon filled with people from the community and many others from further afield, all of whom had come to watch the unveiling, by local children, of a statue of Sarah Jane Rees. Sarah was a proud Llangrannog woman, born in 1839 and known by her Bardic name of Cranogwen. A colourful procession of people, bearing banners and sporting innovative costumes, had walked a mile to the newly renovated community garden, the site for Sebastien Boyesen's exquisite statue.

The procession. Image courtesy of Julie Nicholas.

The Welsh Children's Poet Casi Wyn conducted primary school children in the singing of a song especially commissioned by Literature Wales and composed by her and the children. Earlier, Casi and Hanan Issa (National Poet of Wales) had read a commissioned poem (*Dywed, beth oedd ei chyfrinach? / Tell me, what was her secret?*). This formed part of a carefully orchestrated few days of celebration marking the culmination of a long campaign by Cerflun Cymunedol Cranogwen Community Monument in partnership with Monumental Welsh Women (MWW).

Cranogwen came from a family of sailors. She was a skilled mariner and spent two years on cargo ships between Wales and France. She taught navigation and maths at home, in Liverpool and in London. By the age of 21 she was running a small school in Llangrannog. She was the first woman to win a poetry prize at the National Eisteddfod (in 1865) and became a popular poet as well as being a pioneering female editor (from 1879 until 1889) of a Welsh-language monthly periodical called *Y Frythones* (*The Female Cambro-Briton*), which campaigned for girls' education. This polymath also became an extremely popular lecturer, travelling far and wide – making two extensive trips to America where she addressed Welsh-speaking audiences – as well as delivering lectures lasting about two and a half hours, several times a week at chapels across Wales. Her biographer, Jane Aaron, has compared her popularity amongst Welsh-speaking audiences to that of a modern-day rock star. She advocated women's equality as a central plank of her Christian message. She

Monumental Welsh Women members with the sculptors. Image courtesy of Molyneux Associates.

was also a lifelong temperance advocate and founded the South Wales Women's Temperance Union which, by the time of her death in 1916, boasted 140 branches.

Cranogwen lived with a local woman. She remained immensely proud of her seafaring community. Her statue reflects this in little details, such as anchors on her buttons. The costume and materials used also reflect the natural environment, with its dramatic rocks and their striations. In a society where the menfolk might be away at sea for long periods, its women were used to being resourceful and independent in ways not always associated with Victorian Wales.

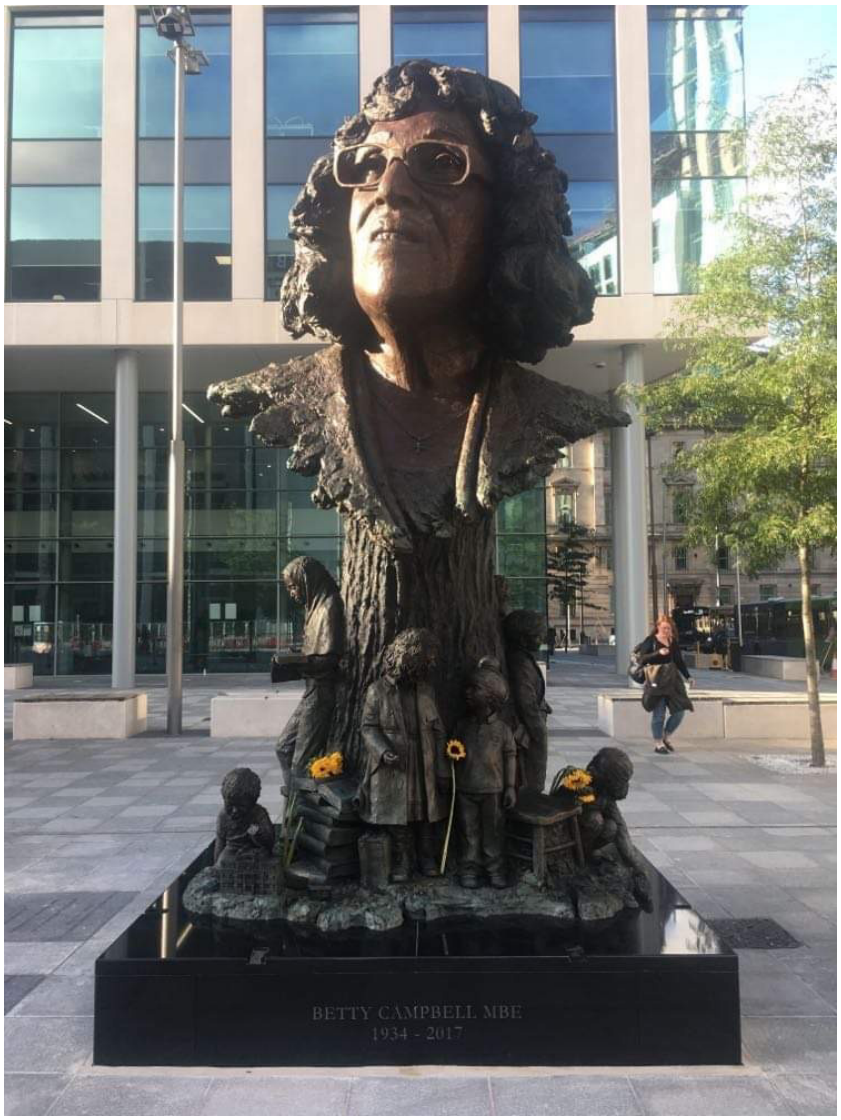
The sculptor, Sebastien Boyesen, has lived in Llangrannog for thirty-two years and has worked as an acclaimed artist and designer for even longer. He mentored Keziah Ferguson, a young woman sculptor, on this project. It's the third statue of a woman to be commissioned across Wales by MWW. Our mission is to get five statues of five women erected in five years.

As recently as 2016, not a single statue of a real woman existed in any outdoor space in Wales. Aware of the importance of visibility and role models, MWW was formed as a small, not-for-profit group of women, all determined to change the situation by commemorating the past achievements of the talented women of Wales. Our founder Helen Molyneux emphasises that, 'you cannot be what you cannot see'.

A few years ago, in the middle of Cardiff, a grand new Central Square was being developed: a vast pedestrianised piazza in front of the railway station, designed to house high-rise businesses, flats and organisations, including the new BBC Wales headquarters. Rightacres, the square's developer, along with Welsh Government and Cardiff City Council, generously agreed to support a public artwork in this space: a statue of a historical woman who had made a major contribution to Welsh society. Working with the Women's Equality Network, we whittled down a list of fifty candidates to a shortlist of five.

To ensure that the final choice was endorsed by as many people as possible, BBC Wales ran a Hidden Heroines poll in January 2019, preceded by a week in which radio and television (in English and Welsh), the press and social media bombarded the public with

The Famous Five. Image courtesy of Monumental Welsh Women.



The Betty Campbell Statue. Image courtesy of Ruth Cayford.

information about the five women. A public online ballot followed. The result was announced on television from Central Square.

The People's Choice, by a clear margin, was Betty Campbell (1934-2017). The daughter of a Jamaican father and Irish/Welsh Barbadian mother, Betty lived her entire life in Butetown, Cardiff's multi-racial docklands community. She faced prejudice based on her race, class and gender but became, against the odds, the first black headteacher in Wales. She was well-known as a tireless champion of diversity and equality, fiercely proud of her community and her school, which she made a beacon of multiculturalism. She was a Cardiff City Councillor, a member of the Race Relations Board and sat on the Commission for Racial Equality. It was especially fitting that the first statue would be of a Cardiff legend. It would also be the first statue in Wales of a named black person.

Raising the many thousands of pounds needed was a challenge, one not helped by Covid. Many different organisations, businesses, foundations and individuals generously contributed, partly persuaded by our indefatigable chair and by the many fund-raising events we organised. Working with imaginative art consultants, Studio Response, we selected Eve Shepherd from an impressive field of internationally recognised sculptors. She did us proud with what is a majestic figurative monument.

We involved Betty's family from the outset and one of her children declared, as soon as he saw the maquette, 'It's my mum'. At the same time the statue is symbolic: Eve was drawing on the saying that out of tiny acorns, mighty oaks grow. Betty emerges out of an oak tree, resolute and rooted. At her feet are figures of the children she nurtured and symbols of the docks. During the unveiling ceremony, in September 2021, pupils from her school sang her favourite Labi Siffre song. The then Prince of Wales (who had met her at her school) and actors Rakie Ayola and Michael Sheen sent messages projected on to a giant screen. Her family spoke movingly, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales read her poem about Betty and Professor Olivette Otele made a powerful speech. A BBC Wales documentary about Betty, her statue and our campaign, was shown on television. The statue is now an integral part of Cardiff life: people agree to meet 'by Betty's statue' and flowers and messages are left there.

Spurred on by the Welsh government having the foresight to grant not just £20,000 towards Betty's statue, but also to provide the same amount for each of the four runners-up, enabled us to kick-start fund-raising for further statues. So, we began planning a second statue, that of Elaine Morgan (1920-2013), who was the first woman from South Wales to receive a mining scholarship to Oxford University.

A highly talented and prolific early television dramatist, her popular adaptations included *Testament of Youth* and *How Green Was My Valley*. Elaine was also an author whose pioneering study *The Descent of Woman* (1971) – still in print – reached number seven in the *New York Times* bestseller list. This book gave Darwinism a feminist twist. Later publications advocated the Aquatic Ape theory. Her first story had been published in the national Welsh newspaper (the *Western Mail*) when she was 11. Aged 82, she began a spirited weekly column in the same paper. She died a decade later.

Elaine had always kept her feet firmly on the ground. A lifelong socialist, she lived in Mountain Ash in the Cynon Valley and this was the obvious location for her statue. We chose Emma Rodgers FRSA, acclaimed sculptor of the Cilla Black statue, and in March 2022, on a remarkably sunny day, Elaine's statue was unveiled outside the new doctors' surgery. It depicts beautifully, a young Elaine, pen and paper in hand, with waves suggesting her pioneering work on evolution.

We hope that June 2024 will see the unveiling of the statue of a woman who, although Welsh and remaining

Elaine Morgan in Mountain Ash. Image courtesy of Julie Nicholas.

closely associated with Wales throughout her life, nevertheless spent most of her adult life in England: Lady Rhondda (1883-1958). The Second Viscountess Rhondda, who had been born Margaret Haig Thomas and was briefly Margaret Mackworth, was the most privileged of our five women, yet even she lacked the right to vote until she was in her thirties and had to battle for decades for many rights, including being able to take her seat in the House of Lords.

Margaret used her privilege and money to help others. As well as being imprisoned in Newport, Monmouthshire for setting a letterbox alight, she was arguably the best-known suffragette in Wales and secretary of Newport's Women's Social and Political Union). In 1920 she founded, funded, then edited the hugely influential weekly paper *Time and Tide* and gave it a pioneering all-female board. It appealed especially to the newly enfranchised woman, but was also appreciated by many other women and men and the literary giants of the day wrote for it. She was a leading figure in business, sat on more boards than any other woman in the UK and became the first female president of the Institute of Directors. Margaret also founded the Six Point Group that sought to improve women's legal rights. Newport is the obvious site for her statue and a Statue4Lady Rhondda MWW steering group is working hard to raise funds. The sculptor Jane Robbins revealed her powerful maquette of Lady Rhondda at a recent fund-raiser at Newport's cathedral.

The fifth statue will be of Elizabeth Andrews (1882-1960), a seamstress who left school aged 13. A miner's wife, she became the first woman elected to the executive of the Rhondda Labour Party, active in women's suffrage and the Women's Cooperative Guild. In 1919 she became the first Labour Party Women's Organiser for Wales. She was a leading campaigner for pithead baths, nursery education and maternity rights in her Rhondda locality and editor of the 'Women's Page' in the *Colliery Workers Magazine*. Her statue is due to be unveiled in 2025 in Penderyn.

Memorialising these five rather different figures will, we hope, help to change some of our public spaces and also stimulate further campaigns for statues elsewhere, especially in North Wales. We see them providing an accessible, free and lasting legacy of public art for all. And, crucially, we want this way of doing History to inspire people, especially young women, in the present and future.

To learn more about the MWW campaign, see the website www.monumentalwelshwomen.org. We are still badly in need of further funds for our last two statues. Our website includes details about how to donate. Any contributions, however small, will be much appreciated. You can also donate via https://uk.gofundme.com/f/statue-for-lady-rhondda

'Don't Believe the Papers' – Katie Gliddon's Suffragette Diary

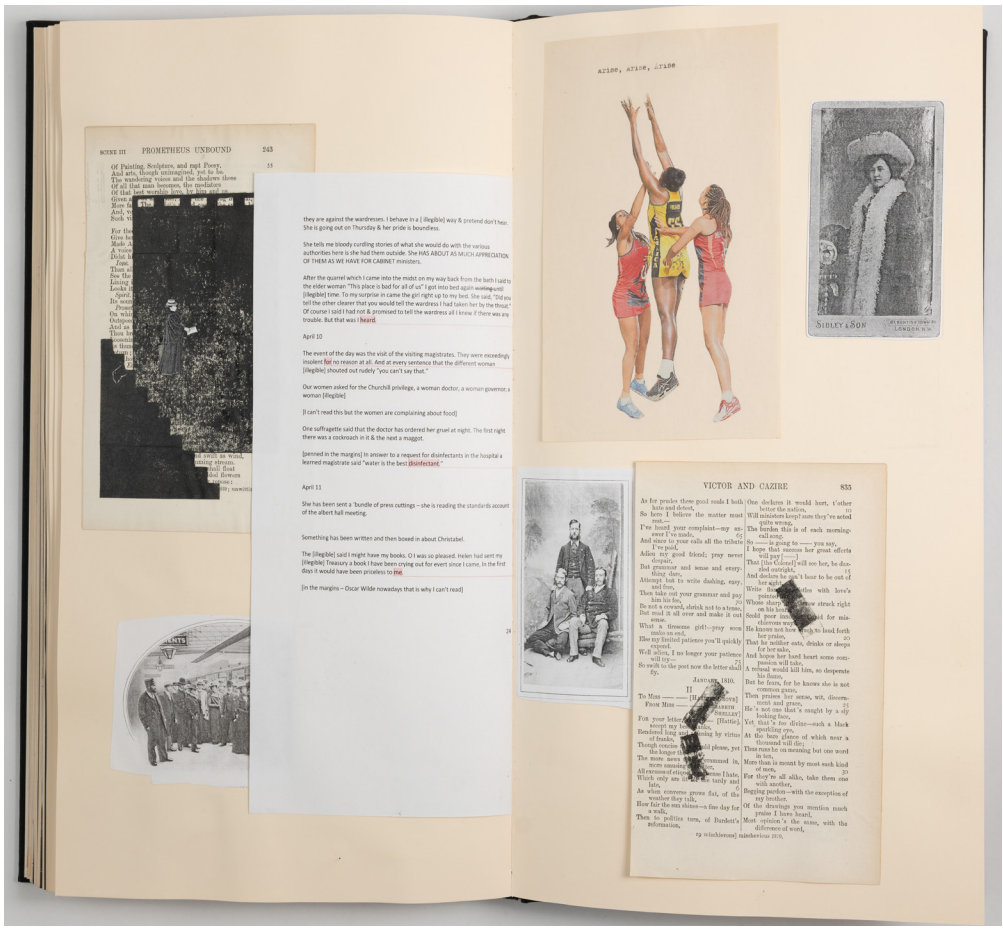
Dr Mireille Fauchon

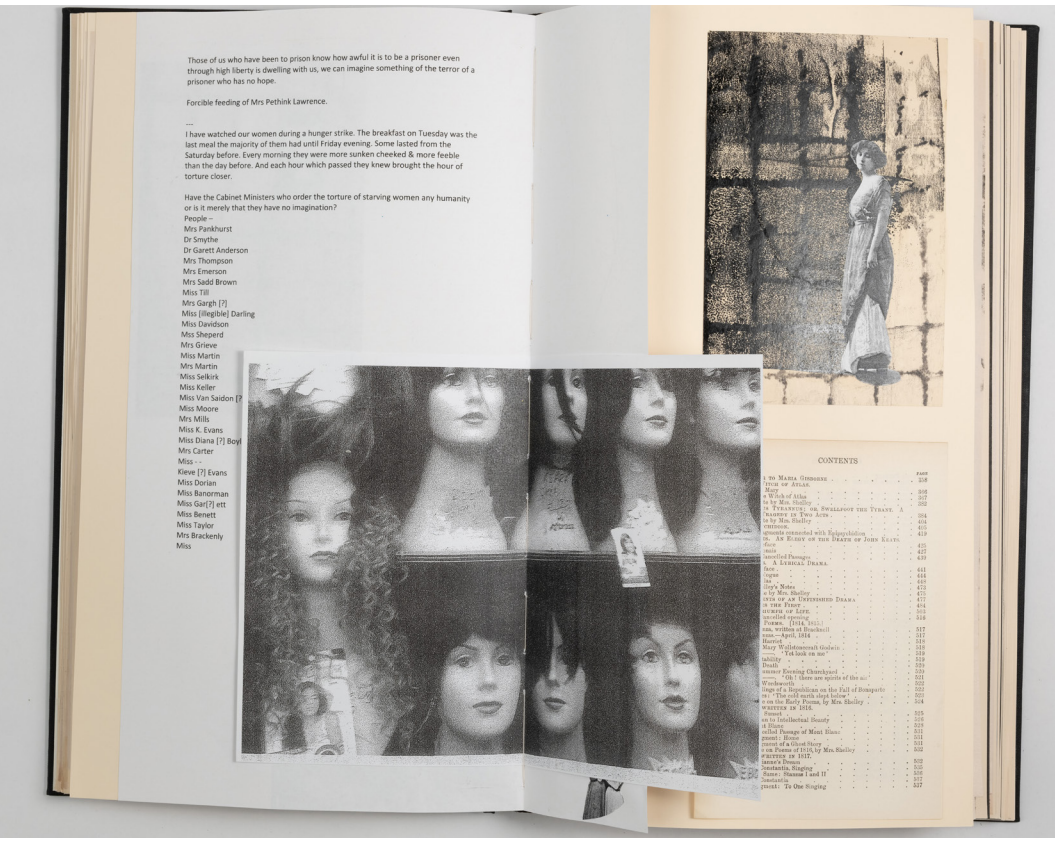
London College of Communication

'Don't believe the papers', wrote the Suffragette Katie Gliddon to her mother from Holloway Prison, urging her not to believe everything that was being reported in the press. This line stayed with me as I navigated through her collection while sitting in the reading room of The Women's Library in the summer months of 2017. Gliddon had been sentenced to two months with hard labour in the spring of 1912 for taking part in a mass glass-smashing protest while campaigning for enfranchisement. While detained, she kept a diary pencilled in the margins of a compendium of poetry by Percy Bysshe Shelley—her own copy taken with her for this very purpose. On release she revised and edited her account, producing several variations with the intention of it being published.

The study and interpretation of Gliddon's life writing formed the central case study of an arts practice-based PhD completed between 2016-2020 at Kingston University London. The research was supported by the HMRC funded London Doctoral Design Centre. On entering the project I had no idea that I would be working with Gliddon's collection, let alone addressing such a historically significant feminist narrative. By the time Katie Gliddon stepped fully into frame, I was already a year in and I had been searching for a case study. Let me rephrase, I was searching for a story. A story through which I could examine the methods and approaches at play in my work as an illustrator and would ultimately prove my hunch that this practice could have value in social research. In my role as an educator, I am privy to the workings and doings that take place within the creation of illustration projects. In order to illustrate any given subject, it must first be understood. Illustrators are trained to interpret, to find and locate information as appropriate. This can result in highly inventive methodologies. The creative skills applied in imaginative practical work are evident in this investigative and interpretative process: imagination, narrativization, creative making and experimentation across media, in order to determine how best to represent and communicate.

To return to Kate Gliddon and how I bonded with a woman long dead and the interest in events from over a century ago, it should first be known that I have always had a penchant for local history. I have an ear for the fantastic, for the remarkable within the mundane and stories about people in places that are familiar to me at least. I am not a historian. My fascination lies not in empiricism, accepted facts or the study of change over time, but in the stories we tell ourselves in an attempt to make sense of the 'here', now and yesterday; the everyday historical consciousness found in gossip, chit-chat, rumours and hearsay. I have often thought this, in part, is due to the origins of my being: the daughter of an Indian mother from rural Goa and a British father, who was born at the dawn of Second World War only to join the Royal Air Force at seventeen, estranging himself from his own bloodline. Neither had much material evidence of their lives before coming together, later in life, to start a family in South London—Balham to be exact. I was raised within a simultaneous milieu of different voices (mostly women's), accents, time frames and realities. In my consciousness, the grey of 1990s suburban London met stories from the village, which were heavily tinged with the supernatural. In these tales, spirits bewitched lakes and the restless dead can speak through you while Spitfires fly in the skies above Tooting. I know the marvellous can be found all around us and mostly behind closed doors. My family home, an unremarkable terraced maisonette, stood just streets away from The Priory, a castellated miniature mansion



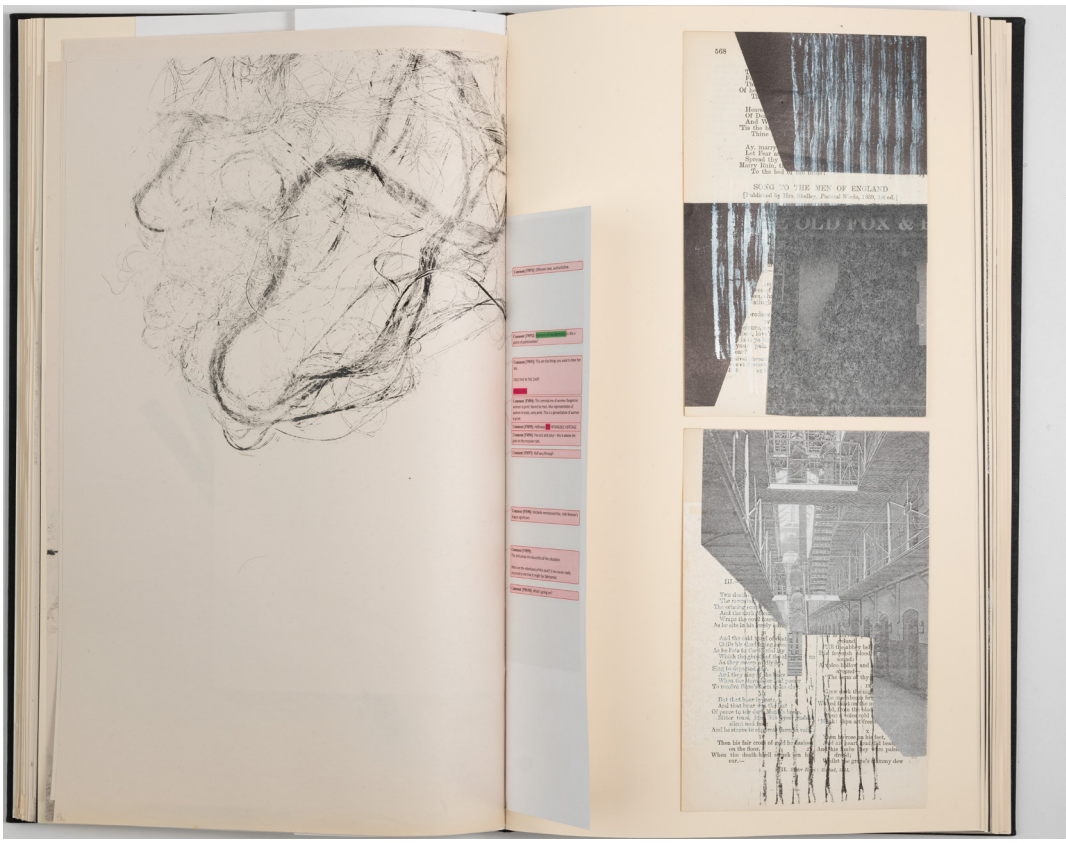


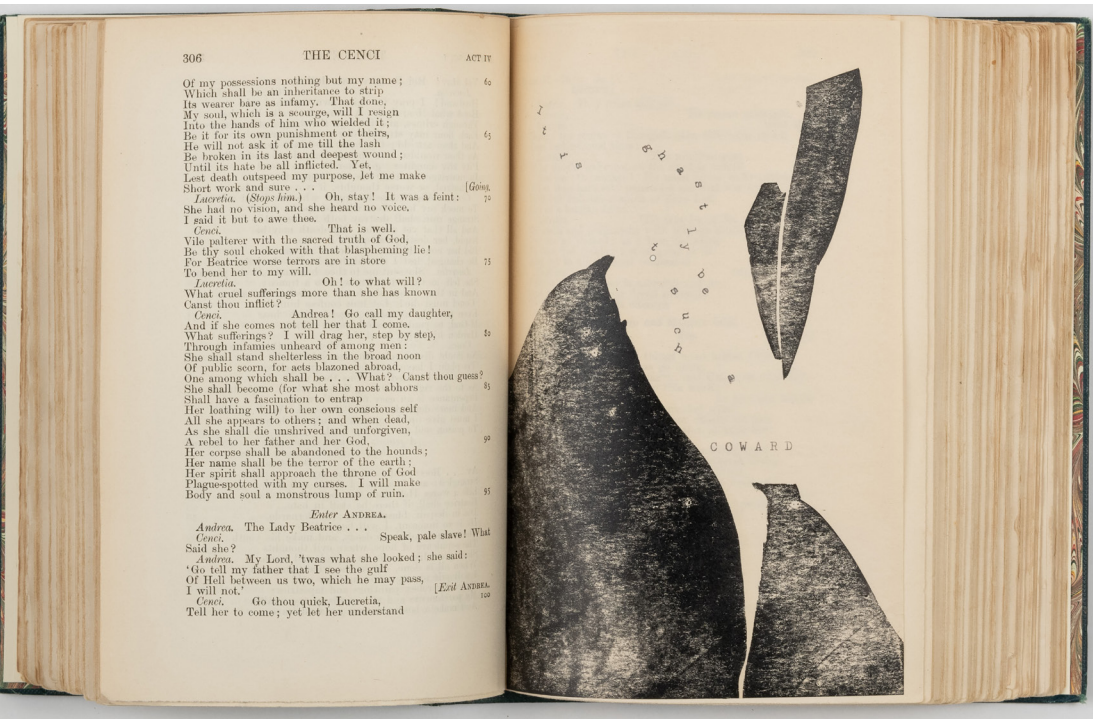
based documentation, reports, local history notes, transcriptions – anything able to capture, in print, a personal or distinctive voice. This is not necessarily the voice of an individual, but also the mood or character of a group. Local press clippings have always been amongst my favourite form of record as they represent the snipped view of a very localised area and the highly specific concerns of a community at a certain point in time. The fragmentary nature of the clipping offers other narrative opportunities, maybe in the accidental reveal of a horoscope, a lonely heart column or an advertisement. These partial views of existences also tell of desires, be they mundanely practical, and can provide just enough context around which a whole world can be imagined. My approach as an illustrator then, is to respond to these storylines, to interpret them, make sense of them and represent, through creative practice, what is understood of that past in the here and now.

By way of a series of fortuitous events and conversations, which always seems to be the way, I arrived at the LSE Library to meet with Gillian Murphy (Curator for Equality, Rights and Citizenship) to discuss working with The Women's Library Collections. On hearing of my

(now flats) which was once host to an infamous Victorian murder mystery. It was there that a man was poisoned and died horribly; his wife was suspected but no one ever knew if she really did it. On another road during a different era, the madam, and subsequent media charmer, Cynthia Payne, kept her infamous 'house of Cyn', where Green Shield Stamps could be exchanged for personal services. Her patrons were said to be only the finest of lonely men.

How I came to know these tales, I can't quite say. They are held in the earth, brick and grit—only to be mentioned in passing. The truth, as if such a claim could ever be made, is not what I seek. Verisimilitude suits me fine, even outright make-believe is more revealing of the human desire at the core of the claim. My work as an illustrator has often led me in search of the traces and residues of such phenomena: vampires in Highgate Cemetery, tunnels below Streatham, witches in Lowestoft. And once there's a lead—a location, name, date or event—I'll be found in an archive of some sort. Due to the location-specific nature of my interests, I look to resources situated within those places, heritage centres, records offices, borough archives and museums, usually those maintained by the local council. Notwithstanding the many and various physical objects held in archives, there is a particular type of material I am drawn to—ephemeral print or paper-

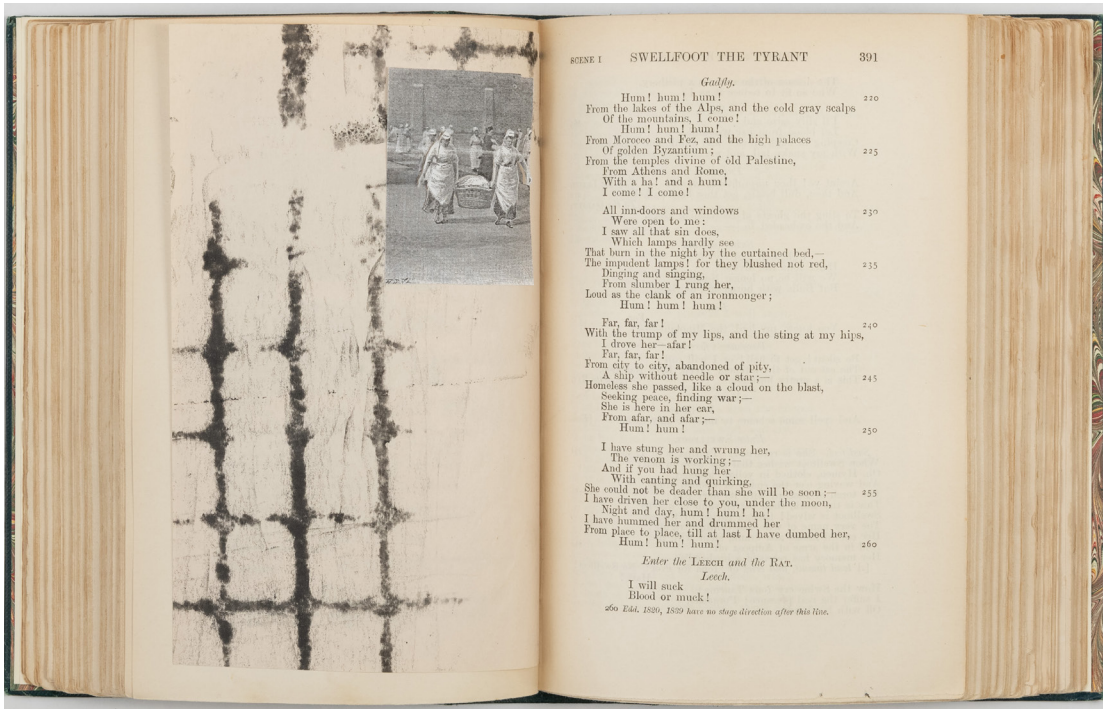


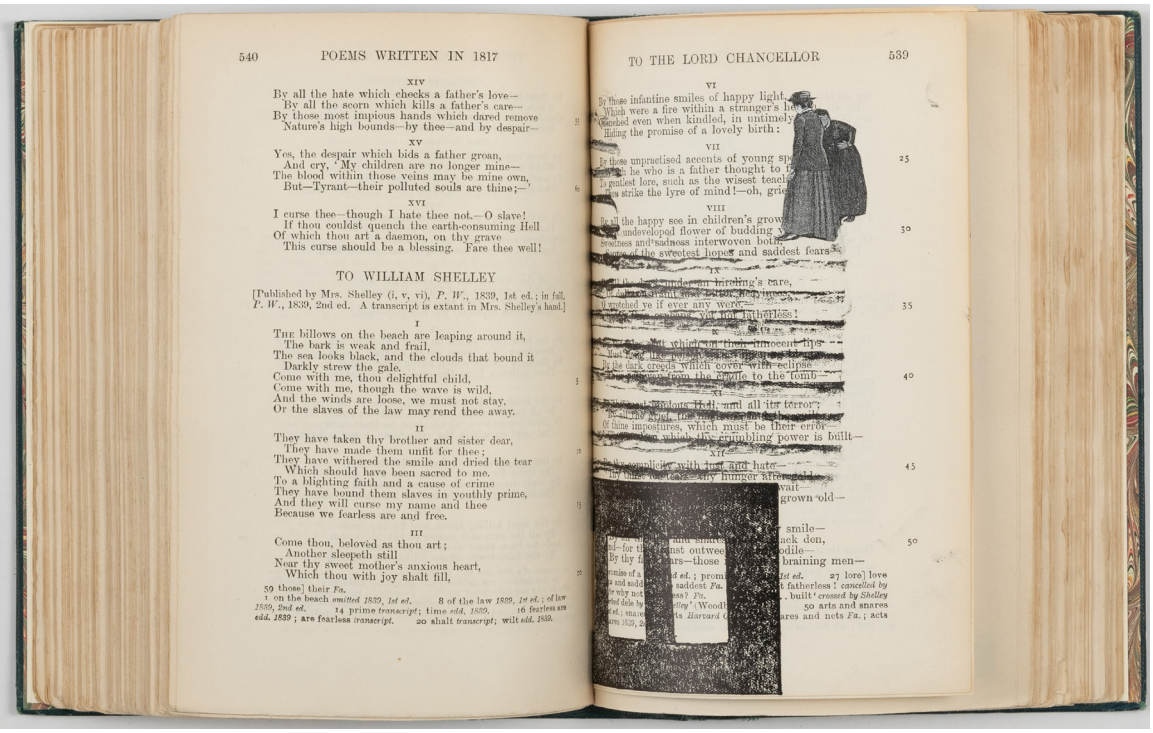


interests and previous works, it was suggested that the Suffragette prison writings may be of interest. Provided with a few prompts to navigate the cataloguing system, my first search returned the papers of Katie Gliddon. I requested the fond blindly, not knowing what the collection would contain. My memory of this first research session in the archive is dominated by the discovery of the Shelley Diary. Sat atop a boxed pile of paper files was what appeared to be a substantial book carefully protected in white archival tissue. When unveiled, an unassuming hardback was revealed, which was cased with mould green coloured book cloth. Its gilded title simply read *Shelley*. At first glance it appeared reminiscent of any generic antiquarian volume. However, flicking through the pages revealed that faintly pencilled writing filled all of the available space surrounding the printed verse. This was Gliddon's secret testimony, kept during her time in Holloway, but it was clear from the volume of the materials present that there was much more substance to this collection. There were several versions of her account, made after her release, as well as scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings of press coverage of the Suffragette movement's activities and her collection of Suffragette ephemera. At first sight, this appeared to be no less than a perfect find. Accordingly, I committed to working with the collection, resolving to navigate through the prison writings chronologically, beginning with the original prison diary. I then decided that my research into Kate Gliddon would not extend outside of the archive and that my interpretation would be uninfluenced by other sources. I would attempt to understand her experience in her own voice and through the perspective that she had chosen to record. Without any foresight of what would next be revealed, a remarkable narrative began to take form.

The Shelley diary, astounding though it is as an artefact and witness, did not reveal the fullest record. It was from the second account, written post release, that a fuller picture emerged featuring details and situations originally omitted. It transpired that during the times when entries in the original diary were particularly sparse, women were being taken to be forcibly fed. I have wondered, tentatively, whether the differing versions were owing to fear of discovery in prison or due to the processing and realisations that come with time and reflection. The later accounts show her writing to become terser, more self-aware and are edited into a more journalistic tone—I imagine in anticipation of publishing for an audience. With the overview of the varying accounts, which I suspect were never intended to be published by Gliddon as her collection was donated by her nephew after her death, I was able to form an imagining of her.

Across the writing, I read what I understood as the development of her feminism. I recognised a deepening empathy for her fellow 'ordinary' prisoners, many of whom were likely detained on accounts of

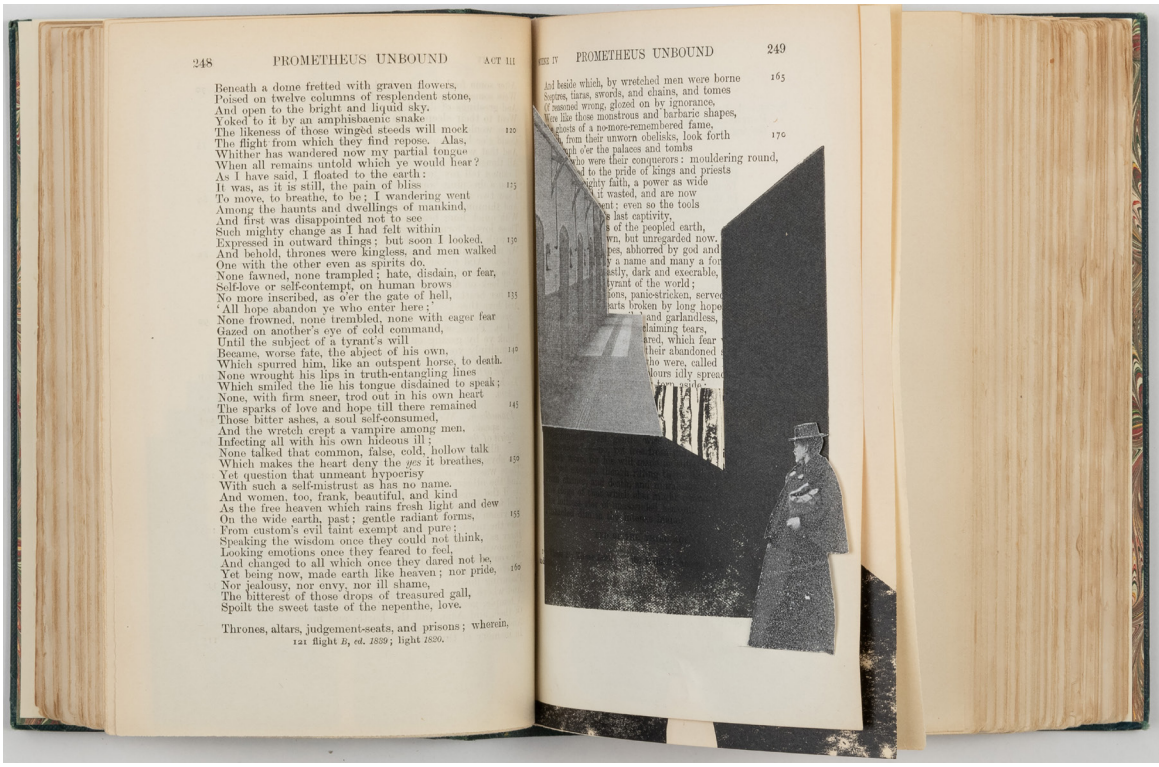


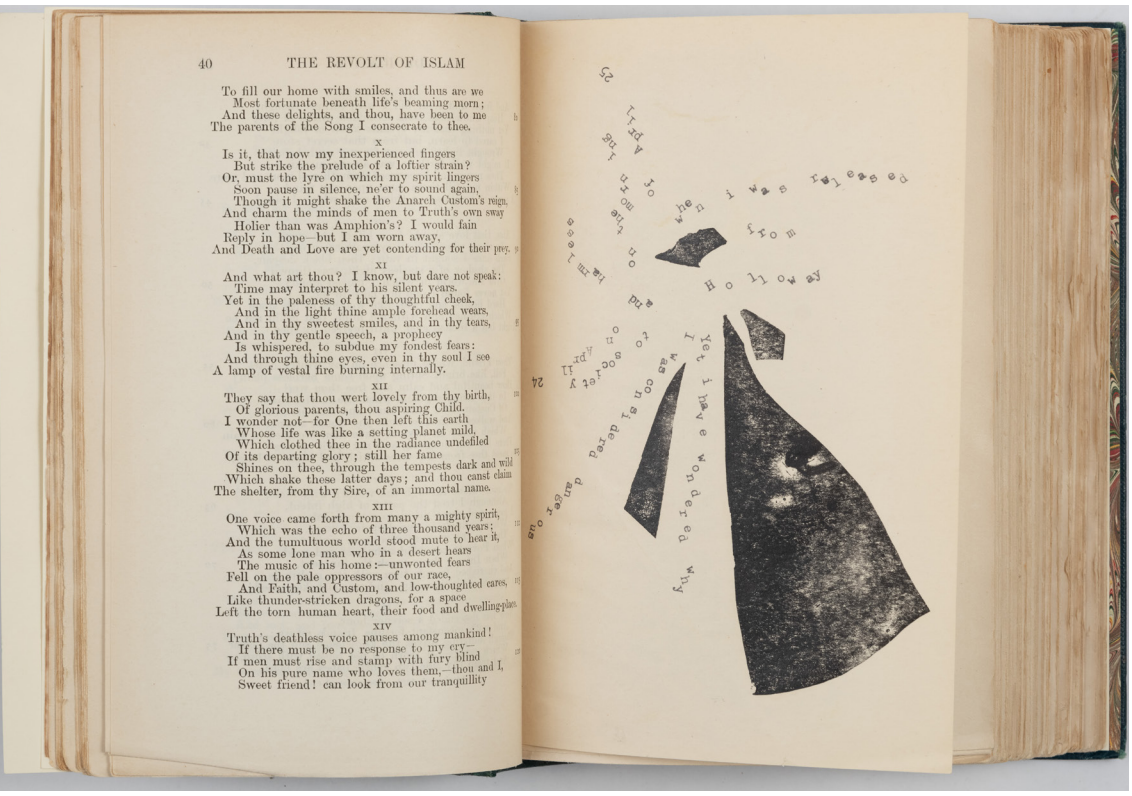


prostitution. Now, in such close confinement, I believe that she understood, with new force, the injustices she was campaigning against. Gliddon wrote of her feelings of cowardice as she felt too afraid to hunger strike and glorified her fellow Suffragettes, who she tenderly described and clearly adored.

While in the archive, I imagined Gliddon with all of my senses; I was with her in that cell as, straining to hear the overheard conversations and communicative knocks, she heard the weeping and sounds of women being taken in the night. I found my own prejudices of the past challenged and moved between tears, laughter and surprise, as I contemplated what she described while simultaneously fantasising about what may have been left absent. There were other seemingly serendipitous connections that could not have been foreseen. Gliddon was from Croydon, a place well known within my own history and, most uncannily, she too was an artist, illustrator and art school educator. A fissure was created the moment I came to Gliddon's writing, into this crevice I whispered my questions and judgements. I went to places she described and timelines merged as I contemplated the events of 1912 in the present, while my own memories of Croydon resurfaced. I could not help but find connections between our lives, as well as the events of the day and year, as we entered the 2018 centenary anniversary of partial enfranchisement.

Visual creative responses were made throughout the research process (interpretations and understandings at specific moments). These responses led the research forward and are revelatory of particular points in the research journey. The outcomes of the investigations were multiple, being mostly print based, collage and mixed media—drawing together materials from different sources. I visualised my imaginings and I printed directly from shards of broken glass, which I then combined with quotes pulled from her writings. Alongside my own visual imagery, copies of archival documents, contemporary and past newspapers, my own and Gliddon's writing came together—the content changing in response to the developing research and storylines. My choice of media was informed by the materiality of the collection. I worked on loose sheets of paper, which then became piles. I acquired my copy of Shelley's poetry from the same dated edition and worked directly onto the pages. In an act of conscious mimicry, I recreated the Shelley dairy, replacing her commentary with my own visual interpretations and produced a scrapbook that collated all of the fragmentary papers. The intention was to describe a narrative formed of a





series of interwoven stories across time—non-linear and fashioned through associations created by clusters and groups. The mode of presentation is deliberate, a form of feminist re-enactment in which, by trying to access and know the past, a new understanding of the politics of the day are understood with dreams for the future.

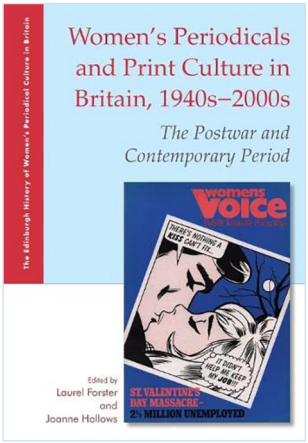
Mireille Fauchon is an illustrator, researcher and educator. Her co-authored book *Illustration Research Methods* (2021) was published by Bloomsbury. Her forthcoming *Illustration, Narrative and the Suffragette: An Illustrative Enquiry* will be published by Bloomsbury in 2024.

Photography by Simon Eaves.

Book Reviews

Laurel Forster and Joanne Hollows (Eds.). *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940s-2000s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Pp. 432. ISBN Hardback: 9781474469982, Ebook (ePub): 9781474470001, Ebook (PDF): 9781474469999 £160.

Andrea McDonnell
Providence College, USA



Print culture, particularly those publications associated with women readers and producers, is often ephemeral. Pamphlets, magazines, even digital content, are here today, soon misplaced, damaged or forgotten. Archives and libraries tend not to house such material, sometimes due to the difficulty of securing a full collection and sometimes, frankly, because it is not valued as academically useful or significant. In its range and rigour, Forster and Hollows' impressive collection of essays detailing the significance of *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940-2000s* works to document that which may have otherwise been lost to the sweep of time. Here, the editors, along with twenty-two contributors and with the aid of more than two dozen images gathered from original sources, highlight the multifaceted value of these texts, their relationship to their readers, and the ways they both respond to and shape the rapidly developing culture in which they are produced.

In the introductory chapter, Forster describes a key goal of the collection: to consider the 'ways in which print media primarily targeted at women have both reflected and directed the changing landscape and multiple ways of being a British woman', from the Second World War through to the 21st century (1). The chapters that follow delve into all aspects of this evolution, from mass market fashion and fan mags to women's publishing houses, from indie presses to socialist, feminist, and lesbian magazines. In doing so, they reveal the diversity of print culture, with its distinct aims and approaches, and the ways in which it speaks to the complex nature of women's lives and identities. The book is organised thematically into five core parts, attending to the production process, the readership and its meaning-making practices, the role of women's publications in shaping tastes in arts and culture, and the ways these texts address emerging and shifting conceptions of feminisms and femininity. In 'Part IV: Negotiating Femininities', chapters by Sarah Crook, Janet Floyd, Fiona Hackney, and Mary Irwin offer rich analyses of the ways in which texts from *Modern Woman* to *Frank* engage with both the domestic - fashion, food, mothering - and the rise of feminism, especially the increasing visibility of women in the workplace; the personal, as the saying goes, is the political.

Throughout, we see how the process of generating textual content creates powerful networks of women,

In Profile

Norena Shopland

Tell us about your area of expertise?

I specialise in the history of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. I have written and spoken extensively about all aspects of those histories, but with a particularly emphasis on Wales. I also do a lot of training on LGBTQ+ language and history. In addition, I write on various aspects of Welsh history, such as my recently published book, entitled *Women in Welsh Coal Mining: Tip Girls at Work in a Men's World* (2023). We tend to think of coal mining as a male-dominated industry, but women worked extensively on the pit brow and were an integral part of mining. However, their contribution to this industry has generally been ignored. Using examples from Welsh mining, the book highlights these extraordinary women who had to fight societal disapproval for over 100 years in order to keep their jobs.

What motivated you to become a historian and activist?

I love a good story and there are so many out there that remain untold.

What achievement are you most proud of?

My book, Forbidden Lives: LGBT stories from Wales. This book spawned several ground-breaking projects, such as my development of research methodologies that resulted in a commission from the Welsh Government to do training in LGBTQ+ language and history for all local libraries, museums, and archives in Wales. The Welsh government was the first in the world to do this. In 2023, to test out how transferable these skills are, the Welsh government awarded an Anti-Racist grant to Glamorgan Archives. Their remit was to compile a minority ethnic research guide using my methodologies and we will publish the results in 2024.

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

Cranogwen, Frances Power Cobb, Lady Rhondda, and the Ladies of Llangollen. I would want to chat to them about how these intelligent, powerful women defied societal conventions and lived together as same-sex couples. I would ask them what their difficulties were and how would they felt about now being recognised as trail blazers in lesbian history.

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

Recently, it was *When Romeo was a Woman: Charlotte Cushman and Her Circle of Female Spectators* by Lisa Merrill (2000). We tend to think of women in history being restricted in their ability to travel freely, but, in truth, thousands of women throughout history wore men's clothes, passed as men and went off and did what they wanted - a subject covered in my book *A History of Women in Men's Clothes: from cross-dressing to empowerment* (Pen and Sword Books, 2021). The inspiration from *When Romeo was a Woman* was a group of females, many in same-sex relationships, living in Rome and living life as they wanted to - some of them scandalising society by dressing in men's clothes, riding horses like men, smoking, and generally having a good time.

What important piece of advice would you impart to a budding historian/ archivist/ activist/ librarian?

Look for the differences, because it's there the fascinating stories lie.

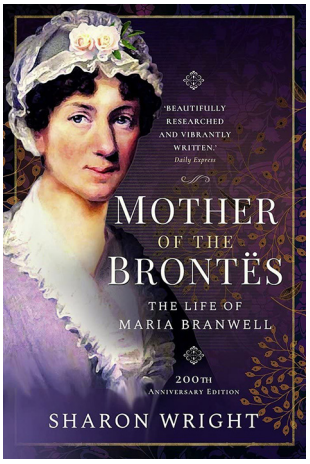
in collaboration and conversation with one another as creators and producers. Part I of the collection, 'Publishing Industries and Practices', uses a media historical approach to detail the establishment and development of notable publishing houses, magazines and digital content. In doing so, the authors show how the history of these businesses is really the history of women working together with common, though sometimes contested, aims. These producers create for their readers an experience that is similarly collective. Loughran's essay, '"The most helpful friends in the world": Letters Pages, Expertise and Emotion in British Women's Magazines, c. 1960–80', provides a colourful case study of the positioning of women's magazines as friends and advisors, with readers writing in for tips from the Agony Aunts, (male) doctors, and (female) nurses, whose address to their 'bodily, psychological and emotional health' mirrored the societal conceptions of expertise, while also subtly challenging structural hierarchies of knowledge-production (133). Relatedly, in her analysis of *Just Seventeen*, Waters notes the ways in which the magazine hails its readership into a collective 'you,' an intimate public, an imagined community of girls, in ways that benefit from, yet elide direct conversation with, the gains of feminist political activism (154-163). Numerous chapters detail the ways in which print culture can function as dialogic space, speaking to and enacting the feminist work of solidarity.

Some of the most compelling essays in the collection attend to contemporary issues. Laura Favaro's work on women's magazines and Web 3.0 and Kaitlynn Mendes' writing on 'Digital Feminist Cultures' provide important context for the ways in which online content mirrors, challenges and influences traditional print publications, while also noting the role of social media in providing a platform for reader discussion that resists traditional power structures. Estella Ticknell's excellent and nuanced essay on representations of race, class and gender in *Vogue* shows how, despite apparent strides in the diversity of editorial staff and models, the magazine continues to reproduce hierarchies of wealth and privilege. Numerous authors also grapple with the tension between print's existential need for financial support and the urge to resist falling into the consumerist ethos of hegemonic femininity, a challenge that is perhaps all the more salient in our contemporary economic landscape.

The breadth of Forster and Hollows' collection, in terms of period, scope, and methodologies, makes *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940s-2000s* a rich site of engagement for scholars in the field, as well as an effective and accessible text for students.

Sharon Wright, *The Mother of the Brontës*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2019. Pp. 200 + 32 black and white ill. ISBN: 9781526757609 (paperback). £12.99.

Ellis Naylor
Bath Spa University History graduate



Everyone has heard of the Brontë sisters - Charlotte, Emily and Anne - either through their classic works of literature, or through the many outpourings of studies on the women in recent years. Even their brother Branwell has been brought to life by Daphne du Maurier's vivid biography in 1961, whilst much is also known about the life of their father, the Anglican priest Patrick Brontë, who in the end outlived his whole family. Their mother, Maria Brontë, has remained somewhat a mystery and yet her influence on her family's fame and identity was extremely significant. In this book, Sharon Wright has set out to bring Maria out of the shadows and tell a story of love and tragedy in a fascinating biography.

The book begins in eighteenth-century cosmopolitan Penzance, Cornwall, where a young Maria Branwell is introduced and living a life in a prestigious family where she was 'perfectly her own mistress' (24). In 1812, Maria unknowingly gave up this life of comfortable independence as she bravely made an intrepid journey across Georgian England to Woodhouse Grove in Yorkshire to assist her Aunt and Uncle's school. This is where she met and fell in love with Patrick Brontë, or "Pat Prunty" as he was born in Ireland, who had also travelled from his home county and made a home in Yorkshire.

Throughout the book, Wright introduces us to a whole host of individuals who were connected to Maria and this research is vital in order to understand deeper the context of Maria's life and relationship with Patrick. As Wright points out, her love letters to Patrick are 'virtually all we have of Maria Branwell's own record of her life and so in turn, we have very little information on Maria's day-to-day experiences' (77). Wright does include a chapter dedicated to unpicking parts of these letters, allowing the reader to feel more connected to Maria - as 'her letters are alive with her passion, loyalty, intelligence, wit and learning along with her faith and her fears' (95). It is only a shame that there were so few. However, these letters, which are included within the volume (in full in an appendix) are rich in their content and could be researched even further - for example, through the emerging study of emotions history. It would be fascinating to understand deeper the emotional responses of Maria with regards to her experiences as a woman in this period falling in love.

The regional historical context offered within this publication is also vast and it is a wonderful insight into the social history of Britain during Maria's lifetime. Maria and Patrick's romance was set to the background

of the Luddite movement in the north, Maria's childhood was during a time rife with smugglers in Cornwall and both their adult lives continued to see the effects of the Napoleonic Wars. From the beginning, it is also clear the role that religion and the rise in Methodism in Cornwall played during the late eighteenth-century (led by John Wesley who was also closely connected to the Branwell family) and how this shaped Maria's life.

As the book moves on to talk about Maria's married life with children, it explores the joys and struggles the family faced and these chapters are a wonderful insight into the sometimes turbulent Yorkshire society and how Maria and her husband navigated this. The 'bookish couple' were able to gain many friends - whom Wright explores in order to reveal more about Maria - for example, drawing on the diaries of her friend Elizabeth Firth (139). Tragically, Maria's life was cut short at 38, after a harrowing eight-month battle with cancer. However, Wright has teased out as much detail as she could from Maria and Patrick's early married years until Maria's death at Haworth Parish, now the Brontë Parsonage Museum.

Overall, Wright's biography is a much-needed publication that brings to life and reveals more about the celebrated Brontë family. She successfully argues the case that without Maria, there would not be the Brontë literature we know and love today. It was wonderful to discover Maria's own joy for writing and awful to witness how her tragic death cast a shadow on the whole family. Wright touches on the argument that this traumatic event would have influenced the Brontë sisters' writing. Compared to Maria's joyful love letters showcased in this biography, the Brontë books do not particularly echo their style.

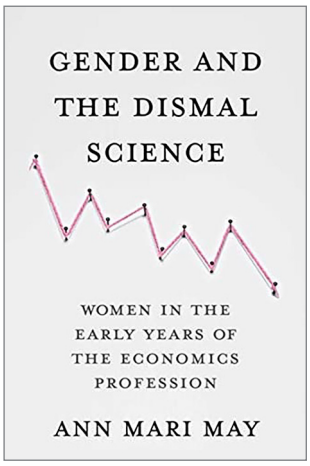
This is a well-researched book, although the lack of footnotes has meant it is difficult to follow up on certain areas. I found it to be gripping, sharp and extremely moving. Furthermore, it was thoroughly enjoyable to be immersed in the life of another unsung Brontë writer and read more about the history surrounding some of my literary heroines.

Ann Mari May, *Gender and the Dismal Science: Women in the Early Years of the Economics Profession*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. Pp. 256. ISBN Paperback: 9780231192910, Hardback: 9780231192903, Ebook: 9780231550048 £28.

Helen Glew
University of Westminster

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on women and the professions. Focusing on the USA and the discipline of economics, the text explores the myriad ways women were subtly – and often not so subtly – excluded from different aspects of professional recognition, including academic positions, publications, and membership of the American Economics Association (AEA).

May's text is so strong, in part, because it starts with documenting the current problems caused by the recognised dearth of women economists. Those women who do work as economists, along with other commentators, have started to question what might be missing in present discussions and approaches as a result of women remaining in the margins. Early on, May writes 'Economists have only recently become aware of the lack of women in economics' (4) and this sense that women economists simply weren't seen and weren't visible to the male members of the profession pervades the whole book. Indeed, May uses each chapter to build up an overall picture of the various ways that the overwhelmingly male majority worked to exclude women from the late nineteenth century onwards – by, for example, reclassifying women's work in economics as instead, part of cognate disciplines, by not questioning formal and informal marriage bars for women, by excluding women from being able to take up faculty appointments in many universities that weren't women's colleges, and so on. Chapter four, for example, recounts how during intensive membership drives by the AEA in the early twentieth century, committee members focused on recruiting businessmen who would be assumed to be interested in the findings of economists; the constituency-in-waiting of female economists with, or working on, PhDs was almost entirely ignored. It is unclear from the records whether this was deliberate or the result of not being able to conceive of these women as being of the same status; either way, the result was the same. Taken together, May provides a detailed picture of how all of these various measures combined to *de facto* largely bar the economics profession to women after the Second World War. 'What most women learned', she demonstrates, 'was that it was more acceptable to be a consumer of someone else's knowledge than to be a producer of knowledge.' (165). It was the development of the Committee on the Status of Women in Economics in 1971 – inspired no doubt by so-called 'second wave' feminism, though May does not make this connection explicit - that caused recognition of, and an examination of, women's absence.



Occasionally, the attempt to quantify women's contributions and position in the professional hierarchy in the early twentieth century can have its own pitfalls. The chapter on co-authorship, for example, offers a vast array of statistics on the gender of writing partners in the period. However, without a wider discussion of what co-authorship actually signalled in this period and how it was understood – was it simple collaboration, an attempt at profile-raising, a way to acknowledge and assert different expertise, or one author helping the other to make a name for themselves – it is difficult for the reader to make sense of this discussion. Indeed, without a thorough explanation of the implications of power dynamics and potentially unequal relationships between authors, and whether the concept of 'lead author' existed, the quantitative data can

only tell us so much. A set of biographical case studies here would have enriched the discussion.

Throughout the book, May uses an extensive range of archival sources and the book is meticulously researched. She reconstructs the life histories of a number of women economists – some, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, very well known, but others less so – and it would have been good if the book had included an appendix with biographies of all of these women as their stories are otherwise spread throughout the book.

This is clearly an important contribution to the literature on women in academia and the professions, the discipline of economics and, more widely, the history of exclusions of women from institutions. Its strength is in the detailed investigations into the operation of the specific mechanisms of exclusion and their combined effects. Such an in-depth study will be welcomed by scholars looking at gendered power dynamics in many fields and contexts.

BOOKS RECEIVED AND CALLS FOR REVIEWERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Elizabeth Cobbs, *Fearless Women: Feminist Patriots from Abigail Adams to Beyoncé* (Harvard University Press, 2023)

Virginia Cox and Lisa Sampson (eds.), *Drama, Poetry and Music in Late-Renaissance Italy: The life and works of Leonora Bernardi*, (UCL Press, 2023)

Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy in Hollywood* (Princeton University Press, 2023)

Yevonde: Life and Colour (National Portrait Gallery, 2023)

Jessica Cox, *Confinement: The Hidden History of Maternal Bodies in the Nineteenth Century* (The History Press, 2023)

Deanne Williams, *Girl Culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Performance and Pedagogy*, (Bloomsbury, 2023)

Mari Takayanagi and Elizabeth Hallam Smith, *Necessary Women: The Untold Story of Parliament's Working Women*, (The History Press, 2023)

Announcement of Prizes and Funding

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

BA and MA prizes:

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

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

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

WHN Research Facilitation Grant:

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

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

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

ECR and Independent Fellowships:

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

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

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

WHN Committee Meeting Report

The Women's History Network's Steering Committee met on 14 April 2023 via Zoom. In her report, Sarah Richardson, the WHN Chair, focused on a number of administrative issues that continue to be dealt with at the moment, including the opening of a new bank account with CAF Bank and the filling of a number of vacancies on the Committee. Those vacancies for the newsletter and social media and publicity roles looked close to being filled.

Membership numbers were reported to be slightly down but are still strong, with 510 fully paid-up members. Social media channels continue to grow, with a particularly strong period of engagement across Women's History Month, principally on Twitter, with 450 new followers. Increasingly interactive content is also being trialed, where audiences are asked to contribute. This method of engagement runs alongside the now-established calendar of content for the year, which focuses on anniversaries, themed days, history months and connects the WHN blogs and resources to these key dates. It was noted that new content always goes down particularly well. Newsletter numbers also continue to slowly increase.

It was also reported that the speaker programme for the summer Seminar series was mostly finalised and that writing workshops were going well.

There was a discussion on the Index for the journal, which Norena Shopland and Susan Cohen have been working on. The committee applauded the extensive work that has gone into this. The indexing of articles is now complete and it was agreed that this should be launched on the WHN website. The possibility of a blog index was also put forward with students/ECR's being hired to do the cataloguing.

The Schools Prize was underway, with a closing date of 30 June. Similarly, the MA Dissertation Prize, with a closing date of 1 June. The Research Facilitation Grant has been postponed until September. Planning for the WHN Conference, on Migration (which will be online again this year) was also progressing, with papers coming in and keynote speakers being finalised.

Membership Announcements

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

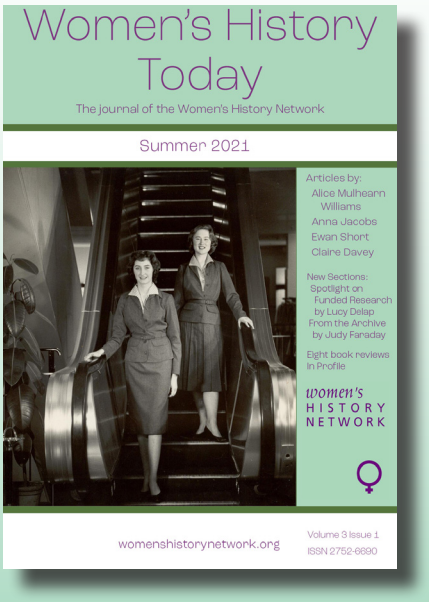
Do you pay your subscription by standing order? If so, please check that the payment details reflect the 2023 rates. Don't forget, we have different rates to reflect different personal circumstances, so it is worth checking that you are paying the correct rate for you. Details of the 2023 rates for all categories of members can be found on the back cover of the magazine or by logging into your account at www.womenshistorynetwork.org.

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

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

Publishing in *Women's History Today*

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



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

Chair—Sarah Richardson

Charity Rep—Hazel Perry

Blog Editors— Kat Perry, Lisa Berry-Waite

Social Media— Vicky Igilkowski-Broad

Membership Secretary—Susan Cohen

Treasurer—Vacant

(Archive) Secretary—Urvi Khaitan

Conference support role— Alexandra Hughes-Johnson, Hazel Perry

Website and publicity—Maria Georgouli Loupi

Prizes and Grants—Anna Muggeridge

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

Newsletter Editor—Tayo Agunbiade

Community Liaison Vacant and Helen Antrobus

Diversity Officer—Norena Shepherd

Schools Liaison—Tahaney Alghrani and Mary Feerick

Seminar Organisers — Rose Debenham, Anna Harrington

Co-opted Members of the Committee

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

WHN Journal Editor: Kate Murphy
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

IFRWH rep—Gillian Murphy

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

Why not join the Women's History Network?

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

Conference

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

Prizes and Grants

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

Networking

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

Publication

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

WHN membership

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

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

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

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

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