

Women Magistrates, Ministers and Municipal Councillors
in the West Riding of Yorkshire,
1918 - 1939

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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August 1991

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In the two decades after the partial enfranchisement of women in 1918 and the removal of legal disabilities which excluded them from the magistracy, women in the West Riding of Yorkshire were mobilized to seek a new civic role as councillors and as justices of the peace through membership of women's organisations, of the women's sections of political parties and to a lesser extent as a consequence of their widespread involvement in charity work. By the post-war period, too, traditional arguments against the ordination of women in the Free Churches had lost credibility and a number of women became church ministers in the strongly Nonconformist West Riding.

Women magistrates were rapidly accepted on equal terms and from the start shared duties equally with their male colleagues. Ordination of women in the Free Churches was premised on the principle of complementarity and, although usually obliged to accept the less desirable churches, women ministers experienced little hostility. The majority of women councillors, however, justified the need for their election on the grounds of the distinctive contribution that women could make to local government. By identifying only certain issues on which women's views should be sought and concentrating on areas of local government which only affected the lives of women and children their contribution was seen to be limited.

Individual women's influence over their appointment as magistrates was minimal and their numbers remained low primarily because local advisory committees failed to adopt progressive criteria for their recommendations. Traditional attitudes were still too deeply entrenched to allow many women to seek ordination and it was the identification of a limited role for women, together with social, cultural and economic factors, which militated against any significant increase in their representation on local councils in the West Riding throughout the period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the beginning my supervisor, Dr Clyde Binfield, has shared my enthusiasm, encouraged, cajoled, imposed deadlines and read my work critically. I am most grateful to him for all his help and for his many suggestions for source material and people I should contact.

One of the rewards of researching a relatively recent period has been the opportunity to meet so many sympathetic and interesting people. I have had delightful meetings with the Revd Violet Hedger, the Revd Alice Platts and Mrs Jessie Smith. With others I have enjoyed innumerable cups of tea and delicious cakes over stimulating conversation and even a most tasty steak and kidney pie with members of the luncheon club at Littleover Baptist Church.

It was the Revd James Grote who arranged for me to visit Littleover and I am grateful to him, to the Revd Ian Ring of the Sheffield West Group of the United Reformed Church, Mrs Joanna Parker of Manchester College Oxford, Mrs Glenda Bellamy of the Sheffield Volunteer Bureau, the National Council of Women and its Sheffield branch, the Sheffield Soroptimists and the headmistresses of the Sheffield and Leeds Girls' High Schools for allowing me access to their records and to the Librarian at Bradford University for permission to quote from Joanna Scott's thesis Bradford Women in Organisation 1867-1914. Michael Meadowcroft kindly made the material he had collected for his thesis on local government in Leeds available to me. Librarians across the old West Riding, and in particular Mrs Heap in Leeds and the Sheffield local history librarians, have dug out material for me. Dr Peter

McNiven of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester helped me to explore the records of the Lancashire Independent College and David Doughan and his colleagues at the Fawcett Library have always been welcoming and helpful as was Dr Angela Raspin of the British Library of Political & Economic Science. Many other people have replied to my letters, suggested useful contacts and sent me valuable material.

My family have always taken great pride in my achievements and if they have had a lot to put up with over the past few years, I am sure they know how much I appreciate their support and help.

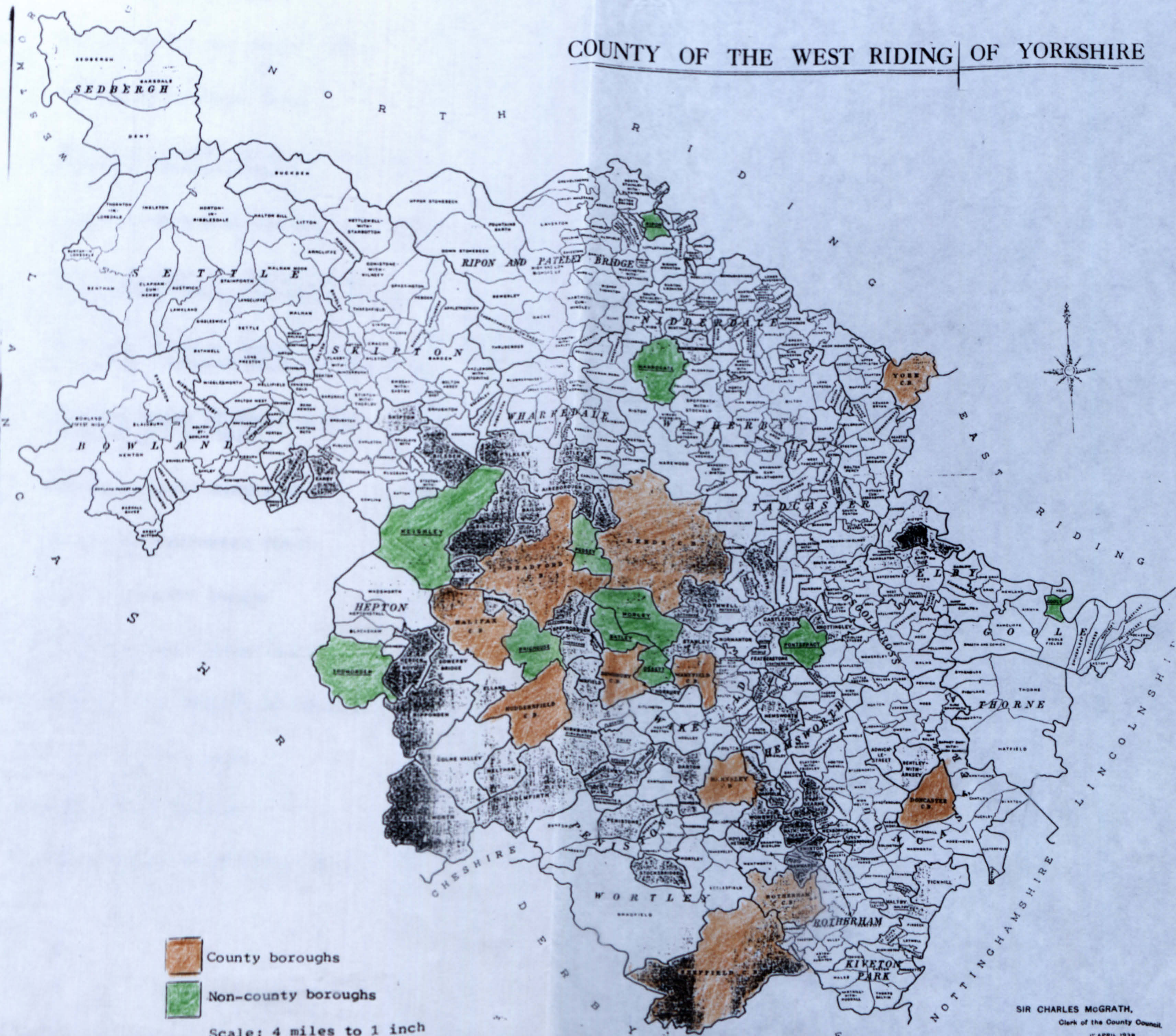
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SOME FRUITS OF THE WAR -

COUNTY OF THE WEST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE



-  County boroughs
-  Non-county boroughs

Scale: 4 miles to 1 inch

SIR CHARLES McGRATH,
Clerk of the County Council
1st APRIL 1939

ABBREVIATIONS

GPDST	Girls' Public Day School Trust
ILP	Independent Labour Party
NCW	National Council of Women of Great Britain (formerly NUWW)
NFWW	National Federation of Women Workers
NUSEC	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (formerly NUWSS)
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (renamed NUSEC in 1919)
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers (renamed NCW in 1918)
WCA	Women Citizens' Association
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WLA	Women's Liberal Association
WLGS	Women's Local Government Society
WLL	Women's Labour League
WPS	Women Police Service
WSPU	Women's Social & Political Union

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INTRODUCTION

On November 3 1917 a well-attended meeting, representative of a series of such meetings organised throughout the country, was convened by women's and trades organisations at the Montgomery Hall in Sheffield. Those present were united in celebrating the granting to women of the parliamentary franchise which had been sought but denied for so long. The voices of local men and women mingled with those of national speakers as they debated how "the great power that the Legislature had placed in [women's] hands" should be exercised. They discussed the need for better educational facilities, the principle of equal pay for equal work, motherhood endowment, how to combat continuing high levels of infantile mortality. Throughout the conference ran the thread of what women, with their newly acquired voting power, could do to achieve very necessary social and economic reform. As a leading member of the suffrage movement, Ray Strachey, suggested, it was important for women to discover in what ways they could "contribute fully to the life of the community."¹

Two years later women were again celebrating. Following the introduction of a string of private members' bills dealing with specific issues touching women's social and professional status and the unexpected success of a Labour-sponsored Emancipation Bill designed to sweep away all the remaining legal disabilities which women faced, the Government had introduced its own Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill which had the immediate effect of opening the legal profession to women and implied, in theory, that the principle of equality of opportunity had been conceded throughout public life.²

It is the response of women in the West Riding of Yorkshire to the removal of legal handicaps to their full participation in local community life and to the wider opportunities ostensibly open to them that this thesis seeks to examine. The failure of women to achieve significant inroads in national politics has been extensively researched.³ The experience of women's involvement in the hitherto male worlds of the council chamber and the magistrates' court in their own localities in the inter-war period is, however, virtually uncharted.⁴ The value of regional historical inquiry is that it enables the conclusions of the, to date, very limited generalised research into women's history in this period to be either under-pinned or challenged. Moreover, it can be argued that it was this initial response to women's improved political status that established the pattern of their experience for the future.

Professional opportunities for women expanded only slowly in the provinces during the inter-war period. Sheffield University accepted women medical students from 1905,⁵ but in Leeds, although women were occasionally admitted to study individual subjects from the late 1890s, it was impossible for them to fulfil all the necessary requirements for a medical degree until 1910 when the Infirmary finally agreed to open its doors to women students.⁶ In 1920 there were five women on the Sheffield city medical list although none had actually trained in the city. In Leeds there was only one. By 1938 their numbers had risen to 18 and 16 respectively.⁷ It was not until 1922 that women first sat for the Law Society examinations. However, the majority of those who did complete their training as solicitors in the inter-war period had taken articles in a relative's, usually their father's, practice. They remained few in number. The area of greatest expansion for women was in those professions

allied to social work - employment as almoners, house property managers or moral welfare workers. However, "the salaries and money rewards [were] often tiny, and the prospects at all times uncertain."⁸ Women social workers still accounted for only eight per cent of women graduates in the 1930s.⁹ The majority of educated women remained clustered into the nursing and teaching professions.

However, professional women were predominately single women. The majority of women continued to give up work when they married although there were some exceptional cases;¹⁰ a number of married women doctors remained in general practice, for instance, particularly if they worked alongside their husbands. Nevertheless there existed an army of educated married women who were no longer active in the formal economy. Moreover, the decline in fertility was widespread in the inter-war period and no longer confined only to middle-class families.¹¹ By 1930 a married couple were raising an average of just over two children compared with the five or six of mid-Victorian parents¹² and a woman could expect to have borne her last child by the age of twenty-eight.¹³

Moreover, despite considerable complaints about the availability and quality of servants, in some areas of the provinces there was little difficulty in obtaining domestic help in the inter-war period. The absence of alternative employment for single women in the mining areas of South Yorkshire, for instance, guaranteed that a fourteen year old live-in servant could still be obtained in Sheffield for eight shillings a week in the late 1930s.¹⁴ In the textile areas of West Yorkshire where the range of employment available to women was more diverse, the percentage of the total female population in

domestic service was slightly lower. Nevertheless, a significant number of women still found employment in service whilst in Leeds there were still 8,623 female private domestic servants recorded in the 1931 Census compared with 10,505 in Sheffield, a city of comparable size.¹⁵ Hence, it could be argued that, in theory, middle-class women had more time to devote to extra-domestic activities at a time when the appearance of a woman in the public sphere provoked considerably less comment and controversy than her Victorian and Edwardian predecessors would have had to face. This was particularly so with local politics which could be viewed as an extension of women's philanthropic endeavour whilst their entry into municipal service could be legitimated as a translation from domestic to community housekeeping. Indeed, Mrs Humphrey Ward and the anti-suffragists had invoked the entry of women into local government as a major argument for denying them the parliamentary franchise. The local arena was "the appropriate sphere of service" for women, one for which they were eminently suited whereas involvement with parliamentary affairs was deemed beyond their interest and competence.¹⁶

Women's involvement in public life was by no means limited to participation in the traditional male spheres of the council chamber and the magistrates court in the inter-war period. They played, for instance, a considerable role in alternative political pressure groups, particularly peace movement organisations such as the League of Nations Union or the No More War Movement. In 1926, for instance, many local women took an active role in the Women's Peace March. The activities of such women have, however, proved harder to recover than those of women operating in traditional institutions whose records are more likely to have been preserved and whose deliberations were more consistently reported. After an

initial exploration of the extent to which women were politicised and educated for citizenship through their charity work and membership of women's organisations, the male worlds of the town council and the magistrates court are, therefore, those on which the thesis focuses.

Whilst endeavouring to establish the reasons why certain women chose to move from the domestic into the public sphere, what measure of success they encountered, what factors determined their progress, and whether their experience varied from town to town, the major issues with which women were concerned are also explored. To what extent, for instance, was the division of labour in the workforce reflected in a division of labour between men and women in the public sphere? Can the generalised claim that women were consigned to the "soft" issues such as maternity and child welfare, nursery education, care for the mentally and physically handicapped, be locally substantiated?

By way of contrast the fortunes of one particular group of professional women have equally been examined. These are women Free Church ministers who, although few in number, were very much in the public eye and whose entry into the close-knit world of the male clergy provoked considerable public comment. They are, consequently, more visible than other professional women such as doctors who, although still struggling to broaden their occupational horizons in the inter-war period, had, by 1918, achieved recognition of their professional competence and were no longer viewed as a pioneering group. Women ministers, however, have been neglected by both social and ecclesiastical historians, as has, until recently, the whole issue of women's religious experience and spirituality,¹⁷ whilst historians of the women's movement are open to the accusation that they have tended

to overlook the very real importance of religion in the lives of women.

In the case of women town councillors and magistrates the West Riding of Yorkshire affords a microcosmic picture of the experiences of similar women throughout the country. The chapter on women magistrates is regrettably short; the magistracy was a sphere in which women encountered little hostility, performed the same duties as men and were most rapidly accepted on equal terms possibly because (the chairmanship of the bench to which they were obviously unable to aspire for a number of years excepted) there was no organisational hierarchy. Once the excitement over their first appointment had subsided, therefore, their activities locally virtually disappear from the record. Women ministers, on the other hand, constitute a select, highly specialised group. Consequently chapter six with its focus on four individual women who were ministers of Congregational, Baptist or Unitarian churches in the West Riding in the inter-war period differs radically in its approach from the previous chapters which discuss in a generalised way the selection and role of women councillors and magistrates. Women ministers were not, for the most part, either Yorkshire-born or Yorkshire-trained but, nevertheless, the quandaries and challenges they had to face in the course of their careers reflect some of the traditional attitudes and assumptions that continued to handicap women's progress in many areas of public life. Moreover, whereas a necessary reliance on local newspapers and the records of local societies has determined that the experiences of women councillors and magistrates can only be explored through the public record of their lives, the small amount of personal material that has survived for women ministers allows some knowledge of how they, as women in a man's world, were thinking and their ideas and

feelings have a particular relevance because aspects of their work, training and experience encompassed so many of the issues and problems that women in both the voluntary and the professional sectors had to confront.

The very nature of the spheres of activity examined dictates that the majority of women belonged to the middle classes although it must be remembered that as married women are usually classified in accordance with their husband's social categorisation, there are dangers of misrepresentation. Nevertheless, even active Labour party women would tend to be drawn from the ranks of better-educated, middle-class Socialists or the respectable "aristocracy of Labour" who gravitated towards the Independent Labour and Co-operative Parties. The likelihood of poorer working-class women who were faced with the double burden of domestic management and the need to contribute to the family economy having either the opportunity or the inclination to become involved in local public life was remote.

The geographical limits of the thesis are determined by the boundaries of the old West Riding, at the time one of the largest administrative units in the country. It stretched from the textile complex of Bradford/Halifax/Huddersfield in the west to the port of Goole in the east and from the market town of Ripon in the rural north to the heavily male-dominated industries of South Yorkshire mining and steel-making which suffered most severely in the inter-war depression.¹⁸ The diversity of economic experience offered by this area is further broadened by the presence of Leeds which was fast developing as an administrative centre in the 1930s and of the railway centres of Doncaster and York. York was also a cathedral and garrison city and had a large number of women workers who were employed in the confectionery industry.

The frontispiece map of the West Riding shows that in 1939 there were eleven county boroughs and eleven non-county boroughs in the administrative area. In 1931 the West Riding County Council itself serviced a population of 1,530,405 over an area of 1,625,058 acres. The bulk of the research is concerned with women in the county and non-county boroughs as the inclusion of urban, rural and parish councillors would have made the numbers unwieldy and the collection of material infinitely time-consuming. Similarly, although individual women members of the West Riding County Council are mentioned from time to time, their collective experience has not been systematically researched for the reasons discussed at the beginning of chapter three.¹⁹

Individual Yorkshire women have, however, been found for the main part to be literarily reticent and it has proved necessary to rely to rather a greater extent than desired on reports and interviews in local newspapers and these need to be treated with some caution. Moreover, the official records of local societies and organisations are frequently incomplete or have survived for one centre and not another. Chapter two, for instance, on women's political organisations, gives a very sketchy picture and the whole issue would repay further, and more thorough, exploration. Greater understanding has, therefore, occasionally been revealed by the incorporation of other women's experience, particularly that of women in Manchester. Moreover, some areas where little research had previously been undertaken such as the campaign for and the initial appointment of women magistrates or the opening of theological training colleges to women students have had to be explored from a general standpoint to provide a framework for the experiences of local women and of those who spent a considerable part of their lives living and working in the West Riding.

Even throughout such a non-homogeneous area, however, it is impossible to deny that rather than witnessing a steady stream of women into public life, the inter-war period was characterised by a muted and tentative response which, in many cases, failed even to be sustained during the 1930s. In conclusion, therefore, chapter seven examines various issues which help to elucidate the cultural, social and economic factors underlying this marked under-representation of women in local government, the magistracy and the Free Church ministry.

The realities encountered by the middle-aged widow of a trade union secretary in Bradford who inherited her husband's council seat or of a compassionate woman minister struggling with the meagre finances of an elderly church in a squalid and depressing area of Leeds were at a far remove from the intellectual and literary worlds of relatively privileged women like Dora Russell or Vera Brittain whose conscious feminism was impelling them to seek alternative forms of married life and self expression in the inter-war period and whose books are well-known. It is hoped that a knowledge of the lives of local women who, although often exceptional in their own communities, came closer to the majority of the female population of the time, will contribute to an understanding of the reasons underlying the continuing pervasiveness of the ideology of separate spheres.

By the inter-war period women had a long tradition of philanthropy to draw on²⁰ and during the years 1918 to 1939 many thousands were involved in some way in the voluntary sector in the West Riding whether as charity workers, members of women's organisations, Poor law guardians, councillors or magistrates.²¹ The involvement

of so many women must inevitably have had some impact on public opinion and their views and activities are therefore worthy of study and if, when the focus is directed to those who moved from the philanthropic world which had long been accepted as a suitable sphere for women to new arenas which had previously been the preserve of men, their numbers become very much fewer, the significance of these women's experience is in no way diminished as it serves to illustrate the fundamental social and cultural changes that had to be addressed. After all, the vision of men and women as equal partners in public life is still far from being realised; the study of the local experience within the context of the national is a valuable aspect of research history which can help to elucidate general trends.

Footnotes

Full publication details are given in the bibliography unless works cited are only tangential to the text. Where copies of newspaper articles have been supplied by local libraries or have been taken from collections of newscuttings it has not always been possible to give page numbers.

- 1 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Nov 5 1917, p 6; Sheffield Independent, 5 Nov 1917, p 5.
- 2 Ray Strachey: "The Cause", pp 375-7.
- 3 See Melville Currell: Political Woman, pp 158-85; Brian Harrison: "Women in a Men's House: The Women M.P.s, 1919-1945" in The Historical Journal, 29, 3 (1986), pp 623-54; Elizabeth Vallance: Women in the House, pp 5-22.
- 4 In her Ladies Elect Patricia Hollis has explored in considerable detail the electoral experiences and spheres of interest of women councillors elected between 1908 and 1914. However, it was 1918 before the first woman councillor was elected in any of the West Riding administrative units.
- 5 A W Chapman: The Making of a Modern University, p 228.
- 6 Stephen T Anning and W K J Walls: A History of the Leeds School of Medicine: One and a half centuries, 1831-1981, pp 96 + 98.
- 7 Figures from Kelly's Directory of Sheffield & Rotherham 1919-1920 and 1938 and Kelly's Directory of Leeds 1920 and 1938.
- 8 Ray Strachey quoted in Ronald G Walton: Women in Social Work, p 107.
- 9 Ronald G Walton: ibid, p 108.
- 10 See Appendix A for the percentage of women employed in the local workforce in ten major centres in the West Riding in 1911, 1921 and 1931.
- 11 See Appendix B for the birth rates in Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford compared with the national average.
- 12 Deirdre Beddoe: Discovering Women's History, p 180.
- 13 John Stevenson: British Society 1914-1945, p 159.

- 14 Conversation with Mrs Chambers, 12 July 1989.
- 15 See Appendix C for the principal occupational groups for working women in a number of areas of the West Riding in 1931.
- 16 Patricia Hollis: "Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space", p 193.
- 17 See Dale Johnson: Women in English Religion, 1700-1925; Gail Malmgreen: Religion in the Lives of Englishwomen, 1760-1930 (London, Croom Helm, 1986); Brian Heeney: The Women's Movement in the Church of England, 1850-1930.
- 18 See Appendix D for comparative rates of unemployment in the West Riding insured workforce in the early 1930s.
- 19 See chapter three, p 120.
- 20 See, for instance, Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England.
- 21 See chapter one, pp 48-9.

CHAPTER ONE

Pathways to Public Life?: Charity Work

In the middle years of the 1920s Vera Brittain wrote in scathing terms of middle-class married women's commitment to voluntary work. She accused them of apathy, ignorance, unreliability, devotion to trivial amusements rather than to humanitarian aspirations and attributed the bulk of "social work" to the efforts of career women who had already proved their determination and drive through their pursuit of economic independence and who often came into contact with the needy through their professional work:

Thus has arisen the curious situation that about one-fifth of all the middle-class women in the country are suffering from overwork, while the abilities of the remaining four-fifths are slowly atrophying from lack of use and interest in life, particularly childless married women or those whose children [have] flown the nest.¹

Consideration of the records of many charitable societies covering a wide range of philanthropic activity in the towns and cities of the West Riding of Yorkshire in the inter-war period shows that, certainly in one provincial region, Vera Brittain was unjustifiably harsh on married women. By far the majority of women whom it has been possible to identify were married. Many were elderly; some were childless; others had married sons and daughters. Many were widowed. A small number who could rely on domestic help or the co-operation of their family and neighbours were younger women. They were complemented by a significant but declining number of spinsters.

The central figure in the charitable life of any town or city was the mayoress. Not only was she expected to accompany her husband to many civic occasions but she herself would be inundated with requests from charitable societies, frequently those run by women, to open bazaars, preside at annual general meetings, to act as hostess at tea parties for sick or needy children, to visit schools or hospital wards. This individual commitment by mayoresses to the charitable life of a community appears to date from the turn of the century. Mrs Currer Briggs, for instance, wife of a colliery owner who was Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1903-4, is considered to be the first woman to give the office of mayoress a distinct role in the public life of the city. Taking "a large view of the duties of a Lady Mayoress," she determined to use her position to make a positive contribution to the welfare of impoverished children in Leeds.² Successful fund-raising enabled her to establish the Leeds Poor Children's Holiday Camp Association which offered seven to fourteen year old children from underprivileged families the chance to enjoy a two weeks' holiday on the shores of Morecambe Bay.³

By 1914 the office of mayoress was widely recognised as the focus for women's charitable activities. Thus, on the outbreak of war in August, Mary Blamires, mayoress of Huddersfield, was hastily recalled from a family visit to Hampshire to preside over a group of ladies who were keen to undertake voluntary work to help the war effort. As she wrote in a letter to her husband who was in Australia:

. . . The women started a Relief Fund for sick and wounded soldiers. I was sent for from Alton to preside and have been kept on the run ever since. I came home for a few days to see what was wanted, but the ladies said I ought to be there all the time. . . .⁴

Some women who became mayoress, particularly Labour women, had had little experience of charity work outside everyday neighbourliness or, perhaps, participation in chapel activities. Mrs Fountain, Lady Mayoress of Leeds in 1922-3, felt she had travelled a long way from the factory where she had started work at the age of ten.⁵ This precipitation into the limelight was very difficult for some women to contemplate. Mary Blamires was "diffident and very shy" when she first became mayoress but was determined not to let her husband down, nor to allow the office of mayoress to be undervalued. She soon grew in confidence.⁶ The mayoress of Pudsey in 1926-7, Mrs Simeon Myers, had not taken any part in public affairs before her husband's election to the mayoralty. She confessed to having approached her year of office with considerable foreboding and nervousness and was more than happy to return to the "firelight of her own home."⁷

Other women, however, found that their year as mayoress opened the door to public life or to a continuing commitment to charitable work. They acquired a taste for public service that remained long after their year of civic office had finished. Mrs Bolton's year as Lady Mayoress of Sheffield in 1928-9 heralded many years' service as a prominent member of the Diocesan Babies' Home committee.⁸ Four years after her term as mayoress of Pudsey, Mrs Procter Naylor had not only been elected a Poor Law guardian but was working for the district nursing association, the women's section of the British Legion and the Mothers' Union.⁹ Mrs Borrill, mayoress of Doncaster in 1923-4, had had no previous experience of civic or public duties but found considerable enjoyment and a useful outlet for her organisational abilities in the charitable work demanded of her during her year in office. Her association with several of the

organisations she had assisted as mayoress continued for many years.¹⁰

An office demanding a similar commitment to charitable effort was that of Mistress Cutler in Sheffield. Master Cutlers were men eminent in their profession who usually had long experience of public speaking and public duties. Not so the Mistress Cutler. It was more than likely that she had never opened a bazaar in her life. As Mistress Cutler she would

probably open a score, with the obligation of saying, tactfully and gracefully, the right thing at each. In between bazaars she will be expected decoratively to extend her patronage and presence to anything from School Speech Days and Prize Givings to Women's Luncheon Clubs, from Babies Homes to Garden Parties, from Folk Dance Orgies to Social Service Committees.¹¹

She equally had to be ready to entertain a host of people from the most exalted to the most humble. Mrs Neill, Mistress Cutler in 1937-8, attended 100 official functions just in the first five months of her year of office.¹² Mrs Brown who wrote a series of features in the Sheffield Telegraph about her year as Mistress Cutler in 1930-1 mentions at least four hospital visits, attendance at over twelve annual general meetings of charitable organisations, and opening 22 bazaars and sales of work. Moreover, these were only the occasions which had been particularly memorable.¹³

Sometimes it was only when they became mayoress or Mistress Cutler that some ladies from prosperous middle-class households who rarely ventured into the less attractive parts of a city became aware of the great gulf between their own lives and the grinding poverty experienced by working-class women struggling with the effects of long-term unemployment, ill-health, dirt and

overcrowding in, for instance, the East End of Sheffield or the slum districts of Holbeck in Leeds. Thus, when going to open a bazaar at Holy Trinity Church in Sheffield's The Wicker, the Mistress Cutler, Mrs Brown, was immediately struck by the contrast between the bright, sunny day she left behind her in the prosperous West End and the Stygian gloom of the industrial smog shrouding the church. The dreary picture of poverty she met was even more startling. The women were pasty-faced, haggard looking:

Some of them had a grim, determined look which seemed to say, 'Well, life is pretty tough, but we will fight to the end.' But many of them looked crushed and resigned as if they had given up all resistance. Their misery was solid and tangible; it seemed to rise and attack me; it took away all my brightness.¹⁴

The mantle of "Lady Bountiful" was, even if reluctantly, taken up by Mistress Cutlers and mayoresses as an expression of the supportive self-sacrificing role they were expected to fulfil in furtherance of their husband's career or political ambitions. There were other women who found that the nature of their husband's employment equally dictated that they, as wives, should be involved in unpaid community service. Clergymen's wives, and to a lesser extent their daughters, were expected to act virtually as unpaid curates to their husbands. They had to face the same daily round of

drilling the Girl Guides, reading novels to the Mothers' Union, polishing the altar brasses, cadging money for the organ fund, making brown paper jackboots for the schoolchildren's plays

that the hapless Dorothy experienced in Orwell's A Clergyman's Daughter.¹⁵ Even Mrs Needham, wife of the Vicar of St Philip's Church in Sheffield, who managed to live an economically independent life running a

preparatory school in Doncaster, was expected to support her husband in his work. Her evenings were devoted to parish visiting and to the Mothers' Union.¹⁶ Such women were particularly involved in work among women and girls, work for which the male clergy, educated and trained in an overwhelmingly masculine environment, may have had little feeling and aptitude. The son-in-law of Mrs Burrows, wife of the Bishop of Sheffield, for instance, believed that Mrs Burrows "had done much to help [her husband] to see things from the woman's point of view."¹⁷

Certainly many women active in philanthropic organisations were also church workers whose parish visiting frequently brought them into contact with poverty and need. Thus, Mrs Moulson's involvement in the Sheffield Schools' Clothing Guild, of which she was president in 1931, was prompted by the distressing cases of extreme poverty she encountered as a worker for St George's Church.¹⁸ Mrs West, a staunch Methodist, who served on the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association and was president of the Armley Babies Welcome in Leeds in the 1920s, turned to charitable work in an attempt to bridge the gap between the respectable and, to her, rather smug church-goer and the many poor families who had lost touch with the Church and felt a predominantly middle-class institution had little to offer them. A compassionate and thoughtful woman, she felt she "had been going to chapel and doing [her] own soul good for so many years, and was still absolutely out of touch with the people outside." When visiting poor families she had found considerable resentment towards the church:

They seem to think that church-going is like a 'great gulf fixed' and that there can be no possible contact between themselves and Christian people. I realised how selfish it was to gether up so many good things to my own soul without passing them on to others.¹⁹

It seems plausible, though, that the charitable efforts of women church-goers in the inter-war period were more a pragmatic response to a perceived need than part of a personal evangelical crusade which for many Victorian women had provided tangible proof of their own salvation, or a source of distraction or definite focus for those struggling to reconcile their Christian faith with the apparent senselessness of life on earth or wavering expectations of the life to come.²⁰

However, there were still many women whose commitment to philanthropic work stretched back to the great Victorian tradition of women's mission to the poor and under-privileged. Thus, in Leeds, Miss Jane Brown, the daughter of a highly successful banker, was touched by the plight of "gentlewomen of limited means" who were chronic invalids but had no-one to care for them. For the majority there was little expectation except the workhouse. In 1885, at a time when no similar establishment existed outside London, Miss Brown leased a house, furnished it and engaged a matron at her own expense. This became the Victoria Home which offered such women "the benefit of Medical Attendance and Nursing combined with home comforts" Miss Brown formed a small informal committee of her friends who paid regular visits to the residents and entertained them with musical or literary recitals. This committee, in turn, together with the addition of a number of men, provided the basis for a board of management appointed when Miss Brown was forced through the increasing financial outlay required to expand the work of the home to constitute the charity on a more official footing. Although Miss Brown's connection with the home was severed when she died in 1921, several of her friends continued a long tradition of service into the inter-war period. Such women brought

a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to their work. Miss Clorinda Woodhouse was honorary secretary from 1899 to 1945 whilst Mrs Arthur Middleton had already served twenty years on the committee when she took over the presidency on Miss Brown's death.²¹

A similar example of the expression of individual women's commitment to the sick and underprivileged can be found in Sheffield. The Cripples' Aid Society was founded in 1900 by two wealthy spinsters, Miss Barker and Miss Jane Barker, inspired with compassion for the many handicapped children at the time shunned by society and deprived of care and education. By 1931 their association had grown from a membership of twenty-six, recruited primarily through the simple but effective means of accosting physically-handicapped people in the streets and asking them to join, to over 1,700 who benefited from fortnightly get-togethers, instruction in occupational skills, children's parties or convalescent treatment outside the smoky confines of the city.²² For the Misses Barker, the wealthy "surplus" women of their generation, the association provided a sense of usefulness and satisfaction by bringing some happiness and purpose to perhaps previously less fulfilled lives. In 1931 they were still "presiding happily, yet busily, over the tea urns at the crippled children's tea parties at the Cutlers' Hall", taking pleasure in the company of the children they were never able to raise themselves.²³

By the inter-war period, too, the tradition of philanthropic service in certain middle-class families was well established. Kitson Clark has identified the emergence in the mid-nineteenth century of a "Leeds elite", a group of widely-educated and highly successful local manufacturers and professional people who, despite their religious and political differences, were united by

their membership of various societies and clubs and "the sharing of common intellectual and cultural standards rather than common economic interests . . ." ²⁴ It was such people as the Anglican and Conservative Beckett, Gott, Tetley and Sadler families and the Liberal Lupton, Luccock and Kitson families who worshipped at the Unitarian Mill Hill Chapel, who were at the centre of educational and social reform and of institutional philanthropy in Leeds in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the inter-war period many of these families, even more closely linked by the gravitation of many old Liberal adherents like the Luptons to Conservatism, still figure predominantly in the upper echelons of Leeds charitable endeavour.

Moreover, as women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century gained recognition and acceptance and women became better educated in their duty as citizens, women members of these families began to make their own contribution. Both Emily Kitson and Mrs Francis Lupton were involved in the early work of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education. Mrs F W Kitson was a founder member in 1884 of the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls. She was still an active member of the executive committee in 1921 and had been joined by two other female members of her family. The committee equally included three Lupton ladies and Mrs Charles Tetley of the Leeds brewing family. Although less heavily involved in the routine administration of the association by 1938 members of the Kitson and Lupton families were still faithfully serving on the committee. ²⁵ Theirs was a tradition of family service often handed down from mother to daughter. Mrs Blackburn, for instance, who was involved with moral welfare work and with the Babies' Welcomes in Leeds and whose father had been a city alderman

came from a home that had "service" as its motto, and had always been taught that to serve one's fellows was the greatest honour and happiness in life. Her father had always been in the public eye, but it was more particularly from her generous-hearted mother that she first learned the ideals that were to determine the course of her life.²⁶

Mrs Blackburn and the members of other families traditionally involved in local charities were raised in a similar spirit of commitment to service as were women like Mrs Bruce Richmond, the granddaughter of William Rathbone and honorary secretary of the Queen's Institute of District Nursing from 1919 until the post-Second World War era, who when asked at what age her interest in nursing was first kindled, replied that "she couldn't possibly remember. She had been born to it."²⁷

There was a similar tradition of social service among paternalistic Sheffield steelmaking firms like W T Flather, one of whose executive directors was Miss Laura Flather who pioneered welfare work among the women workers. Flather women were particularly involved with rescue and moral welfare work and as with other prominent companies, daughters followed their mothers, their mothers-in-law or older family members onto the same committees.²⁸ The practice was, however, not quite so prevalent in Sheffield as in Leeds since the leading steel families were not so long established as the "Leeds elite".

Family traditions of philanthropic service were frequently reinforced by educational example. Boarding schools for the daughters of wealthy men which had little concern with public examinations and aimed to give their pupils a smattering of education may not have included the inculcation of a sense of civic responsibility amongst their pupils. Violet Markham, for instance, youngest

daughter of the managing director of the Staveley Coal Company near Chesterfield, found that at the boarding school for between thirty and forty girls she attended for some eighteen months in the southern outskirts of London "the problem of poverty was [never] mentioned beyond an occasional perfunctory address on some charitable subject."²⁹ Women involved in local charities in the inter-war period who had been pupils at the Sheffield High School, however, would have been encouraged as schoolgirls to help out at the Girls' Evening Club in Regent Lane which originated with a visit in 1881 of the moral welfare worker, Miss Ellice Hopkins. Work among girls less privileged than themselves was deemed to offer "a practical and practicable form of usefulness," whilst fostering in the girls those womanly virtues of self denial and humility:

Self denial - to work steadfastly, sometimes amid difficulties and disappointments, and at the expense of some pleasures and enjoyments:
Humility - which shall give willingness to obey orders, to perform cheerfully what may seem almost trivial duties, to take the lowest place, and thus receive the training which prepares for a more responsible post.³⁰

Such sentiments accorded admirably with the feminine ideals of service and self-sacrifice passed on at home by Victorian and Edwardian mothers to their daughters.³¹

Other girls were involved in fund-raising to support the "Helena Maud" cot at the Children's Hospital and in visiting the ailing children who occupied it. The cot was named after an early mistress at the school, Miss Ramsey, who had first interested some of the girls in the idea. An article in the school magazine in 1889 suggested that girls might take a still greater and deeper personal interest in the children through home visits and gifts of warm clothing and food. Such

activities would entail no personal sacrifice "for we shall certainly earn the reward of feeling that it is more blessed to give than to receive."³²

There were frequent visitors to the school who endeavoured to enlist the support of the girls in their charitable work. Following the visit of a lady engaged in mission work in Syria, there developed a regular pattern of afternoon music recitals. These were not official concerts but members of the school would perform violin solos, duets or trios or sing to entertain their fellow pupils who themselves were not allowed to remain idle but were industriously sewing. Cups of tea would be sold to raise money for the necessary materials. With true Victorian earnestness these occasions fulfilled a dual purpose; they broadened the musical education and public-performing experiences of the girls and provided

an opportunity for developing among the pupils that spirit which aspires to labour for something more than self-culture, and which realises a sense of responsibility towards those in need, even though unknown.³³

Anxious to help local charities as well as those overseas, in one year in the late 1880s between forty and fifty garments were made and presented to the Girls' Training Home in Sheffield to provide girls with suitable clothing to enable them to go into service.³⁴ In 1890 the various charitable efforts of the girls were brought together with the formation of a Ministering Guild. In its second year two sewing meetings were held in the school hall at which garments were manufactured or mended and altered for distribution to various Sheffield charities nominated by the girls and chosen by a committee elected by the School.³⁵ Much of this commitment to helping those less privileged than themselves was instilled in the girls by the example of

Mrs Woodhouse, head mistress from 1878 to 1898. As an old girl wrote in appreciation when Mrs Woodhouse left to take up the headship of Clapham High School:

Mrs Woodhouse taught us that it was not enough to be loyal to our school, but that we should be full of zeal for the public interests of our town. She not only taught by precept, but gave in her own person a lesson of true enthusiastic citizenship.³⁶

The inculcation of a tradition of voluntary service was strong in all Girls' Public Day School Trust schools. A similar commitment was instilled by other schools founded to provide the daughters of upper and middle-class families with the academically-rigorous training needed to enable them to benefit from higher education. Thus at the Leeds Girls' High School which owed its foundation in 1876 to the efforts of members of the Leeds Ladies' Educational Association and of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education who were concerned at the lack of high class education for girls in Leeds whilst pupils were offered an academically-demanding curriculum, they were also made aware of their feminine social responsibilities.³⁷ Girls were encouraged to join the school's Guild of Charity and in 1906 when it appeared that the payment of an annual subscription was deterring some from becoming members the rules were relaxed so that pupils could qualify for membership purely by taking part in the work of the Guild or, if they were old girls, if they expressed themselves willing to do some definite piece of work for the Guild such as teaching in Sunday school, giving some form of education to handicapped children or sending flowers to hospital patients or workhouse residents.³⁸ In this way it was hoped that the whole School, and many old girls, would be drawn into the Guild, that they would become aware of the contrast between their own lives and those of the less fortunate

and offer some form of service in the spirit of self-denial and unselfishness impressed upon them at the annual meeting of the Guild in December 1905:

There is great work open to us, and we ought to feel the responsibility. We should cultivate and encourage the feeling as much as possible It is so very easy to think that the comparatively little we could do would be of no use; but Christ himself said that He would bless even a cup of cold water given in His name. How much more then will He bless any act of self-denial on our part for the benefit of others.³⁹

Similarly Joanna Scott found that Bradford Girls' Grammar School "inculcated a tradition of voluntary service" and in 1889 an Old Girls' Union was formed where ex-pupils could meet, serve the community and "render any talents they possess a source of pleasure to those whose lives are often destitute of all that makes life beautiful."⁴⁰

The development of maternity and child welfare services at the beginning of the twentieth century saw a widening in the nature and scope of schools' charitable activities. Inspired by the interest of their headmistress girls at the West Leeds High School became involved in the work of the Babies Welcome Movement. In 1911 they sent a large hamper of clothing as a Christmas present for the babies.⁴¹ By 1913 such enthusiasm had been aroused that the school undertook the establishment of a separate branch in Armley to be staffed by past and present pupils.⁴² This West Leeds branch was formally opened in June 1913 by Mrs Kitson Clark, president of the Leeds Welcomes, and innumerable past pupils, girls, mistresses and parents were drawn in to act as volunteers who weighed the babies, and ran the clothing and thrift clubs.⁴³ In this way the interests of the girls were channelled into the feminine sphere of service from an early age.

The Girls' Central Secondary School in Sheffield attained a high degree of academic excellence under Miss Couzens, chief mistress and subsequently headmistress from 1904 to 1925, but she equally encouraged her pupils to help "their neighbours and people in distress."⁴⁴ The highlight of the school year was the May Day ceremony when the Upper School was entrusted with the election of a suitable girl as May Queen. The responsibility on the shoulders of the girl elected was considerable as the ceremony took place in a large public hall and she had to face the whole school, parents, friends and city dignitaries. The crowning ceremony was performed by the Lady Mayoress or the Mistress Cutler and later the May Queen and her "maidens", went in procession through the Sheffield streets to deliver flowers to one of the hospitals:

Miss Couzens always laid great stress upon the fact that May Day was an occasion on which every member of the school, young and old, had a part to play . . . in helping the various charities to which the quite considerable profits were sent each year The emphasis throughout was that every member [of the school] could and was expected, through this ceremony, to render service to the community.⁴⁵

Thus, as Emily Janes, editor and Secretary of the National Union of Women Workers (later the NCW), pointed out in 1893, girls leaving such establishments were deeply imbued with a sense of their responsibilities as citizens.⁴⁶ As Frank Prochaska recognised, these girls

were not without other opportunities, which some of them took up; but with a deeply ingrained sense of social obligation they could not envisage a life cut off from some form of social service.⁴⁷

Consequently, among those women who subsequently served on voluntary committees there were often some who had matriculated or even graduated and had considerable talents to offer.

A number of these graduates were wealthy single women. By 1914 women's claim to higher education was firmly established for girls whose parents were wealthy and recognised the value of a wider intellectual outlook for their daughters. That those daughters would use their education in the pursuit of a definite career was not so widely accepted, especially amongst those who had received a university education in the 1890s or early Edwardian period when the entry of a middle-class girl into paid employment was still widely considered unlady-like.

Moreover, even for later graduates like Rosalie Cole of Sheffield who read history at Newnham during the First World War and then completed a diploma in social work at Birmingham University,⁴⁸ openings in the fledgling professions of social work were few. Salaried women social workers were poorly paid, their prospects limited and their status uncertain.⁴⁹ Similarly, life as a teacher, still the only source of professional employment open to many women, was no sinecure even for those whose academic qualifications enabled them to seek positions in GPDST or girls' grammar schools. When Miss Willey, the first girl to be awarded a scholarship by Sheffield local education authority to take advantage of a university education outside the city, left Oxford in 1917 to teach at the Central Newcastle High School, the mistresses were so poorly paid that it was impossible for them to feed themselves properly, especially if they also had dependent relatives to support. Attempts to present a budget to the headmistress demonstrating the annual

salary a woman needed to live on only brought horrified condemnation of such unladylike behaviour. Moreover, living conditions were spartan and strict control was exercised over staff behaviour, particularly that of the junior mistresses.⁵⁰ For women wealthy enough not to have to work and whose position in society offered them the opportunity to make a contribution to local educational or charitable activity at a high level, unpaid service which offered greater freedom of movement and higher social recognition was undoubtedly more attractive.

Moreover, the need for training, even for voluntary workers, which had first been acknowledged by the Charity Organisation Society and was highlighted by the sometimes chaotic and uncoordinated proliferation of voluntary work in the First World War was now more widely recognised and by the inter-war period opportunities to acquire the necessary skills were more widely available. Thus, Miss Matheson, a Birmingham settlement warden, wrote in 1916 that

gradually men and women have awakened to the knowledge that good-will is not in itself a sufficient guide to intelligent helpfulness and that he who would help his neighbour must first himself acquire the tools of his craft⁵¹

Barbara Wootton found, when lecturing at Westfield College, that the majority of social science students were not intending to become professional social workers:

mostly they were young women of means and leisure who wished to engage in various charitable activities . . . , they had grasped that if you want to make a success of 'slumming', or to set the poor to rights, it is better to know something about the lives of the people into whose business you propose to interfere. So they came in their cars and their pearls and their elegant clothes to hear what I and others had to say;⁵²

In Leeds, the Red House Settlement which was opened in 1913 in the impoverished and overcrowded area of Hunslet became closely linked to the University department of social service after the war and offered a training ground for students as well as voluntary workers to whom it gave "an opportunity of studying conditions at first hand."⁵³ Thus educated women who benefited from the training opportunities available to them could approach charitable work almost as a profession.

Therefore to receive a higher education in no way precluded single women from charitable service: rather did it enhance their chances of making an effective and valued contribution in a sphere which, in the inter-war period, was widely accepted as eminently suitable for women. As, Mrs Neill, Sheffield's Mistress Cutler in 1937-8, advised readers in the Daily Independent:

I am bringing up my daughters to take a share in the social work of their city
Careers are commendable for girls who have to earn their livings, but I think those who are provided for should give their time to voluntary work There is so much to do and so few people willing or able to do it.⁵⁴

For those educated women who had pursued a career on completion of their training, voluntary work provided an acceptable and rewarding outlet for their energies if they were obliged for professional or social reasons to resign from their posts on marriage. Nurses like Mrs Winifred Williams were able to maintain their interest in their profession on a voluntary basis as members of hospital boards of management,⁵⁵ whilst the skills of women teachers such as Mrs Mair, who until her marriage in 1922 was headmistress of the Rotherham Municipal High School for Girls, could be utilised effectively in the service of youth organisations. Faced with the enforced

transition from busy school life to the purely domestic sphere Mrs Mair found that the Guide movement gave her ample scope:

for exercising her organising abilities, and also for pursuing in some degree her ideals as applied to the welfare of girls educationally, morally, and physically.⁵⁶

Social constraints also dictated that some women should refrain from formal employment. Thus, Mrs Gumpert, who graduated in medicine at Sheffield University and subsequently started in general practice, was obliged to cease working when her husband, who had completed his training in the same year, was appointed medical registrar at the Royal Hospital in 1931 and found that he was:

expected to live in a select part of the town and my wife was discouraged from engaging in general practice on the theory that it would lower my standing as a future specialist. This was the unkindest act of all, as she was well trained in general practice and hospital work and would have loved to make a substantial contribution to the family budget. She would have enjoyed the work too.⁵⁷

Like other surgeons' and would-be surgeons' wives, Mrs Gumpert had to content herself with linen leagues but at least in this way a useful and expensive training and a fund of experience were not totally lost to society.

Particularly once their children had grown up, the domestic responsibilities of middle-class women in South and West Yorkshire appear not to have been very onerous. A Mistress Cutler like Mrs Brown whose husband was managing director of the steel manufacturers, Hadfields, employed at least one cook and two maids.⁵⁸ As has been shown in the Introduction, it was perhaps not so difficult to obtain domestic help as it was in some other parts of the country and this was particularly so in

South Yorkshire where there were few alternative forms of employment for women.⁵⁹ Mary Stocks, in her Eleanor Rathbone Memorial Lecture in 1953, referred to the inter-war period as a golden age for middle-class women when they could enjoy the benefits of emancipation but were still a privileged group with the "advantages of the old class-structure still operating if not wholly intact . . ."⁶⁰ With small families, husbands away for long hours and domestic servants to run their homes, the range of legitimate pursuits for middle-class women outside the home was broadening in the inter-war period. However, voluntary work still offered the most satisfying sphere of activity for the less frivolous, and the more socially aware and compassionate woman.

However, Mary Stocks, whilst pointing out the emancipatory impact the First World War had had on the lives of many women,⁶¹ overlooked the fact that for others the War must equally have left a great void in their lives. For some, immersion in philanthropic work acted as a kind of catharsis, a desperate attempt to prove that they could still be of use in a world which had seen those sons and husbands in whom they had invested so much squandered in the mud of Flanders. They "had built up a new life on other people's needs."⁶²

Moreover, the War had equally drawn some women into charity work for the first time. Recent studies of women's involvement in the war effort have tended to focus on their entry into the formal economy. Much less attention has been paid to their voluntary contribution, partly because such work is less well documented and partly because the response was frequently chaotic and fragmented.⁶³ Women were recruited into volunteer uniformed women's organisations and into nursing detachments. They offered their services as drivers,

helped out in canteens or on farms, served refreshments to military personnel at railway stations. Whereas such work allowed a few, predominantly single, women to break away from the sheltered domestic environment for the first time, others sought some form of service in their immediate locality which could be reconciled with their continuing commitment to their homes and families. The knitting of "comforts" for the troops was work which could be picked up and pursued whenever a convenient moment arose. For some personal and charitable work became closely intertwined as they offered their homes as military hospitals or convalescent homes and, in some cases, took on the post of superintendant themselves.⁶⁴

Other forms of war service took women out of their homes into the local community. Some became volunteer members of the patrols organised by the National Union of Women Workers to police the parks and control the behaviour of women who were suddenly faced with the unprecedented freedom and economic independence afforded by wartime conditions.⁶⁵ Sheffield University became a centre for voluntary work to assist refugees and the wounded. The Sheffield University Hospital Supply Depot gathered together over 500 ladies who worked from rooms in Western Bank and supplied some 456,247 articles for the troops. Others welcomed Belgian refugees and equipped hostel accommodation for them.⁶⁶ Like Mrs Gertrude Halbot, an ex-school teacher, some women in Leeds, in co-operation with the Education Committee, opened day nurseries for the children of munition workers and staffed and financed them through their own efforts.⁶⁷

Other women, responding to the example set by the Prince of Wales's Appeal for a National Relief Fund on 6 August 1914, formed their own charitable committees to help women and children who found their lives adversely

affected by the war. Thus Sheffield's Lady Mayoress, Mrs Oliver Wilson, called upon a small group of women to form a Ladies' Civic Aid Committee to help alleviate distress amongst women thrown out of work by the initial dislocations of the war.⁶⁸ Visiting the dependents of fighting men who applied for relief to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association also made heavy demands on the services of voluntary workers.⁶⁹ The Leeds branch of the Association which was based at the Red House Settlement had 770 cases on its books in 1916 and sixty-six visitors. Many of these on their visits to the Settlement in East Street and to surrounding homes in one of the most depressed and overcrowded areas of Leeds were witnessing the effects of dire poverty for the first time:

to this work come many with willing hands but often timid minds; they never knew there were homes such as these, they have never been in East Street before,⁷⁰

In many instances women's interest in such spheres of activity did not cease when the war ended. Thus, Mrs Ives, another of the early volunteers involved in wartime nursery provision in Leeds, maintained her interest in nursery schooling in the inter-war period and served from 1921 to 1942 as chairman of the Red House Day Nursery.⁷¹ Women who had assisted the families of fighting men through the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association continued to act as visitors to those who had lost their main breadwinner - 1,126 families, for instance, were being visited by the Sheffield Council of Social Service in September 1921.⁷² Others continued to be involved in the running of girls' clubs which had initially been formed to provide leisure facilities for young women munition and factory workers. For a few, like Mrs Carter of Sheffield, voluntary war work grew into a life-long commitment and, Painted Fabrics Ltd, the company she was

instrumental in starting to provide employment and homes for severely disabled servicemen continued to make substantial demands on her time and resources until it was wound up in 1958.⁷³

Women found themselves, therefore, drawn into charity work for a variety of reasons. By the inter-war period the areas of voluntary work with which they were involved were manifold but fell into four main organisational patterns. First, there were the local branches of national welfare charities such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or the Lifeboat Institute. The principal function of these branches was the raising of funds to support the work of paid officials or the administration of charitable relief through local committees of national welfare societies such as the Soldiers' and Sailors' and Airmen's Families' Association. Secondly, a number of organisations existed which provided special facilities to meet the needs of specific groups within the local community. These included youth organisations such as Sunday schools, the scouts and guides, the Young Men and Young Women's Christian Associations and the Boys' and Girls' Brigades. Many of these had church or chapel links but were essentially social, recreational and educational organisations. They were staffed predominantly by volunteers who usually operated under the guidance of one or two salaried workers. Thirdly, there were local institutions mainly founded, thanks to the generosity of wealthy benefactors, during the nineteenth century. Among these could be found the voluntary hospitals, homes for the incurably ill, settlements and almshouses.

Finally, there were innumerable individual organisations which had emerged on an indiscriminate and haphazard

basis in response to specific needs identified in the locality. Among these were the many concerns of individual churches and chapels and organisations that were particularly concerned with the welfare of children, the sick and aged. Thus, humanitarian concern over the plight of children from poor families had prompted the formation in 1890 of the Cinderella Club in Bradford. Started by a group of schoolteachers who were alarmed at the undernourished condition of some of the children they taught, the Club aimed to feed and clothe the poorest children in Bradford.⁷⁴ A similar organisation existed in Leeds although in this instance it was known as the Boots for the Bairns Fund and was under the stewardship of the Yorkshire Evening Post which could use its influence to prevail upon city manufacturers to provide footwear and clothing at cost price.⁷⁵ In Sheffield the schools' clothing guilds, which were run entirely by women, operated on a much smaller scale.⁷⁶ In Barnsley, families in distress could apply to the Lady Harriet Wentworth and Barnsley Charity which was founded in 1902 with funds provided by Lady Harriet Wentworth of Wentworth Castle and other members of her family

to relieve, as far as possible, the suffering caused by poverty without doing anything which shall tend to increase the great avoidable causes of poverty, such as improvidence, idleness, and vice.⁷⁷

Other societies concentrated on some specific individual need such as convalescent aid or surgical appliances.

Like the Lady Harriet Wentworth and Barnsley Charity, many of these organisations were initially founded by women, sometimes primarily by the efforts of one person like Mrs Currer Briggs who inaugurated the Leeds Poor Children's Holiday Camp Association in 1904;⁷⁸ alternatively by a group of women such as the young

women's Bible class at Masborough Independent Chapel whose initial efforts to provide holidays for needy and delicate children blossomed into the Rotherham and District Children's Convalescent Home at Filey.⁷⁹ Women were particularly involved in the founding of moral welfare organisations. Thus homes for destitute girls were opened in Leeds and Bradford following a nation wide tour by the moral welfare reformer, Miss Ellice Hopkins, in the early 1880s although each had been encouraged to develop autonomously as Miss Hopkins believed that local conditions would dictate different patterns of development.⁸⁰ A new spirit and outlook towards moral welfare work in the changed climate after the First World War is discernable in the inter-war period and women's concerns were being diverted from such issues with heavy moral overtones as temperance and prostitution to the practical problems of helping unmarried parents and their children and maintaining family relations in the face of difficult economic conditions. Women church members were particularly involved, for instance, in the running of Diocesan babies' homes and providing accommodation for unmarried mothers and their babies where it was hoped they would learn Christian standards of conduct.⁸¹

There had been an impressive growth in the number of charities in the nineteenth century; in the inter-war period new areas of charity work emerged either, like the British Legion, to mitigate the hardship and suffering engendered by service in the Great War or as changing social and economic conditions highlighted the plight of previously unacknowledged disadvantaged groups within a community. Thus, in Sheffield, the Soroptimists, in recognition of the difficulties faced in later life by a growing number of single women of limited means galvanised women's organisations in the city into opening a home for aged ladies in 1938.⁸² The period was,

however, more strongly characterised by the development of new spheres of activity within existing organisations - the linen leagues in the voluntary hospitals, for example⁸³ - or the rapid expansion of earlier foundations. This was particularly the case with youth organisations such as scouting and guiding and the inter-war period witnessed a marked expansion of the work of the Young Women's Christian Association as social centres or hostels for women and girls opened in such cities as Leeds and Sheffield and in smaller towns like Doncaster.⁸⁴

A further feature of the inter-war period was the attempt to co-ordinate and integrate local voluntary and statutory provision through the formation of Councils of Social Service. These councils, to which the majority of local charities were affiliated, liaised between those administering social services, whether public or voluntary, and the general public. Miss Harford, secretary of the Sheffield Council, estimated in 1931 that some £3,000 was required annually to enable the Council to carry out its task effectively.⁸⁵ Helping to raise these funds, acting as visitors for the Personal Service sub-committee and serving on the executive committee illustrate the scope of voluntary activity that women could undertake in the inter-war period and these functions are explored further below.

Fund-raising

Frank Prochaska has demonstrated how women came to make a growing financial contribution to nineteenth-century charitable endeavour, not only through their personal contributions but through their effectiveness in devising and implementing fund-raising schemes and their willingness to equip themselves with the necessary

accounting and secretarial skills to enable them to perform their task more successfully. As a result, women

became an increasingly powerful force in the charitable world not simply because they were paying for a larger and larger share of the bill; their organizational talent and ingenious money-making also played a crucial part.⁸⁶

By the end of the First World War changing social and economic conditions were adversely affecting charitable donations. At a time when an explosion in the number of charities sparked by the war dictated that income was more thinly spread and when charities themselves were crippled by rising prices and heavier operating costs, high taxes and death duties were channelling resources in other directions.⁸⁷ It was pointed out in the Annual Report for the Sheffield branch of the NSPCC for 1919, for instance, that the society was badly run down after war, that subscriptions were not sufficient to meet all the expenses of the branch and that ward collectors were urgently needed.⁸⁸ For the NSPCC and all other societies the situation remained serious in the inter-war period and income was severely affected by the adverse economic climate which doubtless prompted many to pull in the purse strings.

Whereas in the nineteenth century most charities had existed solely on the fund-raising activities of their members, and particularly their female members, charities in the inter-war period were coming to rely increasingly on payments from corporate bodies such as insurance funds or public authorities. Indeed, the recognition of the growing responsibility of the state for the welfare of its citizens prompted one eminent social worker, Elizabeth Macadam, to christen the system of social welfare provided in partnership between voluntary and statutory bodies "the new philanthropy."⁸⁹ Thus, Houses

of Help for homeless girls and young women or Diocesan babies' homes would receive an annual grant from the Poor Law guardians or, after 1930, the public assistance committee of the local council; they were helping to keep women and babies out of the workhouse. In the wake of the mental health legislation of 1913 which placed the primary responsibility for the care of the mentally ill on local authorities, voluntary associations working with the mentally handicapped received the major part of their income from statutory bodies. The total income of the Sheffield Voluntary Association for the Care of the Mentally Defective in 1923-4, for instance, was some £183 of which £155 came in the form of grants from the Board of Control, the local statutory committee and the education committee; only £2 16s 6d came from subscriptions and donations.⁹⁰ Other organisations were obliged to seek new methods of fund-raising which were designed to attract small sums of money but from a much wider public not necessarily committed to any particular cause. Nevertheless, voluntary fund-raisers still had a vital role to play and women displayed considerable ingenuity in tapping new sources of income.

Bazaars, often lasting for three or four days, were still an important source of income for local charities. For many the annual bazaar was the central focus of the year's fund-raising activities. However, individual events were now only a poor reflection of some their glorious, highly lucrative Victorian forerunners. In Bradford in 1901 the Ladies' Committee was able to raise £4,919 at a bazaar for the Children's Hospital.⁹¹ A bazaar on behalf of the Hospital for Women in Leeds in 1907, together with donations in response to a special appeal, realised £5,000.⁹² Similar events throughout the region in the inter-war period were much more muted affairs. The annual autumn fair for the Leeds Maternity

Hospital in 1936 which included stalls selling cakes, household linen, produce, china and glass, flowers and sweets and allowed its patrons a moment's frisson of excitement when a lady palmist revealed the secrets of the future raised £214 net.⁹³ This figure differed little from other years in the 1930s although there is evidence that in the years of high unemployment income from the sale was slightly down. Thus, the lowest sum raised was £198 in November 1933, the highest £271 in 1938.⁹⁴ The ladies of the Sheffield Jessop Hospital Linen League, working alongside contributors to the Penny in the Pound fund, did succeed in raising £3,000 at a two-day bazaar in 1927⁹⁵ but other ambitious fund-raising events fell victim to the economic situation. An ingenious three-day bazaar was planned for November 1931 at the Cutlers' Hall on behalf of the Sheffield Council of Social Service. The proposed theme was "My Lady's House", with the large banqueting hall to be divided into "rooms", in each of which appropriate articles would be offered for sale. Thus books would be found in the "library", white elephants in the "lumber room", game in the "larder".⁹⁶ "As a result, however, of the economic crisis, it was felt wise to postpone indefinitely the holding of the Bazaar."⁹⁷ It never took place.

The inter-war period is characterised rather by a multitude of fund-raising efforts on a much smaller scale; the ubiquitous sales of work, fetes, matinee concerts, pound days and the highly popular American Tea. In toto these efforts still succeeded in raising a fairly considerable sum but in themselves they constitute very insignificant amounts. When the NSPCC in Sheffield, for instance, organised a League of Pity concert at the Empire Theatre in 1930 £67 was raised from an alleged audience of 1,200 people.⁹⁸ The average donation was, therefore, just over one shilling.

Although the majority of women may not have been in a position to make substantial contributions to charity themselves, they were prepared to devote themselves to fund-raising or to organising others into chiselling money out of whomsoever they could. Many smaller organisations still depended to a considerable extent on bands of voluntary helpers canvassing their friends and neighbours for annual subscriptions. In 1926 nine women were responsible for collecting between them £190 in subscriptions and donations for the Sheffield House of Help.⁹⁹ Frank Prochaska found, and in the inter-war period it still seemed to apply, that women gave most generously to societies founded for women and children.¹⁰⁰ Thus of the 184 subscribers to the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls in 1928, 125 were women. Thirty-seven of the subscribers were men and the remaining twenty-two subscriptions came from local companies or societies.¹⁰¹ Of the eight major legacies left to the Leeds District Nursing Association between 1933 and 1937, six totalling £587 came from women. The two legacies from men amounted to £15.¹⁰²

Annual subscriptions for some societies were collected through ward committees. Thus the Leeds Maternity Hospital in 1928 had committees in nineteen districts and between them they raised £354.¹⁰³ A similar scheme was adopted by the NSPCC which by 1927 in Sheffield had thirty district ladies' committees which covered the whole city and surrounding areas. Each district was entitled to have at least one representative on the central committee. Contributions varied considerably according to the endeavours of the ladies involved and the wealth of the district. In the relatively poor year of 1933, Hallam, under the energetic chairmanship of Mrs A E Neill, whose committee ran one of the largest

groups in the country, raised £212. St Philips district, on the other hand, with its slums and declining population contributed only £1 15s and throughout the period there was considerable difficulty in finding anyone willing to canvass this area.¹⁰⁴

Despite the determined efforts of women like Mrs Neill, the volume of individual subscriptions appears to have increased little during the period. The Council of Social Service in Sheffield had 303 subscribers in 1927. Two hundred and fifty-five of these were individuals or couples.¹⁰⁵ By 1939 the total number of subscribers had crept up to 350 and 290 were individuals or couples.¹⁰⁶ The number of subscribers to the Sheffield Diocesan Babies' Home fell steadily year by year until the death, in 1934, of Mrs Burrows who had been the chairman since its inception in 1918. A revitalised committee under Mrs Wolstenholme attempted to tackle the problem by initiating a recruitment drive. It was hoped to obtain 200 new subscribers at one pound each but by the outbreak of war in 1939 this drive had only been partially successful.¹⁰⁷ In Leeds, despite repeated requests for new subscribers, the Red House Settlement was forced to close in 1923.¹⁰⁸

In the face of declining or static income from individual subscriptions, new sources of fund raising had to be tapped. These were designed to draw in a much wider proportion of the local community, many of whom were exhorted to make the occasional cash donation without any commitment to any particular cause. Flag days were a typical example of these more universal forms of fund raising. The first in Sheffield was organised during the First World War by the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies to raise funds for the Scottish Women's Hospital in Serbia.¹⁰⁹ Unless the weather was

particularly adverse, flag days could be guaranteed to raise quite substantial sums of money even in less prosperous years - people like to be seen to be contributing. Large numbers of volunteers were necessary to make them effective but they required little personal outlay and women organisers could draw on their network of friends and neighbours and members of other women's organisations. Standing on a street corner for an hour or so could be conveniently fitted in with domestic commitments or combined with a visit to the shops.

The raising of money was also achieved by a much more widespread use of static collecting boxes. House-to-house collections equally became increasingly popular. Gertrude Wood, for instance, was responsible for organising 800 volunteers who between them collected £628 during the Sheffield District Nursing Association house-to-house collection in 1930.¹¹⁰ Even very small donations could soon mount up if enough people could be persuaded to contribute as the women who initiated the "Stamp Scheme" on behalf of Doncaster Royal Infirmary found. Between 1926 and 1946 £11,021 was raised through twopenny donations for each of which a stamp receipt was given.¹¹¹

Carol Dyhouse has illustrated the extent to which needlework came to be regarded as an essential component of a working-class girl's education in late-Victorian and Edwardian England.¹¹² Moreover, middle-class girls were equally encouraged not to let their hands remain idle. Proficiency with the needle continued to be universally expected of all women throughout the inter-war period. Miss Turner and her sister who received a Methodist boarding school education in the Lake District returned to Sheffield destined to act as unpaid companions to their mother and passed interminable hours pouring over

intricate embroidery. Nor in the Gozney household in Leeds were the girls allowed to have idle hands. Their mother's "fingers were always busy knitting and sewing for the people she befriended, and her two daughters were encouraged to follow her example."¹¹³ Women's skill with the needle could be readily employed in the cause of charity. Sewing or knitting in the company of other women was both companionable and productive and many organisations, therefore, in the run up to sales of work or bazaars, formed sewing parties who would set to work to stitch garments, pin cushions and needlecases, tea trays, tea towels and antimacassars.

If women did not have the time or the inclination for sewing, they could produce or provide an infinite number of other domestic items. Thus, voluntarily-run day nurseries would rely on annual sales of work or pound days which enabled the cupboards to be restocked - sugar, soap, jam, dried fruits, custard powder, all made their way on to the shelves.¹¹⁴ Women working on behalf of the Doncaster Royal Infirmary which, like all the voluntary hospitals, faced serious financial difficulties in the inter-war period, organised "Egg Days" when "thousands of eggs were collected from voluntary contributors, to be put down in water-glass for the enrichment of patients' diets throughout the coming year." Between 40,000 and 50,000 eggs were collected each year.¹¹⁵ Other women provided white elephants or books, spent hours making bookmarks, took infinite pains dressing dolls or baking or getting others to bake biscuits, cakes, sweets which were then usually sold to other women. It was all purely an extension of the domestic sphere and provoked acid comments on the part of feminist writers like Winifred Holtby who poured scorn on a social system

which overworks eight-tenths of its female population, and gives the remaining two-tenths

so little to do that they must clutter the world with useless objects.¹¹⁶

Mrs Brown probably shared this view. It was customary for the Mistress Cutler to purchase a item from every single stall at every bazaar and sale of work she was asked to open:

Already I have afternoon tea cloths and tray cloths galore, soap that would do the washing of a small village for a year, dusters in abundance, tinned goods enough for a Polar Expedition, handkerchiefs, nightdress-cases, babies' frocks and the like without end. What it will be at the end of the year I cannot imagine"117

Individually such items had little intrinsic value; the significance of women's contribution lies in the sheer number of events organised and volume of goods produced. Large-scale fund-raising between the wars, on the other hand, usually took the form of a direct appeal to the local community. These appeals were administered by predominantly male committees but women would be responsible for much of the spadework.

Frank Prochaska's research has revealed the extent to which charities in the nineteenth century were the beneficiaries of considerable legacies from single and widowed women with no immediate family or no family business requiring capital investment.¹¹⁸ There is evidence that women continued to donate income from legacies and from family businesses to help the local community. As Miss Jane Brown used much of her personal fortune to endow the Victoria Home for Ladies in Leeds, both Helen Wilson in Sheffield and Violet Markham in Chesterfield used personal legacies to finance settlement work. At the end of 1901 Henry Wilson, Liberal M P for Attercliffe, whose family had a strong commitment to social purity, educational reform and civic service gave

each of his children "substantial sums of money". They also each received a letter explaining that the money was indeed theirs to use as they thought fit but that they should still consider it "a sort of trust" which he knew they could be guaranteed not "to spend . . . in a rash impulsive way [or] even on good and useful objects."¹¹⁹ This financial independence seems to have encouraged Helen Wilson who had been one of the first five women to obtain a medical degree at London University and in 1895 become the first woman doctor to practise in Sheffield,¹²⁰ to pass on her share of the practice to another woman doctor and to devote herself entirely to welfare and charitable work. She had been one of the original council members of the Neighbour Guilds Association formed in Sheffield in 1897 and in 1905 she funded the building of Rutland Hall to bring together under one roof the various activities of the Shalesmoor and North Sheffield Guilds.¹²¹ In 1928 the building was formally handed over to the Trustees but Helen Wilson remained president and closely connected with the Settlement until her death in 1951.¹²²

No doubt Helen Wilson found common cause with Violet Markham who when she came into an inheritance in 1901 found herself a woman of "ample personal independence"¹²³ dividing her time between London and her home on the outskirts of Chesterfield where "there was ample scope for voluntary effort to make good some of the deficiencies in the life of the town".¹²⁴ Her response, on the advice of May Tennant, was to found a women's settlement in the belief that in this way she could:

fling some contribution into the scales in which the prosperity of the few was balanced so unevenly against the meagre life of the many.¹²⁵

Large-scale bequests from individual women became less numerous in the economically-troubled 1930s although as late as 1937 Miss F L Tozer of the Sheffield steelmaking company, Steel, Peach & Tozer, who contributed to many causes in the city and was a founder member of the Council of Social Service, and "surely the last in Sheffield to be known all her adult life simply as 'Miss Tozer'", provided the entire cost of the new Chapter House in the Cathedral in memory of her parents.¹²⁶

Personal Service

Wealthy spinsters and widows could determine their own patterns of spending. Married women usually lacked economic independence and were less able to be generous. Many did, however, have a valuable commodity to offer - plenty of time which could be devoted to service. Married women visited the sick and needy; they ran girls' or women's clubs; they helped with activities at settlements; they looked after working women's young children. Some approached their voluntary work so seriously that although many still employed maids and cooks to perform the domestic chores within their own families they felt themselves obliged to take lessons in cookery and needlework so that they could fulfil their duty to less privileged women and girls more effectively.¹²⁷

One expanding area of personal service for women between the wars was work with young people. Although the most familiar youth organisations like the Young Men and Women's Christian Associations, the Scouts and Guides, the Boys' Brigade, and the Girls' Friendly Societies were in existence before 1914, the period 1918 to 1939 saw a considerable increase in the number of young people attracted to them and a more professional approach to

organisation and training. The West Riding South guiding area, for instance, which stretched from Huddersfield in the north to Sheffield in the south and eastwards as far as Goole and Selby, had a total of 2,434 Rangers, Guides and Brownies in 1919. By 1937 there were 10,660.¹²⁸

The major provision for young people continued to be in single-sex organisations and women generally confined themselves to the female sphere, although some were involved in the lower echelons of scout troops. Guiding has always been the doyenne of girls' movements and has tended to attract women leaders of high social standing. Although ostensibly seeking to instil habits of self-reliance and independence in young girls, the Guide movement's dedication to Church, Empire and Nation struck a strong chord among Tory women.¹²⁹

Institutional visiting offered a further sphere of personal service and encompassed the contribution of two or three individuals who visited and entertained the frail residents of such institutions as the Leeds Victoria Home for Invalid Ladies¹³⁰ and of much larger, more highly organized groups such as those who visited elderly men and women in Poor Law homes and provided therapeutic pastimes through the auspices of the Brabazon Employment Society or committees of lady visitors who went round the hospital wards. Members, for instance, of the Sheffield Royal Hospital Samaritan Society who worked in conjunction with the hospital almoners, followed up the cases of individual patients, ascertained their needs and supplied clothing, bedding, extra nourishment in the form of eggs, butter and grocery tickets or arranged for patients to be sent to a "holiday home" to facilitate their recovery.¹³¹ In Leeds, in 1938, a group of volunteer ladies introduced a free library service of "light literature and magazines" for the patients at the Maternity Hospital.¹³²

Visiting in people's homes no longer presented quite the inchoate, patronising and undisciplined picture that Prochaska paints of nineteenth-century philanthropy, particularly before the advent of the Charity Organisation Society in 1869 which endeavoured to train volunteers and to initiate a system of case record-keeping. The growth of socialism and working-class consciousness meant that no longer would some "visitors, taking advantage of their superior social status [knock] and [enter] before the door could be opened."¹³³ Many had become suspicious of the charitable intentions of the middle-classes as the Sheffield NCW found when it attempted to provide midday meals for expectant and nursing mothers in Attercliffe Church Hall in 1935: "There appeared to be a great deal of prejudice against anything which savoured of charity, and a good deal of misunderstanding".¹³⁴

Visiting in the inter-war period was more organised; volunteers would often operate in conjunction with trained, salaried staff; personal calls were less on an indiscriminate basis; volunteers would visit in response to specific requests from individuals seeking help or from statutory and charitable bodies who had identified a particular need. Women visitors would, for instance, visit the homes of children recommended for a recuperative stay at the Rotherham and District Children's Convalescent Home at Filey to assess their needs and the family circumstances. The children would be selected by the lady members of the committee on the advice of the visitors.¹³⁵

Other volunteers visited the physically handicapped in their own homes, helped with advice, and, if possible, arranged to supply their special requirements. With only

a few salaried visitors, the Sheffield Cripples' Aid Association had 1798 cases on its books in 1932 and had to rely on voluntary workers to make the majority of the 18,274 visits that were made that year.¹³⁶ In a spirit of compassion and understanding visitors offered friendship, provided clothing and books, organised the loan of carriages and invalid chairs, gave lessons to some of the delicate children too ill to leave their homes, advised on suitable leisure occupations at a time when employment for the physically handicapped was virtually impossible to find. Such visits could not be hurried and, as reports had to be submitted on each case, were often very time-consuming.¹³⁷ Virtually all these visits were made by women.

The Sheffield Voluntary Association for the care of the Mentally Defective equally relied heavily on voluntary assistance. The Association had 134 visitors in 1925-6 despite widespread reluctance to take up service with the mentally handicapped as the work was regarded as difficult and distasteful. In 1927 an appeal was made for younger women to volunteer in the hopes that they might "act as sisters to feeble-minded girls."¹³⁸ Visitors endeavoured to show wives how to improve their cooking techniques, sewing skills and child management, teach them about nutrition and the handling of the family budget and help to provide furnishings and clothes. Much time was spent just giving advice. Visitors tried, for instance, to persuade the mothers of "feeble-minded" girls of the moral danger they could be in if they were not sufficiently supervised. Some attempted to dissuade parents on eugenicist grounds from allowing their daughters to marry. Through the contribution of its lady visitors the Association was often able to keep families together, even where the mother might suffer from periodic bouts of mental illness.¹³⁹

The Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls similarly made calls on the time of a small group of visitors. Founded in 1884 the Association took in young girls living in extremely poor families or in circumstances in which they were deemed to be in moral danger, trained them as domestic servants and found them positions in reputable homes. Whilst younger girls were under the care of a salaried matron in one of the Association's two homes, it was the task of the visitors to ascertain the suitability of households which sought to employ girls trained by the Association and to keep in touch with the girls in their new positions and receive reports on their progress. Eleven such visits were made in 1920.¹⁴⁰

Much home visiting was undertaken primarily in an attempt to establish the needs of a claimant. Thus, applications for help to the Sheffield Council of Social Service were handled by the Personal Service sub-committee and after an initial interview with a trained worker, a volunteer visitor would usually be despatched to inquire into the case and the family circumstances. The number of visitors used by the Council rose during the inter-war period, particularly after the Prince of Wales's broadcast speech to the National Council of Social Service meeting at the Albert Hall in London on 27 January 1932 in which he praised the many schemes devised to mitigate the effects of unemployment and "called upon the whole country to accept the challenge of unemployment as a national opportunity for voluntary social service."¹⁴¹ As in the rest of the country, offers of help poured into the Sheffield office. The combined total of Personal Service committee members, voluntary visitors and voluntary office workers rose from 45 in 1932 (36 of them women) to 86 in 1933 (59 women).¹⁴²

Women voluntary workers were anxious to do what they could to alleviate the plight of the unemployed but their efforts were directed more towards helping the families of unemployed men than in the interests of unemployed women workers. This was not necessarily intentional as the Sheffield Women's Mutual Service Clubs, for instance, were originally designed to provide occupational centres for unemployed women to help them maintain their skills and morale. However, when the first centre was opened at the Victoria Hall in March 1933 the typewriters originally provided to enable girls to keep up their typing skills were soon displaced by sewing machines when it was found that the greatest need was not among unemployed women but among the wives of unemployed men.¹⁴³

The subsequent mushrooming of centres bears witness to their effectiveness. They represent an excellent example of women recognising a specific need and organising on a co-operative basis to provide for it. Thus, four of the clubs that had been established by 1936 were staffed by volunteers from the Inner Wheel whilst women from various organisations took on responsibility for others. Membership in 1938 totalled over 1000.¹⁴⁴ Whilst the clubs were encouraged to be self-financing, funded by a combination of members' contributions of 4d a week and by jumble sales and whist drives, they were all affiliated to a central association whose organising committee raised funds to purchase materials for handicraft classes and to finance the employment of a lady worker who, from a tiny office in St James Street, supervised the day to day running of the clubs, the purchase of necessary materials and attempted to attract new volunteers. The leaders of the fifteen centres and their helpers all gave their services voluntarily.¹⁴⁵

Other schemes of a practical nature were implemented by women in the face of continuing levels of high unemployment. A social centre for women and girls was opened in Hunslet in Leeds in 1925 where classes were offered in handicrafts, drilling, dancing, sewing and home nursing. These were areas in which women could bring their domestic experience to bear as Mrs Braithwaite, a past Lady Mayoress, who was president of the organising committee explained:

We feel as women that we are powerless to prevent the sad effects of bad trade and poverty, but we can do much to brighten the daily round, by providing opportunities for healthy activity and bright companionship.¹⁴⁶

A similar need was served by the Women's Centre of the Barnsley Council of Social Service which was attended mainly by the wives of unemployed men and offered "Keep Fit", handicraft and dressmaking classes.¹⁴⁷ During the miners' strike of 1921, and again in 1926-7, women in the South Yorkshire mining villages ensured that the children received at least one nourishing meal five days a week when "set-pots" were installed at village public houses whose kitchens acted as a focal point for women's co-operative efforts.¹⁴⁸ Similarly "clothes shops" to provide clothing for the long-term unemployed for whom public assistance allowances left little margin for replacing clothes and shoes were established. A room in the Methodist Victoria Hall in Sheffield, for example, was stocked with articles provided by the worshippers which were then sold at a nominal sum to avoid the stigma of outright charity.¹⁴⁹

Besides co-operative approaches to the effects of unemployment, individual women expressed their concern through their involvement in another scheme which paralleled the personal service element of the Councils

of Social Service. This was the St Martin's Jubilee Friends' Scheme, the brainchild of the Revd Pat McCormick, which was launched in 1935 and attempted to bring together families from prosperous areas of the country with others in areas of heavy unemployment. Following a broadcast appeal in May 1935 Sheffield was apportioned help for 100 families, most of them with young children. A committee of some thirty lady visitors was set up to act as intermediaries between adopted and adopting families and to provide an after-care service. Each adopted family was visited regularly and visitors reported back to the central committee at least once a month. Visitors encouraged families to maintain contact, allocated gifts of clothes, food and money, sorted out offers of hospitality and arranged for letters to be sent to adopting families to keep them advised of their adopted family's progress.¹⁵⁰ Despite fears that initial enthusiasm would wane, by 1937 80 of the original 100 adoptions were still "live contacts", even though, by that date, many householders had returned to work. Nevertheless, it was recognised that "whilst a regular weekly wage spells independence, it does not necessarily mean a very full life or many frills to life."¹⁵¹

The need for volunteers for the St Martin's Jubilee drew a number of women into personal service for the first time, but in their efforts to mitigate the effects of unemployment as in so many other areas of their charitable work, women's contribution was primarily in the domestic sphere - visiting families, providing lessons in dress-making and other kinds of handicrafts, supplying clothing, offering recreational outlets and homes for girls and young women. They saw certain areas of concern as properly theirs and their values were those of domesticity and the family. They created space for their own contribution alongside that of men.

Committee . Women

Although the differentiation was no longer so marked as in the nineteenth century, women's committee work in the inter-war period was frequently in a separate sphere from that of men. The larger the organisation, the fewer women would be found sitting on boards of management or executive committees. The institutions endowed with the greatest prestige in local charitable life were the voluntary hospitals. These were run by governing bodies elected by the subscribers although frequently only one candidate who had already been agreed upon between the existing members was put forward. Only rarely did women appear on these boards and those who did were usually the nominated representatives of the contributors or had family connections. Lady Stephenson and her daughter-in-law, for instance, were members of the board of the Jessop Hospital for Women in Sheffield of which Lady Stephenson's grandfather had been one of the founders.

In 1924 Shena Simon of Manchester had deplored the fact that of Manchester's eleven voluntary hospitals only six had women on their governing bodies. She argued that hospital administration was eminently suitable work for women, particularly as so many people involved both as patients and staff, were females. Moreover, in many respects much of the routine administrative work in hospitals was little more than household management writ large and "housekeeping comes by usual practice and general consent within even the narrowest definition of 'women's sphere'". Citing the successful involvement of women in the management of hospitals during the First World War and in the administration of Poor Law infirmaries, she attributed medical members of the voluntary hospital boards with the strongest opposition to the election of women because they feared that if

women were on the board, it would not be "so easy as it has been in the past to exclude women doctors with equal or better qualifications from the much sought after staffposts." She exhorted subscribers to ensure that a few women, at least, be elected.¹⁵²

The position was little different in the voluntary hospitals in such large cities as Leeds or Sheffield. Thus the eighteen strong board of management of the Sheffield Royal Infirmary included only one woman in 1938.¹⁵³ Leeds General Infirmary, in 1920, had two women on its board, both first elected in March 1919. They were Lady Sadler, wife of the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University and Elinor Lupton who joined two other members of her family.¹⁵⁴ By 1938 there were still only two women members.¹⁵⁵

Most hospitals had a "Ladies Committee" which raised funds, visited patients and arranged entertainments. These Committees frequently took the form of Samaritan Guilds such as that founded in 1883 by doctors' wives at the Bradford Royal Infirmary "to assist with clothing and food for out-patients, also during convalescence, and help towards the purchase of surgical appliances for in-patients."¹⁵⁶ These committees played no part in the general administration of the institution, although with determination and persistence the election of one or two of their members to the board of management could be engineered, a small victory won, for instance, by the Ladies Committee of the Bradford Children's Hospital in 1918.¹⁵⁷

It was only where an institution had been founded primarily by women that they figured in any significant numbers on boards of management. A typical example was the Leeds Maternity Home, founded in 1904 by a committee of Leeds ladies, known as the "Leeds Ladies' Hospital

Fund". This committee had emerged from a group of ladies who had been involved in the local administration of the Jubilee Fund, a nationwide appeal in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee for money to support nursing services in the community. In the Jubilee year of 1897 the Leeds' Women's Committee wrote to the Hospital for Women in Leeds to advise the managers that they wished some of the money raised from the women of Leeds to be used to provide a maternity ward in the new hospital building which was then envisaged. A series of donations were made to the Hospital between 1897 and June 1903 when representatives of the Ladies Fund visited the new building which was almost complete to inspect the proposed maternity accommodation. Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed at the very limited number of beds and following subsequent reports that several women had been refused admission to the maternity department, the ladies committee resolved to withdraw their financial support from the Hospital for Women and concentrate their efforts on founding a small maternity hospital themselves.¹⁵⁸ By 1929 the hospital had a board of management of eighteen, fifty per cent of whom were women.¹⁵⁹

Although hospital administration was overwhelmingly the province of men, women found an outlet commensurate with their accepted domestic skills in the organisation of hospital linen leagues and knitting circles. Many hospitals had had informal sewing parties; countless women had taken up their needles to supply military hospitals with clothing and bandages during the First World War. With hospitals facing increasing costs and declining individual subscriptions in the inter-war period, women cast around for some substantial and effective way they could help that tied in with the domestic skills and experience they possessed but did not make too great a demand on individual pockets. From the

start the linen leagues adopted the hierarchical structure of such organisations as the Girls' Friendly Society and the Primrose League. Women could, for instance, become members of the Sheffield Children's Hospital Linen League by subscribing 10s or more a year, or associate members on payment of 2s 6d or 5s and the sewing or provision of two garments or articles of linen.¹⁶⁰ To help equip the Rotherham Hospital, which had 133 beds and used 639 sheets and an average of 800 blankets daily,¹⁶¹ the linen league relied on a system of vice-presidents and associate members. The vice-presidents paid much higher subscriptions and were responsible for organising the work of associate members. Other local women's organisations were also encouraged to provide items.¹⁶² This dual system of membership enabled many less wealthy women to be included and ensured that the work of the organisation would not be hampered by lack of willing sewing hands. It did, however, serve to emphasise class differences between women.

It was from the vice-presidents or full members that executive committees were drawn. It was rare for such women to sew garments or linen themselves. They were primarily organisers and fund-raisers. They were equally responsible for apportioning the money raised to the purchase of standardised materials for allocation to sewers and of specific items that were in short supply as not all the requirements could be met with home-produced items.

Away from the hospitals, women were most likely to be found on the committees of smaller organisations, especially those involved with the welfare of women and children. Thus they outnumbered men on district nursing associations and the executive committees of welfare charities for elderly ladies. They predominated on the

committees of Houses of Help which offered shelter and advice to girls and young women, the NSPCC, babies' homes and day nurseries, although in some instances where women lacked the necessary professional skills, men were brought in as trustees or treasurers or to give legal advice. In general, however, the work involved in keeping financial records was not difficult. The sums of money handled were mainly quite small and the necessary knowledge could easily be passed on, especially if members were prepared to overlap in office for a month or so. Despite a greater degree of interaction between men and women in the executive management of charity organisations during the inter-war period, in a number of national societies women still continued to be segregated in separate women's auxiliaries - the Women's Section of the British Legion, the Ladies Lifeboat Guild, the Women's Auxiliary of the YMCA.

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Thus by the inter-war period women had widely espoused a tradition of voluntary personal service passed on to them through family, church and schooling. Charitable work was, however, increasingly becoming the province of married women - their unmarried daughters were less likely to be confined to a life of unmitigated domestic boredom from which organized philanthropy offered a socially acceptable escape route. Moreover the numbers of women who worked for charities was considerable. It is, of course, impossible to give any reliable estimate of the numbers involved given the unrecorded hundreds who must have rattled collection boxes, visited on behalf of their churches and chapels or provisioned and manned innumerable stalls at bazaars, American teas or jumble sales. Nevertheless, when evidence exists that the Leeds General Infirmary had 1384 linen league workers in 1931,¹⁶³ that a medium-sized institution like the Leeds

Maternity Hospital (140 beds in 1936) could rely on the sewing skills of some 60 women in the 1930s,¹⁶⁴ and that some 800 collectors, most of them women, were involved in the house-to-house collection for the Sheffield Queen Victoria Nursing Association in 1930,¹⁶⁵ then it must be accepted that some thousands of women were involved in charity work in the big cities and some hundreds in the smaller towns of South and West Yorkshire. If one includes the many women who were drawn into the ambit of charity work through their membership of organisations like Nonconformist church women's leagues, the Mothers' Union, Soroptimist clubs or even of dancing schools whose proprietors put on fund-raising events,¹⁶⁶ their numbers are impressive.

Although there has been a tendency to sneer at them as pearl-bedecked, finely dressed ladies seeking relief from the interminable round of bridge parties through the exercise of a modicum of charitable largesse, many were earnest, devoted workers who gave years of regular service. It may not have occurred to them to question a social system which produced such poverty, distress and inequality, but to deride their efforts as patronising, self-indulgent or superficial is in turn to patronise well-meaning and valuable service to the community. It cannot be denied that an element of social snobbery may have been involved on the part of some women - Mrs Carter of Painted Fabrics in Sheffield suggested, for instance, that if "on an average you start [a committee] with one or two titled ladies you will find others to follow"¹⁶⁷ - and that some forms of charity work perpetuated social divisions - the ladies of such charities as the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care & Protection of Friendless Girls were no doubt quick to snap up as domestic servants promising girls that their own Association had trained. Nevertheless, for many, the

need to be of use was deeply ingrained and served not only to broaden their horizons but to contribute in no small measure to the welfare of the local community.

To what extent did women progress from charity work to the wider public sphere? Stephen Bristow in his article on the under-representation of women in local government in contemporary society suggests that many Conservative Councillors owe their emergence as municipal candidates to their active role in local voluntary organisations.¹⁶⁸ He implies that this is a conscious policy on the part of Conservative associations and cites John Gyford's findings that Conservatives

cast their net wider than their active membership in seeking candidates, drawing in those of sympathetic persuasion who have made themselves known in the social or charitable life of the community.¹⁶⁹

It would seem, however, that this assertion is not valid for the inter-war period in the West Riding of Yorkshire as a whole, especially in the case of women voluntary workers. Certainly serving on the committees of voluntary organisations equipped a number of women with administrative and organisational skills they may have otherwise lacked. It gave some women experience of public speaking and instilled in many greater self-belief and confidence in the public sphere and, sometimes, provided them with useful contacts. Working for voluntary organisations may have, too, convinced some women that they would have to contemplate a wider social role if they were to achieve a position in which they could effect any significant amelioration in the lives of their fellow citizens.

However, the members of many charitable committees were the wives of a town's leading business and professional men. The Linen League committee of the Jessop Hospital

in 1927, for instance, consisted of Frances Stephenson whose grandfather had founded the hospital in 1864 and two other members of her family, ten wives or daughters of local steel and cutlery/tool manufacturers, the wives of two of the consulting surgeons at the hospital and of the deputy general manager and engineer of the Corporation Electric Supply department and of the managing director of the Sheffield Coal Company, two women whose husbands practised as a solicitor and a chartered account, Mrs Bailey who was an ex-lady mayoress and the wife of a trade union organiser, Mrs Williams¹⁷⁰ and Mrs Wragg of Loxley, near Sheffield. Five women are unidentified.¹⁷¹ Of these committee women only Mrs Emily Wragg, a widow, whose husband had been a partner in the firm of Thos Wragg & Son, firebrick manufacturers, later became a councillor and that was as a member of the West Riding County Council.¹⁷² At a time when the male members of such families had themselves virtually withdrawn from city government it seems unlikely that it would have been considered seemly for their wives to undergo the sometimes undignified rigours of the municipal election process and then to have to fraternize in the Council Chamber with male colleagues whose backgrounds may have differed widely from their own.

Moreover, although the representation of women on hospital boards of management and other previously all-male committees was slowly increasing, much of the women's contribution continued to be exercised in separate areas from that of men. They were still operating to a large extent in a sphere that they recognised as being distinctly their own. Their concerns were those that related to their own experience - the welfare of children, maintaining the stability and authority of the family, providing for the sick. Mrs Neill, as Mistress Cutler in Sheffield in 1938, saw

her principal task as that of "furthering the best interests of the women and children of [the] city."¹⁷³ She and other women like her throughout South and West Yorkshire involved themselves in work that was considered suitable for women; it could be undertaken, in the company of other women from a similar social stratum, without impinging on their essential role as wives and mothers. Moreover, those like Sarah Lupton of Bradford, who gave a good deal of time and energy to the work of at least four charities, may have been reluctant to withdraw from such a commitment and consequently were left with "little time for any prominent part in the political life of the city."¹⁷⁴

Certainly very few women charity workers would have considered themselves "public" women. The majority performed a backroom role. Even at annual meetings the centre stage was usually filled by those in official positions or by the county aristocratic ladies who shared out the patronage of philanthropic societies between them. Committee women, voluntary visitors, fund-raisers got on with their work quietly and with scant recognition. Thus, Mrs T R Ellin, a past Mistress Cutler who worked for the County Homes for Children Association and the Jessop Hospital Linen League, when interviewed for the Sheffield Independent's "Sheffield Women as We Know Them" series in 1931 protested that she was "not really a public woman".¹⁷⁵ Mrs Ellin's response may have been prompted by an element of modesty and self-effacement that was expected of women of her class but it is a view reflected in local newspaper reports of women's charitable activities. Women were frequently depicted as working in an unassuming way; they were said to shun the limelight; if they did make speeches on public platforms they were portrayed as soft-spoken, unaggressive speakers. Typical of such reporting is an item in the

Armley and Wortley News about Mrs Blackburn who included among her interests the vice-presidency of the Leeds Babies' Welcomes and membership of the Leeds Ladies' Friendless Girls' Committee:

. . . few would call Mrs. Blackburn a 'public woman.' Her smooth fair hair, slow smile, and slight figure give no indication of the energetic organising ability so well-known amongst her friends, and her feminine manners do not prepare one for the really astonishing grasp she has of social and political matters.¹⁷⁶

The paper's reporter evidently found it difficult to accept that femininity and efficiency were compatible. The Armley and Wortley News tended to be more patronising in its representation of women in public life than some other local newspapers but elsewhere women involved in charity work were regularly depicted as modest, retiring, and self-effacing.

It is perhaps, therefore, not surprising that few women in the inter-war period moved directly from charity work to municipal service. It seems that there had to be some intermediate step that played a more decisive part in persuading them to move from charity committee room to the Town Hall. Even in Leeds where there was a significant group of long-serving Conservative women councillors who were also keen workers for charity, their election to the Council was prompted not so much by their charity work but by their membership of a political organisation or by a prior taste of electioneering and public service as Poor Law guardians. Even women like Blanche Leigh who treated her ward association virtually as a personal fiefdom and regularly got the members to turn out on behalf of her pet charities,¹⁷⁷ gained considerable practical experience as a Poor Law guardian before she moved on to Council work. Elsewhere women

were propelled into standing for municipal election through their membership of such women's organisations as the National Council of Women, Women Citizens' Associations and the Women's Co-operative Guild and for Labour women, few of whom were directly involved in charity work, membership of the party organisation was imperative. The role of these organisations in politicising women is explored in chapter two.

Footnotes

- 1 Vera Brittain: Women's Work in Modern Britain, p 135.
- 2 Leeds Mercury, 4 Aug 1919, cutting in Leeds People, Vol 7, p 109.
- 3 Yorkshire Evening News, 15 May 1904, cutting in Leeds People, Vol 1, p 119.
- 4 Emma Raffan: Joseph Blamires 1861-1918: A Memoir by his daughter, p 30.
- 5 Leeds Mercury, 12 October 1923, cutting in Leeds People, Vol 10, p 219.
- 6 Emma Raffan: op cit, p 30.
- 7 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 30 1927, p 7.
- 8 Mrs Bolton joined the Committee in the year 1928-9 and served throughout the 1930s. See Sheffield Diocesan Babies' Home Annual Reports, Years ending 31st March 1929-36 and 31st March 1938.
- 9 Armley and Wortley News, Dec 2 1927, p 9.
- 10 Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, June 9 1937, p 4.
- 11 L Du Garde Peach: The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire in the County of York, 1906 - 1956 (Sheffield, 1960), pp 67-8.
- 12 Daily Independent, 23 March 1938, p 11.
- 13 Details compiled from M Brown: Sheffield as seen by a Mistress Cutler.
- 14 M Brown: op cit, p 51.
- 15 George Orwell: A Clergyman's Daughter, p 248.
- 16 Daily Independent, 5 May 1938, p 11.
- 17 Mary Walton: A History of the Diocese of Sheffield, p 43.
- 18 Sheffield Independent, 4 Feb 1931 p 9.
- 19 Armley and Wortley News, Aug 26 1927, p 7.

- 20 See Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, p 119 - "She would save her own soul as she saved the souls of others." The Revd Alexander Mackennal of Bowden Downs Congregational Chapel in Cheshire pointed out to Mrs A, who was struggling with religious doubts and ill-health, the therapeutic value of visiting and teaching others. See Clyde Binfield: "In Search of Mrs. A.: A Transpennine Quest", p 239.
- 21 Information on the Victoria Home is taken from Eleanor Robinson: The Story of the Victoria Home Leeds 1885-1971.
- 22 Annual Report of The Sheffield Cripples' Aid Association (Sunbeam Club) for 1932, pp 7-8.
- 23 Sheffield Independent, 28 Jan 1931, p 9.
- 24 G Kitson Clark: "The Leeds Elite", p 240.
- 25 See, for instance, Isobel Jenkins: "The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education 1871-91", p 54. At the time of her death in 1928 Mrs F W Kitson was recorded as having worked for the Leeds Ladies' Association for forty-four years. See the 44th Annual Report of the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, 1928, p 4.
- 26 Armley and Wortley News, Oct 14 1927, p 9.
- 27 Mary Stocks: A Hundred Years of District Nursing, p 148.
- 28 Lady Osborn, whose husband was a director of the steel company, Samuel Osborn & Co, was, for instance, chairman of the Beet Street Day Nursery as her mother-in-law had been before her; see her obituary in Sheffield Telegraph, 19 Jan 1955, p 3. Successive generations of female members of the Roberts family whose fortunes were founded on the silver and plating works started by Samuel Roberts in 1784 were members of the Aged Female Society committee, one of Sheffield's oldest charities which Samuel Roberts had originated in 1811.
- 29 Violet Markham: Return Passage, p 43.
- 30 Sheffield High School Magazine, No 1 (Spring 1889), pp 16-17.
- 31 See Carol Dyhouse: Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, p 26 - "Women of

all social groups were encouraged from childhood to consider it selfish to become wrapped up in their own interests, for the ideal was to serve others,"

- 32 Sheffield High School Magazine, No 1 (Spring 1889), pp 40-1. Cots in the Children's Hospital were also endowed by the Abbeydale Girls' Secondary School and the Abbeydale Council Girls' School - see Peter Harvey: Up the hill to Western Bank, p 35.
- 33 Sheffield High School Magazine, No 1 (Spring 1889), pp 27-30.
- 34 ibid.
- 35 Sheffield High School Magazine, No 4 (Autumn 1890), pp 176-8 and No 5 (Spring 1891), pp 216-7.
- 36 Sheffield High School Magazine, Vol 1V (1898-1900), pp 41-4.
- 37 See Isobel Jenkins: "The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, 1871-91", pp 47-9. There is a history of the school by H M Jewell: A School of Unusual Excellence (Leeds, 1976).
- 38 Leeds Girls' High School Magazine, Vol 2, No 24 (Summer 1906), p 10 and Vol 2, No 25 (Autumn 1906), pp 15-16.
- 39 Leeds Girls' High School Magazine, Vol 2, No 23 (Winter 1906), p 21.
- 40 Joanna Scott: Bradford Women in Organisation 1867-1914, pp 11-12.
- 41 Leeds Babies' Welcome Association, Annual Report for the Year ending 30th September 1911, p14.
- 42 West Leeds High School Magazine, No 1 (June 1913), pp 10 + 15.
- 43 West Leeds High School Magazine, No 2 (January 1914), p 41.
- 44 G E Evans: So Hateth She Derknesse, p 13.
- 45 G E Evans: ibid, pp 14-15.
- 46 Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, p 225.
- 47 Frank Prochaska: ibid.

- 48 Star, April 28 1956, p 6 and information from Dr Clyde Binfield.
- 49 Ronald G Walton: Women in Social Work, pp 107-8.
- 50 G E Evans: So Hateth She Derknesse, pp 30 + 32.
- 51 Cecile Matheson quoted in Ronald G Walton: Women in Social Work, p 93.
- 52 Barbara Wootton: In a World I Never Made, p 56.
- 53 Yorkshire Post, 26 April 1913 in Newspaper Cuttings relating to Leeds, Vol 5, pp 188 + 189 and Yorkshire Evening News, 11 April 1922 in Newspaper Cuttings relating to Leeds, Vol 11, p 1.
- 54 Daily Independent, 4 Sept 1937, p 5.
- 55 Sheffield Telegraph, July 4 1931, p 8; Sheffield Telegraph and Daily Independent, Nov 9 1938, p 4 and Sheffield Telegraph, April 8 1946, p 3.
- 56 Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, June 23 1937, p 4.
- 57 T E Gumpert: Reminiscences of a Physician, p 108.
- 58 M Brown: Sheffield as seen by a Mistress Cutler, p 149.
- 59 As has been shown in the Introduction, although Leeds was reputedly a more leisured, cultured and bourgeois city than Sheffield in the inter-war period, there were in fact more private domestic servants in Sheffield than in Leeds due to the nature of the local economy. See Introduction, p iv.
- 60 J L Stocks: The Philanthropist in a Changing World, p 16.
- 61 J L Stocks: ibid.
- 62 The phrase is Winifred Holtby's. See South Riding, p 131. In similar, though less traumatic vein, Alderman Mrs Beddows had found in community service relief and solace from an empty and disappointing marriage.
- 63 See Arthur Marwick: Women at War 1914-1918, pp 37-40.

- 64 Mrs Currer Briggs of Leeds, for instance, housed twelve wounded officers in her home at Windermere and when the War Office decided that all hospitals with less than twenty patients should close had extra accommodation erected in the garden to increase the numbers - Yorkshire Post, Sept 14 1923, p 10.
- 65 Arthur Marwick: Women at War 1914-1918, p 40. There were twelve patrol members in Sheffield - see NCW Sheffield Branch, One hundred & Five Years of Active Work, compiled by Miss E Furtado in 1986, p 2. An account of some of the work of the women patrols in Bradford can be found in the Bradford Watch Committee Note Book 1897-1936, p 91. (My thanks to Miss Willmott, Specialist Librarian for Local Studies for supplying a copy and for other information.)
- 66 A W Chapman: The Story of a Modern University, pp 260-1.
- 67 See article on Mrs Gertrude Halbot, one of the founders of the Leeds day nurseries and subsequently a Conservative councillor and member of the Education Committee, in The Leeds Searchlight, No 1 (June 1946), pp 2-3.
- 68 Arthur Marwick: Women at War 1914-1918, p 37 and Sheffield Year Book, 1918, p 54.
- 69 Red House Settlement Report, July 1914 - June 1916, p 7.
- 70 ibid, p 3.
- 71 The Conservative Woman, October 1924, pp 1-2 and The Leeds Searchlight, No 1 (June 1946), p 3.
- 72 Sheffield Council of Social Service Organisation Committee Minutes, Meeting on 19 Sept 1921.
- 73 Painted Fabrics grew out of Mrs Carter's therapeutic work with convalescent soldiers at Wharncliffe Hospital where she introduced many to the art of stencilling. The Company housed disabled men and their families and the men worked under skilled fashion designers on dyeing materials, stencilling fabrics, block printing and leather work. The fabrics produced - georgettes, chiffons in bright colours and striking designs - were sold as luxury items, often through a judicious appeal to social snobbery. The most successful sales outlets besides the regular annual sale were "At Homes" hosted by

society ladies both in London and in Yorkshire. Lady Fitzwilliam, for instance, held an "exhibition" of Painted Fabric clothes and household furnishings at the family home of Wentworth Woodhouse each year for individually invited "guests". The papers of Painted Fabrics Ltd are in Sheffield City Archives. The activities of the organisation were widely reported in the local press: Sheffield Telegraph, Aug 16 1930, p 10; Sheffield Independent, 17 Dec 1930, p 9; South Yorkshire Times, Oct 27 1933, p 20; Sheffield Daily Telegraph, June 15 1934, p 5; Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, Nov 24 1936; Sheffield Telegraph and Daily Independent, 14 Dec 1938, p 4. See also M Brown: Sheffield as seen by a Mistress Cutler, pp 63-4.

- 74 Michael Cahill and Tony Jowitt: "The New Philanthropy: The Emergence of the Bradford City Guild of Help", p 367.
- 75 Yorkshire Evening Post, 28 April 1922 in Newspaper Cuttings relating to Leeds, Vol 11, p 15.
- 76 Sheffield Independent, 28 Jan 1931, p 9 and Sheffield Telegraph, 14 Oct 1937, p 3. The Council Schools' Clothing Guild was founded in 1895 and the Voluntary Schools' Clothing Guild in 1903. They amalgamated in 1935.
- 77 The Lady Harriet Wentworth & Barnsley Charity Annual Report, 1919, p 3.
- 78 Yorkshire Evening News, 15 May 1904 in Leeds People, Vol 1, p 119.
- 79 Rotherham & District Annual, 1903, p 64.
- 80 For Ellice Hopkins, see Sheila Jeffreys: The Spinster and her Enemies, pp 9-15 + 16-19. She visited Sheffield in 1881 when a drawing-room meeting was held at the home of the staunchly Methodist Cole family who were successful local drapers. At that stage there were already seven societies working on behalf of "friendless" girls in the city. The Sheffield House of Help was opened in 1885 and another was opened in Rotherham a few years later - see Margaret Hawson: One Hundred Years Forward: A Century of the House of Help (Sheffield) and Rotherham & District Annual, 1903, p 65. Ellice Hopkins visited Leeds in 1884 to address a large public meeting under the presidency of Mrs Gott, the wife of the Vicar of Leeds. The Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care & Protection of Friendless Girls was subsequently formed by a sub-committee of

the Leeds Charity Organisation under the leadership of Mr Henry Currer Briggs whose wife was still a vice-president of the association in 1938 - see typescript in Leeds City Library. The Bradford association had been founded three years earlier but Bradford had had a women's refuge centre since 1860 - see Joanna Scott: Bradford Women in Organisation, pp 151 + 208. It is important to distinguish between rescue and preventive work.

- 81 The stated aim of the Sheffield Diocesan Babies' Home was "to save lives of the illegitimate children of young girls, to reform the mothers, and restore them to a self-respecting Christian life, and whenever possible, to urge upon the father the duty of taking the larger share in the maintenance of the child." Only first babies were accepted. A girl who had "sinned" twice was considered beyond redemption.
- 82 Minute Book of the Soroptimist Club of Sheffield, Meeting of the Executive Committee on July 9 1936. See also Sheffield Telegraph, 6 July 1937, p 5.
- 83 Rotherham Hospital: 1924; Doncaster Royal Infirmary: 1928; Children's Hospital, Sheffield: 1931.
- 84 A YWCA day centre opened in Leeds in 1925 - see Yorkshire Weekly Post, Sept 19 1925, p 6; a day centre with hostel accommodation opened in Sheffield in 1939 - see Sheffield Telegraph, 18 Feb 1937 and The Builder, Sept 19 1947, p 317; a YWCA day centre opened in Doncaster in 1936 and within one year six per cent of the town's employed girls were members - Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, 1 June 1937, p 4.
- 85 Sheffield Telegraph, July 11 1931, p 11.
- 86 Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, p 46.
- 87 David Owen: English Philanthropy 1660-1960, p 527.
- 88 The Annual Report For the Year Ending 31st March 1919 of the Sheffield & Hallamshire Branch, N.S.P.C.C., p 6.
- 89 See Ronald G Walton: Women in Social Work, p 159.
- 90 Sheffield Voluntary Association for the Care of the Mentally Defective Ninth Annual Report, 1923-24, p 7.
- 91 Joanna Scott: Bradford Women in Organisation, p 311.

- 92 Andrew M Claye: A Short History of the Hospital for Women at Leeds 1853-1953, p 15.
- 93 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1936, p 12.
- 94 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1933, p 11 and 1938, p 12.
- 95 Jessop Hospital for Women Annual Report, 1926-1927, p 8.
- 96 Sheffield Telegraph, July 11 1931, p 11.
- 97 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1931, p 21.
- 98 The Annual Report For the Year Ending 31st March 1930 of the Sheffield & Hallamshire Branch, N.S.P.C.C., p 5.
- 99 House of Help for Friendless Girls and Young Women Annual Report, 1926, p 10.
- 100 Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, pp 30-2.
- 101 The Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, 1920, pp 9-11
- 102 Leeds Association for Nursing the Sick Poor Annual Reports, 1933-1937.
- 103 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1928, p 25.
- 104 The Annual Report For the Year Ending 31st March 1933 of the Sheffield & Hallamshire Branch, N.S.P.C.C., p 18.
- 105 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1927, pp 27-30.
- 106 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1939, pp 21-4.
- 107 Sheffield Diocesan Babies' Home Annual Report, Year ended 31 March 1938, p 6.
- 108 Yorkshire Evening Post, 11 December 1923, in Newspaper Cuttings relating to Leeds, Vol 12, p 187.
- 109 See article on Cllr Mrs Ada Cumming, ex-headmistress of Lydgate Lane Infants' School and secretary of the Sheffield branch of the NUWSS during the first world

- war, in Sheffield Daily Telegraph, March 12 1931, p 4.
- 110 Sheffield Independent, 10 Dec 1930, p 9.
- 111 Garry Swann: The Doncaster Royal Infirmary 1792-1972, p 117.
- 112 Carol Dyhouse: Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, pp 85-9. You may have hated the subject but the necessary skills were at least instilled.
- 113 Conversation with Miss Edith Turner, 13 July 1988; for Mrs Exley (née Gozney) - Armley and Wortley News, Sept 9 1927, p 7.
- 114 See for instance the account of the Sheffield Day Nursery annual pound day, Sheffield Mail, 22 Nov 1929, p 12.
- 115 Garry Swann: The Doncaster Royal Infirmary 1792-1972, p 117.
- 116 Winifred Holtby: South Riding, p 362.
- 117 M Brown: Sheffield as seen by a Mistress Cutler, p 58.
- 118 Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, pp 33-6.
- 119 H J Wilson Papers: Letter from H J Wilson to his children, Cecil, Gertie and Helen, 1st Jan 1902. A slightly modified version went to Oliver.
- 120 W S Fowler: A Study in Radicalism and Dissent: The life and times of Henry Joseph Wilson 1833-1914, p 61.
- 121 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 6 Aug 1930, p 4.
- 122 The Helen Wilson Settlement Annual Report, 1951-52 pp 6-7. See also C L Dickins: In Memoriam: Helen Wilson 1864-1951 and Sheffield Telegraph, Jan 1 1952, p 2.
- 123 Violet Markham: Return Passage, p 63.
- 124 Violet Markham: ibid, p 65.
- 125 Violet Markham: ibid.

- 126 Mary Walton: A History of the Diocese of Sheffield, p 46.
- 127 For instance, Mrs Neal took lessons in cookery and sewing at the Sheffield School of Art when she became involved in serving meals at the Toc H League of Women Helpers' canteen - Sheffield Daily Independent, 4 Oct 1930, p 8.
- 128 Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, July 7 1937, p 4.
- 129 In Rotherham Mrs Athorpe was a Divisional Commissioner and the first chairman of the women Conservatives - Rotherham & District Annual, 1929; Mrs Connell, a Guide captain, was a member of the Executive Committee of the Divisional Conservative Association in Chesterfield - Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, Aug 4 1937, p 6.
- 130 Eleanor Robinson: The Story of the Victoria Home Leeds 1885-1971, no page numbers.
- 131 See, for instance, the Report of the Royal Hospital Samaritan Society in the Annual Report of the Sheffield Royal Hospital, 1930, pp 38-9 and E F Skinner: A Short History of The Sheffield Royal Hospital, pp 66-7.
- 132 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1938, p 9.
- 133 Frank Prochaska: Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England, pp 131 + 106.
- 134 National Council of Women, Sheffield Branch, Annual Report, 1935, p 10.
- 135 Rotherham & District Children's Benevolent Home at Filey, The Record of 1903, pp 3 & 4 and The Record of 1935, p 4.
- 136 Annual Report of The Sheffield Cripples' Aid Association (Sunbeam Club) for 1932, p 7.
- 137 ibid, p 7.
- 138 Sheffield Voluntary Association for the Care of the Mentally Defective Thirteenth Annual Report, 1927-28, p 4.
- 139 Sheffield Voluntary Association for the Care of the Mentally Defective Twenty-third Annual Report, 1937-38, pp 4 -5.

- 140 The Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, 1920, pp 4 + 14.
- 141 Margaret Brasnett: Voluntary Social Action, p 70.
- 142 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1932, p 5 and 1933, p 5.
- 143 Information about the Women's Mutual Service Clubs is taken from B Fearnside: Sheffield Women's Mutual Service Clubs 1933-1962.
- 144 Daily Independent, 5 Oct 1938, p 11.
- 145 ibid, p 11.
- 146 Yorkshire Weekly Post, Sept 19 1925, p 6.
- 147 Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, July 27 1938, p 6.
- 148 Conversation with Miss Ann Wright, 24 Jan 1990.
- 149 Sheffield Mission Wesleyan Methodist Messenger, Sept 1936.
- 150 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1935, pp 17-19.
- 151 Sheffield Council of Social Service Annual Report, 1937, p.13.
- 152 The Woman's Leader, May 16 1924, p 129.
- 153 The Sheffield Year Book, 1939, pp 197-8.
- 154 Leeds General Infirmary Annual Report for the Year ending Dec 31 1920, p 5.
- 155 Leeds General Infirmary Annual Report for the Year ending Dec 31 1938, p 12.
- 156 Michael Cahill and Tony Jowitt: "The New Philanthropy: The Emergence of the Bradford City Guild of Help", p 363.
- 157 Joanna Scott: Bradford Women in Organisation, p 314.
- 158 Andrew M Claye: A Short History of the Hospital for Women at Leeds 1853-1953, pp 11-13.
- 159 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1928, p 3.

- 160 The Children's Hospital, Sheffield Annual Report, 1931, p 44.
- 161 Minute Book, Rotherham Hospital Ladies' Linen League, 1929-1946, Minutes of Annual Meeting, 15 May 1939.
- 162 In 1934-5, for instance, the work of the League was supported by contributions from the Church of our Father Women's League and the women's section of the British Legion - ibid, Minutes of Annual Meeting, April 6 1935.
- 163 Leeds General Infirmary Annual Report, Year ending Dec 31 1931, p 20.
- 164 Leeds Maternity Hospital Annual Report, 1936, p 10.
- 165 See article on Gertrude Wood, a magistrate and ex-Mistress Cutler, who organised the collection in the Sheffield Independent, 10 Dec 1930, p 9.
- 166 Hettie Calladine who, with her sister, ran a dancing school in Sheffield was said to have raised thousands of pounds for "worthy causes" between 1910 and 1931 by putting on shows - Sheffield Telegraph, 29 Jan 1931, p 4. An hilarious description of Madame Hubbard's nubile girls and tiny tots dancing in aid of the Kiplington Kiddies Holiday Home is given in Winifred Holtby: South Riding, pp 63-72. There may, of course, be no similarity between the two.
- 167 Papers of Painted Fabrics Ltd: undated notes written by Mrs Carter after an unsatisfactory sale in Birmingham in 1929.
- 168 Stephen Bristow: "Women Councillors - An Explanation of the Under-representation of Women in Local Government", p 84.
- 169 Quoted in Stephen Bristow: ibid, Note 24, p 89.
- 170 For Mrs Williams, see Sheffield Daily Telegraph, July 4 1931, p 8; Sheffield Telegraph & Daily Independent, Nov 9 1938, p 4.
- 171 The Jessop Hospital for Women, Sheffield, Annual Report, 1927, Linen League Report.
- 172 For Mrs Wragg, see Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Aug 16 1932, p 6 and Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, Sept 1 1937, p 6.

- 173 Daily Independent, 23 March 1938, p 11.
- 174 Yorkshire Observer, April 30 1934. Mrs Lupton's husband had been Mayor of Bradford in 1900, 1901 and 1902.
- 175 Sheffield Independent, 11 Feb 1931, p 9.
- 176 Armley and Wortley News, Oct 14 1927, p 9.
- 177 In 1928, for instance, she organised members of the Brunswick ward committee into escorting elderly ladies from the Potter & Harrison almshouses on a visit to her out-of-town home at Knaresborough and she persuaded another group to organise a flag day in aid of mentally-handicapped girls. See The Conservative Woman, Oct 1928, pp i + iv. She was also, for a while, president of the Leeds Ladies' Lifeboat Guild and organised the first dinner held in Leeds to raise funds for the Lifeboat Institution. In some wards, like Brunswick, therefore, work for charity and work for the party were intertwined.

CHAPTER TWO

Pathways to Public Life?; Women's Organisations

As women's social and political awareness grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, it quickly became manifest that they were powerless to achieve any radical and far-reaching changes without some form of collective strength. Excluded from male clubs and organisations, women founded their own associations, - reformist, professional and recreational, - in which they could gain support and encouragement from like-minded women, develop, in a non-threatening environment, the skills requisite for entry to the male sphere of public life and, through sheer strength of numbers, campaign more forcefully and effectively.¹

Whilst during the Victorian period women's associational activity in single-sex groups had done much to smooth their path to public life, it is arguable that by the inter-war period, when the political and professional disabilities that they had mobilized to overcome no longer existed in principle, the continuing segregation of women in their own organisations was self-defeating. There were, for instance, those who questioned the wisdom of maintaining separate women's sections within the Labour party,² whilst some working women saw the establishment of gender-specific interest groups within professional spheres as a dangerous move which tended to set them apart from their male colleagues.³ Other organisations which existed primarily as pressure groups concerned with what were deemed women's and children's issues could easily be ignored.

Given, however, that, trade union membership apart, women generally lacked any political power base, to what extent were women's organisations in the West Riding of York-

shire instrumental in politicising their members and in facilitating their entry into public life in the inter-war period? The most evident way in which women would become aware of their citizenship responsibilities was through membership of the political parties and the impact of Conservative and Labour women's organisations is examined in some detail. Other women found their political feet through membership of semi-recreational groups like the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) and of self-help and pressure groups such as the Women Citizens' Associations (WCAs) and the National Council of Women (NCW).

Women's Sections in the Political Parties

It was by no means axiomatic that separate women's political organisations should have continued in existence after 1918. However, the tradition of political women-only groups had prevailed since the 1880s when the ineligibility of women for membership of the main Conservative and Liberal organisations but the desirability of harnessing their energies and talents for party political interests prompted the formation of women's subsidiary associations.⁴ Women's membership of the Primrose League, whose Ladies' Grand Council came into existence in 1885, rose rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whilst the Primrose League appealed strongly to women through its social activities and men and women frequently worked together in local habitations, from 1904 more seriously politically-minded Tory women were transferring their loyalties to the single-sex Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Associations.⁵ Even so the records of the Sheffield Brightside Ladies' Conservative Association show that the organisation was little more than an canvassing machine whose members were held together between elections by a

programme of social functions. Although they had three delegates on the Brightside Conservative Association's executive committee, they were not entitled to vote at meetings.⁶

Liberal women's organisations had a greater degree of autonomy. Their first associations appeared in the early 1880s and the Women's Liberal Federation was formed in 1887.⁷ The Sheffield Hallam Women's Liberal Association was reported to be some 400 strong by 1891 and campaigning strongly for temperance, moral welfare and educational causes.⁸ The Liberal Women's Federation's insistence, however, that the annual conferences, from which men were excluded from 1892, should, as far as possible, tackle a wide range of topics but from the woman's point of view reinforced a "separate spheres" ethos that had been originally posited on women's presumed moral superiority and the purifying and ennobling element they could inject into public affairs.⁹ Moreover, the loyalty of many Liberal women had been subjected to severe strain during the women's suffrage campaign.

Although the Social Democratic Federation, on the other hand, had paid lip-service to the concept of equal participation in party organisation for both men and women, it did little to encourage women to step outside their traditional tea-making role. The attitude of the ILP, however, was more ambivalent. June Hannam found, for example, that in the West Riding of Yorkshire, although in the early years women appear to have been highly valued members of the party and were widely encouraged to adopt a visible role as speakers and organisers and as elected members of public bodies, nevertheless it had still been felt advisable to establish separate women's organisations "both to

encourage women to join the ILP and also to give them an opportunity to use their special talents" and the ILP's failure to support women's demands for equality of treatment with men in industry and its continued acceptance of traditional separate spheres for men and women - men as breadwinner, women as homemaker - fundamentally accorded women subordinate status.¹⁰

Labour Party women, too, were segregated in the Women's Labour League which, unlike Conservative women's organisations whose principal raison d'être was to provide an efficient electioneering corps, acted primarily as a campaigning group. Although in 1913, seven years after its inception, the League still had only 4,000 members,¹¹ many effective local campaigns were waged before the War for the implementation of existing legislation: the provision of holiday school meals, municipal milk supplies and baby clinics. However, the League addressed itself primarily to the woman in the home and by stressing the contribution women could make as wives and mothers

sometimes exaggerated the conventional sexual division of labour, developing a 'separate spheres' argument, in which women's access to political life was premised on their experience and knowledge of the domestic sphere.¹²

Thus, whilst women's subsidiary associations had legitimised women's emergence into the political world and given them a well-grounded experience of political campaigning before they themselves became eligible to vote, the tradition of women-only organisations was well established.

Moreover, in 1918 the political parties were confronted by an electorate three times the size of the pre-war one.¹³ Forty per cent of potential voters were now women

whose political awareness and voting intentions were an unknown quantity. To build on the expertise and organisation of the existing separate associations seemed the most practical way of winning the votes of this new female electorate. Thus an approach was made by the National Unionist Association to the officials of the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association, formed in 1904, and it was agreed that the Association would be renamed the Women's Unionist Association and become the official body responsible for the political education of women electors.¹⁴ During 1918 branches were being formed throughout the country although, frequently, this involved little more than the incorporation of local Primrose League habitations, particularly, as at Halifax, where the majority of the League members were women. As the Ruling Councillor pointed out, the logical thing for them to do was to join the WUA.¹⁵ Over 1,300 branches had been formed by the date of the 1921 conference.¹⁶

Within the Labour Party branches of the Women's Labour League were given no say in their fate within the re-organised party of 1918. The absorption of the League to form separate women's sections was "engineered virtually single-handedly" by Dr Marion Phillips, the League's Secretary, and after a number of inconclusive meetings between the League's General Purposes Committee and the Labour Party Re-organisation Sub-Committee the 1918 WLL Conference was presented with a virtual fait accompli when Marion Phillips recommended that the Final Report of the Re-organisation Sub-Committee should be accepted. Although there were a few dissenting voices, the Report was accepted. League branches became the women's sections under the directorship of Marion Phillips who was herself appointed the Labour Party Women's Officer and the publication of Labour Woman, the League's monthly journal, was taken over by the Party.¹⁷

The principal objective of the Labour Party's women's organisation was to effect the establishment of a women's section in each ward, a central women's committee for each division and advisory councils which would coordinate the activities of Labour women across several parliamentary constituencies or across large boroughs, like Leeds and Sheffield, which encompassed a number of divisions. As Reynolds and Laybourn have shown, the West Riding of Yorkshire was one of several areas where the Labour Party concentrated its efforts on recruiting women.¹⁸ At the apex of women's organisations was the West Riding Advisory Council which was formed in October 1919 when 27 local Labour parties from 23 towns sent delegates to Leeds to meet under the presidency of Marion Phillips. Its objectives were fourfold:

to strengthen and co-ordinate the organisation of [Labour] women in the West Riding, to provide [women] speakers for the area, to train women for speaking and public work and to call conferences from time to time on questions having special interest to women.¹⁹

Thus the belief that women had a specific but limited sphere of concern was perpetuated. As Marion Phillips suggested, they should take a more active interest in municipal affairs but the main focus of their attention would be maternity and child welfare, education and nursery schools, municipal dairies. They should, for instance, "see to it at the forthcoming municipal elections, that they returned some one with power to put the [Maternity and Child Welfare] Act into force."²⁰ Thirteen years later such a view still prevailed as a regular woman contributor to the Leeds Weekly Citizen suggested: "Women have interests that make them naturally put emphasis upon certain things - education, housing, maternity and child welfare, health services."²¹

One Advisory Council for the whole West Riding was found to be too cumbersome and by the mid-1920s there were three councils covering the western part of the area, one for South Yorkshire and separate councils in Leeds and Sheffield.²² One of the West Riding councils subsequently became Halifax and District.²³ Progress was, nevertheless, variable. During 1921 Mrs Anderson Fenn, who was the Party's first official worker responsible for women in the north east area of the country, was successful in establishing women's organisations for the four constituencies in Bradford and forming a new section at Morley. She found, however, in Shipley that the "situation . . . was very uncertain and practically no effort has been made to reach the women." Reynolds and Laybourn also found that, particularly in the area around Huddersfield, "the organisation of women Labour members failed to take off or lapsed quickly", although the situation improved after the National Women's Conference was held in Huddersfield in 1927 and rapidly attracted some 300 members to the local women's sections.²⁴

Even in the southern parts of the West Riding where Labour strength was greater, the drive to establish women's sections was not always successful. In Sheffield's Broomhill ward where Progressive candidates were returned unopposed for five years in the 1930s there was no women's section until 1936 when, in a desperate attempt to recruit party workers, a section was formed in the hopes that women members who were reluctant to attend ward meetings might thereby be drawn into political activism.²⁵ Despite a rapid expansion of women's membership of the party in the immediate post-war period,²⁶ the evidence of the reports from women sections in one predominantly working-class division in Sheffield shows that progress was not always maintained.

Attendance at meetings fell off particularly at times of heavy unemployment when women were anxious not to have to make any extra-domestic demands on the family budget. The inaugural meeting of the Shiregreen Women's Section was held on October 17 1923 and although the early meetings, which were initially held weekly, attracted an attendance of between 20 and 35, by 1928 it had been decided to suspend the section and only keep a nuclear committee in existence "at least until the municipal elections."²⁷ In the 1930s the membership recovered substantially but other women's sections in the division were still dogged by the economic climate and by a lack of interest among women voters, even those who were paid-up party members. Thus the secretary of the Brightside and Firth Park section reported in the annual report for 1932 that they had been losing members and that "new members have not been obtained which could enable us, not merely to maintain existing membership but to increase it," even though there were "many women members of the Party, also supporters unattached, resident in the district who do not attend our meetings" ²⁸

It is not prudent to generalise from the records of just one divisional party. The picture varied from place to place. The Halifax Women's Section, for instance, which was particularly lively and politically aware, was averaging 35 members at its weekly evening meetings in 1934.²⁹ However, even in Leeds, "where organisation among [Labour] women . . . was second to none, and it was the only town in the whole country where the Labour Party had a full-time woman official",³⁰ there were women's sections in only nine out of seventeen wards in 1926 and Clara Adams, the women's organiser, had to report to the Annual General Delegate Meeting of the City Labour Party that "a number of Wards still feel that organisation amongst women . . . can best be secured without having

separate women's sections." There were estimated to be 1000 individual women party members in the city that year.³¹ By 1928 there were fifteen local women's groups in Leeds.³²

Thus, not all local parties were convinced of the value of separate women's organisations. Labour women in Doncaster, for instance, who had previously belonged to the Labour Women's League, had been on the point of dissolving their organisation in 1920. There was considerable reluctance to accede to a request from the local agent and party executive committee that they would reconsider and they only agreed to do so on the understanding that they would be allowed to manage their own finances and take all the decisions as to how the money they raised should be spent. They also stipulated that they should be responsible for organising their own educational programme.³³

The success of attempts to organise Conservative women also varied from place to place. They adopted a hierarchy of county federation, central and divisional committees and ward sections but with varying degrees of effectiveness. Some polling districts even had their own organisation although these tended to be very small units and their fortunes fluctuated wildly according to the commitment of one or two enthusiasts. In other areas progress was slow. The Women's Association of the Sheffield Central Division, for instance, was not formed until November 1927 and the records show that it was not always easy to find women to act as chairmen and secretaries of the ward organisations and there were frequent changes of personnel.³⁴ Elsewhere, as in the Rother Valley constituency, it was well into 1928 before the prospect of an increased female electorate, many of whom it was feared would vote Labour, prompted the

formation of a women's association "to commence activity with regard to the thousands of new women voters who would shortly be placed on the register."³⁵

In Leeds, on the other hand, a strong central committee emerged in 1919, the wives of city councillors and local Conservative grandees predominant amongst its officials. During the 1920s Conservative women's organisation in the city appears to have outpaced that of Labour as there were only three wards that were unorganised.³⁶ With Tory women more firmly rooted in the domestic sphere and the Conservative Party's promotion of the home as the bulwark against incipient socialism, Conservative party organisers may have met with less resistance to the idea of continuing separate sections for their womenfolk.

The president of the Leeds Conservative Women's Advisory Council was Lady Clarke, the wife of the chairman of the Leeds Conservative Federation. After 19 years she was succeeded by Mrs Bousfield, the wife of the honorary secretary of the City of Leeds Conservative Association.³⁷ Mrs Ronald Matthews, the wife of the Sheffield Federation vice-chairman, was elected to the parallel position in the Sheffield Women's Central Committee in 1931 whilst, a year later, the wives of all the Sheffield Conservative MPs, were invited to become vice-presidents of the Committee.³⁸ As Beatrix Campbell notes: "wives were women's conduit to the ear of their MP."³⁹ It seemed that in the Conservative party women owed their election to major office in the women's associations more to the status conferred on them by their husbands' seniority in the party organisation than to their own achievements or their suitability for office. By definition this implied that Tory women would act primarily in a supportive capacity which stemmed from loyalty to the party and to their menfolk.

Nevertheless, the emergence of Conservative women's associations was hampered on occasion by the continuing existence of powerful Primrose League habitations. Although a declining force in the inter-war period,⁴⁰ in a few areas the League's willingness to open its arms to non-party members and its commitment to offering a broad and lively social programme⁴¹ saw its membership sustained. The Primrose League remained particularly strong, for instance, in the predominantly middle-class Ecclesall division of Sheffield where it served as the power-base for the Roberts family. Sir Samuel Roberts, his son and grandson all served as Conservative MPs for the Ecclesall division whilst, in the 1930s, the Dowager Lady Roberts, who had been a member of the Ecclesall habitation since its inception in 1886, was a vice-president of the Ladies' Grand Council and had been succeeded as Dame president of the Ecclesall branch by her daughter-in-law.⁴² They acted in close consort with the secretary, Mrs Emma Stevenson, who by 1930 was well into her eighties and had notched up 43 years service as secretary and was reluctant to accept any changes.⁴³ It was not until after Mrs Stevenson's death in 1936 that a Women's Unionist Association was formed in Ecclesall and a women's organiser appointed.⁴⁴ It was the tendency of the habitation to hold itself aloof from official Conservative constituency organisation⁴⁵ that delayed the formation of a Women's Advisory Council in Sheffield until 1930; a council could not be formed unless all divisions were agreeable and willing to participate. Moreover, the Primrose League with its admission of non-party members, its "rather antiquated" methods and style⁴⁶ and its highly socially-oriented programme did not provide the kind of atmosphere conducive to encouraging women's political activism except in a supportive capacity.

The functions of the hierarchical layers of women's party organisation differed. Ward meetings were designed to appeal to both existing and new members. Labour women met weekly or fortnightly, usually in the early afternoon for the convenience of mothers with schoolchildren. They were offered a wide variety of activities: an eclectic mixture of outside speakers, self-education, literary and political readings and discussions, outings, reports from delegates to conferences. Tory women appear to have met less frequently, usually once every two weeks. Divisional and advisory committees were elected from existing members and fulfilled a co-ordinating and educative role as well as advising local parties on matters particularly affecting women and children. They usually met monthly.

Over in Manchester Hannah Mitchell refused to join the Labour Party as she did not wish to be consigned to a subordinate role in a women's section as "a camp follower, or a member of what seemed to [her] a permanent social committee, or official cake maker to the Labour Party." She preferred the ILP with its "open membership to both sexes."⁴⁷ Hannah Mitchell may have been rather too hasty in her judgement. The women sections may have indeed been called upon to do the catering at social events. After all it was what the majority of the women were good at and the Woodseats Labour Party for one expressed appreciation of the women's contribution when the members of the women's section were congratulated in 1930 for their "gifts of refreshments and assistance on the occasion of the social gatherings, and [for] their invaluable work in connection with the Bazaar, . . ."⁴⁸ Moreover, as The Conservative Woman suggested in the wake of the Leeds Conservative bazaar in 1929 neither did all Tory women joyfully accept the mantle of caterers and fundraisers:

Too often it is taken for granted that all women enjoy Bazaars, Sewing and Tea parties. This is just about as untrue as it is to say that every woman likes smoking or takes the same size in gloves. Some women have other interests - music, reading, golfing, painting - and these were left for the time being to do what was rightly considered a duty.⁴⁹

Moreover, the women did not always meekly comply and dismissive criticism of the women's sections as caterers to the Labour Party in particular has tended to detract from the very valuable role they played in the inter-war period in politicising and educating women members.

It was on the political education of women that the Labour women's sections focussed, especially in the early years. Jessie Smith (West Riding County Councillor, 1937-1974), who was a member of her local section in the 1930s, emphasised how poorly educated nearly all the women members were. Many lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills, let alone any knowledge of economics, history or political affairs. What little knowledge they had acquired after schooling was gleaned from attendance at night school or from WEA classes which themselves offered an uncoordinated programme of lectures and were often attended by only a committed nucleus of students.⁵⁰

Thus, the Labour women's sections offered their members regular lectures given by members of the local party, national party women like Katharine Bruce Glasier, by men and women from a panel of local speakers, or by local women councillors, magistrates or Poor Law guardians. On other occasions articles on issues of topical interest in The Labour Woman would be read out and discussed. In addition to the regular meetings, study circles were sometimes formed. In 1926, for instance, Mrs Anderson Fenn commended to members of the Leeds Labour Women's Central Committee

the value of study circle methods for Women's Sections because by that means women could discuss newspaper articles, pamphlets and books, without always having to rely on speakers.⁵¹

Sections could identify newspaper articles or acquire educative literature like the ILP pamphlet Socialism for Women, written by Minnie Pallister.⁵² This provided material for eight meetings designed to broaden women's political and industrial education in areas which affected their own lives. They were asked to consider the impact of the capitalist system on women's labour prospects, the merits of equal pay for equal work, the implications of women's political and economic independence and of family endowment, the relationship between the sexes, the impact of social reform on women's lives. After giving a statement of the theoretical socialist position on each of these issues, various points were suggested for further discussion. In 1933 Labour women in Leeds were encouraged to acquire copies of the Party's four policy pamphlets for study⁵³ and in May 1938 the Sheffield Labour Women's Advisory Council set up a special study circle to consider the Party manifesto Labour's Immediate Programme item by item.⁵⁴

Conservative, no less than Labour, women were anxious to disprove anti-suffragist jibes as to their political competence and set out consciously to educate themselves about both political and economic affairs at municipal, national and international level. Thus, in May 1923, the women's section of the anti-socialist alliance in Sheffield municipal politics decided to form special circles for the study of municipal affairs whilst, in the April 1924 edition of The Sheffield Citizen, published by the alliance in the 1920s, women's ward associations were advised that a number of speakers were available who could lecture on such diverse topics as the League of

Nations, smoke pollution, trade unions, town planning and industrialisation.⁵⁵ The women's programme for early 1924 is shown below:⁵⁶

<u>Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Ward</u>	<u>Subject</u>
Jan 30	Park	Organisation
Jan 2	Darnall	Economic Position of Women
Feb 6	Neepsend	Women and the Vote
Feb 13	Burngreave	How Laws are Made
Feb 19	Heeley	The Influence of Cinemas
Feb 26	St Peter's/ St Philip's	How Laws are Made
March 6	Attercliffe	Industrial problems
March 20	Broomhall	How laws are made

The work of education was further extended by the advisory councils which arranged one-day and weekend political schools and quarterly conferences although these seem to have lost some of their popularity and frequency in the 1930s.⁵⁷ Local and regional gatherings for Labour women dealt with matters of party organisation or endeavoured to offer a wide range of topics for consideration although there was a marked preponderance of gender-related issues. Labour women's horizons could, however, be considerably broadened by attendance at the Labour Party summer schools where they met fellow party members from a wide variety of backgrounds and had an opportunity to listen to national party leaders. Elizabeth Hardwick from Wath recalled, for instance, that Ellen Wilkinson and Margaret Bondfield were among the "celebrities" at the summer school she attended in Matlock in the early 1930s.⁵⁸ Women who attended schools and conferences were always expected to report back to other members of their sections and this helped them to develop their skills of presentation and discussion-leadership.

Political education equally included the acquiring of organisational skills and preparation for public speaking. Some girls, particularly those fortunate enough to attend GPDST or girls' grammar schools, may have had some experience of speaking in debating societies. Some women were accustomed to speaking to groups of children, or even parents, in the relatively sheltered environment of school or Sunday school. A few had found their voices as trade union organisers or in front of hostile crowds during the women's suffrage campaign. The majority of women, however, had never been encouraged or expected to speak out in public. As the lady editor of the Sheffield Independent's women's column appreciated, they lacked the necessary confidence:

The fear of appearing foolish deters many a woman from taking any part at a public meeting, beyond that of an auditor. She may have something quite useful to say but is at a loss as regards the moment and manner of saying it and so takes no part in the proceedings.⁵⁹

Women also lacked knowledge of how public or associational meetings were run. Ignorant of necessary skills such as how to draw up an agenda or how to handle amendments and resolutions, if a woman "were asked to take the chair at a meeting, she would refuse because she would not know how to go about things."⁶⁰

Members of the women's association of the Citizens' Group, the anti-socialist alliance in Sheffield municipal politics, who had already been encouraged in 1923 to join the association's classes in public-speaking, were also invited to take part in the study circles run by the Brightside Ward women's section. At these classes women already experienced in public life gave instruction on the general conduct of public meetings, the drawing up of agendas, the duties of a secretary and chairman. Students were then invited to conduct their own mock

political meeting. A further course of study was concerned with the work of the Health, Housing and Finance Committees of the City Council in order to equip women with answers to any questions that might be raised when they were canvassing. In this way, the "members in this class [were] . . . initiated into the art of public speaking."⁶¹

The Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Council, too, ran classes in public speaking organised by Mrs Charles King. Some participants were asked to give five minute talks at the one-day political schools to demonstrate their new found skills and to encourage other women to do likewise. Teams of women were also encouraged to enter Speakers' Competitions and, to foster healthy inter-divisional rivalry, a silver challenge cup was acquired in 1932 to be awarded annually to the most successful team.⁶² The subject in 1937 was "The Fate of Youth in Industry" and the cup was won by Ecclesall No 2 team, with Hallam second, both predominantly middle-class wards.⁶³ Nevertheless women from other areas of the city could hold their own as Mrs Matthews found when she attended a Speakers' competition in Hillsborough. She "was much impressed by the teams composed of working women."⁶⁴ Winning teams would be invited to compete in the Yorkshire Area Competition held in Leeds.

Classes were not necessarily sexually segregated. In Leeds, for instance, in 1922, a debating society was established by several men and women members of the Conservative Party in the hope that "the debates may encourage many who are well able to write an excellent letter, but suffer from torturing nervousness, when they wish to speak."⁶⁵ Unfortunately there is no evidence as to whether men and women attended in equal numbers or whether the debates tended to be dominated by men.

This coming-together of women for the purposes of political education and consciousness-raising necessarily offered many women whose lives were dominated by domestic affairs a welcome opportunity for social intercourse and it was the social camaraderie offered by the women's sections which was considered to be of particular value in attracting potential recruits. This was particularly so with Labour women for whom alternative social outlets were limited. As the Sheffield Women's Labour Association reported in 1924, although in a somewhat idealised style: "New supporters of the Women's Movement [in the Party] have been enticed by means of the prospect of delightful social hours spent in the company of happy, homely women."⁶⁶ Alf Green records that by the age of thirty most working-class women in Attercliffe were spending all their time looking after the home, "some of them rarely leaving the confines of their own backyard."⁶⁷ Thus activities in which children could be included were particularly welcome such as women's sections' picnics in the summer months. Attercliffe, Brightside and Firth Park Women's Sections all held meetings in the local parks when the school children were on holiday.⁶⁸ Children were always made to feel welcome and entertained with fancy-dress parties, celebrations at Christmas and sports days. There is evidence that strong supportive networks were built up amongst Labour women by the introduction of such schemes as the Sheffield Burngreave women's section's Sunshine Fund. This enabled the section to present small gifts to members who were ill. They were called on by a sick visitor and thereby assured of the sympathetic support of other members.⁶⁹ Similarly, collective supportive recognition was forthcoming at times of family sickness, bereavement or crisis. In such ways, for Labour women whose domestic and financial circumstances allowed them little opportunity to escape from family life, the personal and

the political became frequently intertwined, even more so if women's sections started subsidiary activities such as drama or rambling groups.⁷⁰

The highlight of the year for many was the annual outing which for some constituted the only opportunity they had to escape the confines of the smoky, dirt-ridden skies of industrial cities and could often only be financed by the periodical payment of tiny deposits to a thrift club during the year. Bridlington, Scarborough, Whitby and Blackpool were popular destinations. Many Conservative women's section also enjoyed an annual outing and, as non-members were allowed to join in, were seen as important recruiting events. In 1922, for instance, 83 members of the Leeds Central Ward women's section took a picnic to Pateley Bridge accompanied by 20 non-members "whom they hoped to enrol."⁷¹

Conservative women, on the other hand, seem to have maintained a greater distance between their home and political lives although it was not uncommon for their political interests to be blended with their charity work as has been shown in chapter one. The women of the Sheffield Central Division held ward meetings once a fortnight and a mass meeting once a month but like many other Conservative women's sections meetings were suspended between the middle of July and the end of August as it was assumed that members would be away on holiday. That the social side of the meetings was also appealing to Conservative women is evidenced by the immense popularity of whist drives which in some areas came to predominate in the activities of Tory women's sections, so much so that Mrs Ridgeway, the secretary of the Yorkshire Federation of Women Unionists, complained to Conservative women in Leeds in 1923 that it was proving extremely difficult to organise a successful meeting unless it took the form of a whist drive.⁷²

By the end of the 1920s some Labour party members recognised there was a danger that over-emphasis on social events was detracting from the essential educative function of the women's sections. In 1929 Mrs Anderson Fenn, the Labour Party's woman organiser for the North East, resigned. She was followed for a few months by Harriet Fawcett, one of the first women councillors to be elected in York, and then by Margaret Gibb who gave up her seat on Sheffield City Council in order to take up the post.⁷³ An energetic, charismatic woman who had formerly been a school teacher, at a conference of Labour women in Bradford in 1932 she stressed the need for women's sections to become more politically aware. Expanding on this theme the Leeds Weekly Citizen argued that, as socialists, Labour women, with their acceptance of the principal tenets of equality, justice and comradeship, were part of a wider struggle to change the fundamental nature of society. The Labour woman needed to be educated. She needed to be politically conscious. "She knows what kind of society she wants and she must study the methods of bringing it into being."⁷⁴

In a follow-up article the revitalisation of the women's sections was urged. Purely social gatherings should be few in number. The emphasis instead should be on speakers and discussion. It was suggested, for instance, that each section should prepare a definite syllabus as women would be more willing to attend if they knew exactly what was proposed for a meeting; local qualified people should be invited to speak on different aspects of local government; one of Margaret Gibb's Bradford suggestions that a member of each section should attend Council meetings and bring back a report was highly recommended; the need for punctuality and the efficient and speedy handling of routine business matters were

stressed. Ample time for discussion was essential as was the desirability of securing the active involvement of as many members of the group as possible. Meetings had to be made interesting so that they would appeal "not only to the faithful few but to those who will not otherwise show an active interest in the doings of the local Labour party", and could be supplemented in the summer months with visits to "schools, washhouses, waterworks, any municipal undertaking whose workings should be familiar to all intelligent citizens."⁷⁵

In February 1935 The Labour Woman published the winning entries in a programmes competition which featured women section's syllabuses which showed evidence of careful planning and width of appeal. Halifax Women's Section submitted one of the prize programmes. The section met every Tuesday evening at 7.30 and had an average attendance of 35 members. The programme for the September to December session for 1934 shows how far the section was committed to educational work. There were nine meetings addressed by speakers - three men and six women. Seven of the talks were on political topics, one on the work of the St John's Ambulance service and light relief was introduced on one occasion by Miss Montgomery of Huddersfield who recounted her holiday adventures on a cruise in the Mediterranean. The other meetings were a business meeting and a meeting at which members gave detailed reports of their service on municipal committees whilst Mrs Smith, the only Labour woman magistrate in the town, gave a report on the work of the Bench. There were no meetings on 23 and 30 October as members were engaged in municipal election work when they gave particular support to the only Labour woman candidate, Mrs Rothera. Social events were kept to a minimum and were combined with fundraising. As the secretary wrote:

We insist on the educational side of the work dominating our programme. We prefer to organise one or two social events on a fairly large scale rather than run a series of small events which interfere too much with educational work.

In addition to their sectional meetings, members also attended the Halifax and District Advisory Council's autumn conference on the work of women magistrates and 35 members took advantage of an invitation from Margaret Gibb to travel to Sheffield where nursery schools, public washhouses, the City Hall and City Library were visited.⁷⁶

Margaret Gibb was equally anxious to prise the women's sections away from an undue emphasis on "women and children" issues. She encouraged women to attend ward and other party meetings and to work alongside, rather than separately from, male members:

This is as it should be, because while in the present state of our work there may be interests best served by women, neither the work of women nor the work of men should be segregated from the other, so while sectional work may be good it is not an end in itself, - all should blend into a common whole.⁷⁷

Besides educating members and providing regular social contact, the women's sections were able to harness the fundraising skills of their members for political ends. Although Labour women's sections were granted financial autonomy, they regularly and willingly contributed sums, albeit small ones, to divisional and municipal election expenses and played a valuable role in propping up the financial fortunes of local parties which were at best inadequate and at times of economic crisis exceedingly rocky. Thus, in 1927, when no affiliation fees could be spared by the miners' unions in the wake of the lockout and the Doncaster Divisional Labour Party was dependent

on arbitrary grants from the railway unions, members of the women's sections produced a wealth of items to be sold at a two-day sale of work held in the Trades Hall to help reduce the party's financial deficit.⁷⁸

Labour women did, however, feel they had the right to make financial contributions to causes which were of appeal to the collective membership and in particular to those which they felt had particular gender relevance such as the relief fund for Bulgarian widows and orphans in 1926, the expenses of the 1926 Women's Peace Pilgrimage, one route of which went through Doncaster and Sheffield, Marion Phillips's appeal for money and clothing on behalf of miners' wives and children during the lockout and, in the second half of the 1930s, relief for the victims of the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁹ A number of Labour women in several centres were involved in providing homes for Basque refugee children - the home in Sheffield, for instance, provided accommodation for twenty-five children and £850 was needed annually to run it.⁸⁰ The funds of the Labour women's sections were, however, always small and severely restricted their scope of activity. Therefore it was not uncommon for sections to be unable to send delegates to the annual Labour women's conference should long distance travel be involved. Some sections did realise the importance of weekend conferences and summer schools for the political education of their members and endeavoured to provide sufficient funds for one woman to go each year but the numbers who could attend were otherwise limited by women's reliance on winning scholarship places financed by divisional parties or advisory councils which took the form of an essay competition or a test of political knowledge. Neither could any longterm political programme be envisaged. There were no accumulated funds to draw on and consequently each new appeal or invitation

to send delegates to meetings and conferences could only be responded to after resorting to yet another fund-raising event.

Conservative women, too, whose fundraising skills were frequently grounded in their charity work, raised money for political ends. A four-day bazaar was organised, for instance, by the Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee in May 1936 in the Cutlers' Hall. It boasted sixteen stalls, each with its own committee, and the daytime sales activity was complemented by evenings devoted to talent competitions and "Entertainments" in order to raise funds to be devoted to

engaging the full time or part time services of qualified paid women organizers, the purchase and distribution of literature useful and applicable to women, . . . holding Educational Classes, Canvassing Classes, Political Schools, instruction in public speaking, assisting in the formation of Branches of the Young Britons, and helping in every way by giving information to the Divisional Agent in regard to Registration for both men and women.⁸¹

Conservative women could afford to devote most of the money they raised to the political education of the female electorate as many Conservative divisions were well enough placed not to have to rely on the fund-raising contributions of their members.⁸² It is evident that, at least in Sheffield, the voluntary recruiting and educative work of the Conservative Women's Central Advisory Committee was not sustained and after a few years the Committee's primary role became one of raising funds to allow official women's organisers or "missioners" to be engaged.⁸³ The Advisory Committee's members did not, therefore, identify their own role as one of service in the public political sphere.

Fundraising was closely allied to the routine work of recruitment and electioneering, much of which was undertaken at ward level. After the 1921 municipal campaign women were singled out for special praise by the Leeds Weekly Citizen which mentioned their reliability and sustained contribution in distributing literature, canvassing, organising women's meetings and taking voters to the polling stations on election day.⁸⁴ The value of an approach to individual voters such as women were prepared to make through door to door visiting was stressed by Clara Adams, secretary of the Leeds Labour Women's Advisory Council and assistant secretary of the Leeds City Labour Party in 1926 when she opposed a suggestion from Alderman Foster that recruits to the Party could be won through a series of monthly inter-divisional mass meetings at the Leeds Coliseum to be addressed by local Labour members of parliament. Miss Adams argued that mass meetings such as Alderman Foster was proposing were an anachronism and that with Labour as a serious force in parliament, Labour members should be primarily concerned with their parliamentary duties and not with platform prestige. The task of recruitment was best left to individual members who had the time to devote to such activities:

. . . people must be dealt with individually and in smaller and more concentrated meetings if the best results were to be obtained and the people were to clearly understand the Party's true aims and objects.⁸⁵

By implication this was suitable work for women members.

In 1923 women were urged to join the Sheffield Citizens' Association Women's Section in order to help address envelopes or visit voters, whilst the municipal by-election victory of Arthur Shepherd in the Darnall ward in August that year was attributed mainly to the efforts

of the Citizen women: "There is no doubt that this was largely a Women's victory. In canvassing and the distribution of literature, the women worked early and late" ⁸⁶ Cllr Mrs Longden, at a speech to the members of the Citizens' Association women's ward committees in 1925, drew particular attention to the contribution women could make, especially in approaching the women of the wards, "getting to hear their troubles and their needs and putting them in touch with Councillors and Guardians, if they so desire." ⁸⁷

Leisured women, in particular, could be relied upon to provide the foundations of a well-oiled political machine in the event of an unanticipated parliamentary election such as that of 1931 when coalition candidates, predominantly Conservatives, won all seven seats in Sheffield and five out of six in Leeds. Thus, in the annual report of the Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee for the year 1931-2 it was recorded that the bulk of the canvassing, addressing envelopes and despatching and distributing literature was carried out by women workers throughout the city. ⁸⁸ The Conservatives were well-aware of the potential value of their army of unpaid readily-available women workers. They were seen as the major conduit to the working-class voter the Conservatives were so eager to attract in the face of the rising class challenge from the Labour Party. Thus Mrs Neville Chamberlain who had herself organised afternoon women's "clubs" in her husband's mainly working-class constituency of Ladywood exhorted the Conservative women in 1924 to:

go into the back yards and into the little alleys, where people live, often in the greatest hardship and distress, and where nobody goes but the Socialists. ⁸⁹

The value of propaganda work aimed particularly at women was recognised by both parties. Labour recruiting efforts were concentrated into Women's Week or Women's Month celebrations. Women's week in Leeds in 1931 opened with a mass open-air meeting in East End Park when Katharine Bruce Glasier spoke of proposals in the Labour Party's programme which could be expected to be particularly attractive to women. She concentrated especially on the need for nursery schools. During the week a social was held designed to have a wide appeal through a programme of musical items and exhibition dancing. The week ended with a further open-air event in Victoria Square.⁹⁰

In 1927 Women's Month in Sheffield culminated in a long procession punctuated by the colourful banners of the women's sections and women's labour organisations which wound its way through the city to an open-air meeting in Norfolk Park addressed by Marion Phillips, Cecil Wilson, Member of Parliament for Attercliffe and P C Hoffman, the parliamentary candidate for Central Division. The main feature of the month had been a mass canvass of non-Labour held constituencies with between 30 and 50 women taking part each day.⁹¹

Reminiscent of the Clarion vans, were the advisory councils' propaganda buses which endeavoured to combine pleasure with recruitment. A procession of vehicles, all strikingly decorated with streamers bearing the council's name, would set forth for some attractive town or resort and made frequent stops en route at chosen villages where literature was distributed. In 1936 the South Yorkshire Council hired 27 buses for its "Propaganda Outing" to Scarborough.⁹² In 1937 over 600 women descended on Bridlington.⁹³ The sections' colourful banners and resourceful tableaux were also seen at the annual May Day demonstrations.

To what extent, however, did membership of a women's section facilitate women's entry into the public political sphere? Local Labour women's frustration at their lack of representation on the decision-making bodies of the national Party is evident. In the 1920s their entitlement to places on the National Executive was solely through their membership of the Standing Joint Council of Labour Women's Organisations which was heavily dominated by trade union interests.⁹⁴ Although the papers of the West Riding Advisory Council reveal that, in 1922, women in Yorkshire felt themselves unable to endorse the proposal by the Manchester and Salford Advisory Council that Labour women should have direct representation on the National Executive, they did suggest that an electoral system which was fairer to local constituency organisations was desirable and should include some "provision for a minimum number of women members."⁹⁵

The idea that a revision of the National Executive's electoral procedure to reduce the power of the trade union block vote and increase the power of the rank and file through greater constituency party representation would guarantee a more substantial voice for women resurfaced in the late 1930s when there was some local support, at least in the west of the Riding, for the Constituency Parties Movement. Labour women, County Alderman Lady Mabel Smith and the Secretary and Agent of the Halifax Labour Party, Sara Barker, were leading members of the Permanent Regional Committee formed for the Yorkshire Area after a conference addressed by Sir Stafford Cripps was held in Leeds in February 1937.⁹⁶

At the local level it appears that, particularly in the early years of the inter-war period, Labour agents and

executive committees tended to treat the women's sections dismissively and there was friction over the degree of autonomy they should have. There was disagreement over the destination of funds raised and complaints that meetings for women were being organised without the women's sections being consulted. Doncaster women, for instance, enraged at the executive's decision to arrange for Mrs Anderson Fenn to speak to them on December 20 or 21 1920, - not the most convenient of dates for wives and mothers - requested that "in future when a national woman organiser is to visit Doncaster, they be consulted before the date is fixed."⁹⁷ A similar complaint was voiced by the members of the Shiregreen women's section of the Brightside Divisional Labour Party in Sheffield in 1924 when a visit by Katharine Bruce Glasier had been arranged without prior consultation.⁹⁸ They also challenged the agent's request that all amounts over £1 that they raised should be handed over for divisional use.⁹⁹ Women also had to struggle to obtain representation on local trades councils on equal terms with men.¹⁰⁰

Conservative women's right to substantial representation throughout the party hierarchy appears ostensibly to have been acceded from an early stage. From 1921 women comprised one-third of associations' delegations to the National Unionist Associations' annual conferences.¹⁰¹ Local advisory councils and divisional women's associations quickly won the right to representation on local federations whilst women's associations were all entitled to send delegates to divisional executive committee meetings. On the other hand, because women had gender-specific representation, it appears to have been accepted at divisional level that they would not compete with men for the other places on executive committees. Indeed, the records of the Ecclesall Conservative Party show that the names of male members attending executive

meetings were listed first and the women, even if their husbands happened to be members, virtually appended as a group at the end. Women delegates at the national conferences were, at least in the early days, silent, whilst women on local federations appear to have acted mainly in an advisory capacity on such social issues as health, housing and education and in a supportive capacity at political meetings and rallies.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, working within the framework of male-dominated party organisation, a number of reasons can be identified which suggest why it should have been the women's sections that were responsible for bringing the majority of women councillors in the West Riding of Yorkshire into public life in the inter-war period. First, they offered a supportive environment in which women with little experience of associational activity could develop their awareness of political and economic affairs, hone their organisational and communicative skills and gain confidence in their own strengths and abilities. Secondly, whereas, in the main ward organisation, conscious or subconscious discrimination may have militated against a woman being nominated as a municipal candidate in preference to a man, the women's sections at least were in a position to advance the names of women aspiring to selection for the Municipal Panel. Even if only one or two names were forthcoming, either because women were reluctant to push themselves forward or because they were being careful to break the ground gradually, the women's sections did provide their members with a political base. Thirdly, aware of women's overwhelming lack of economic independence, Labour women's groups in particular strove to provide some measure of financial support for women municipal candidates. In the 1930s, for instance, Edith Birch, councillor for Burngreave, was sponsored by the Sheffield

Labour Women's Advisory Council and contributions towards her expenses were solicited from all the women's sections.¹⁰³ Fourthly, and again this applies particularly to the Labour women's sections, their collective identification of vital social issues, often of direct relevance to women's lives but frequently overlooked by male party members, ensured that such issues would have a place on the political agenda. This engendered the acceptance that at least a few token women councillors were desirable as they had knowledge and experience to offer in certain areas of local government work. Local advisory councils, for instance, formed sub-committees which considered such politically controversial areas as housing, education and health.

The extent to which women were actively politicised through membership of single-sex groups within the parties varied, of course, across the region. Labour women councillors everywhere reveal a high incidence of membership of their local women's section. With Conservative women, however, the correlation between membership of a women's association and municipal service is less universal. In Leeds, for instance, the wisdom of establishing a central co-ordinating committee to orchestrate and extend work among women voters on behalf of the Conservatives was immediately acknowledged once partial female suffrage had been won in 1918 and the Leeds Conservative Women's Association was rapidly launched. It was dominated by a group of wives of local politicians and they seem to have moulded the Association into a power base whose influence and valuable assistance they could trade for a number of viable seats on the council. Entitled to representation on the executive committee of the central Conservative association from an early stage, they would have been in a position to ensure that the occasional safe seat was awarded to a senior

member of the Association. The treasurer of the Association, Gertrude Dennison, and the secretary, Gertrude Halbot, were both councillors in the period.¹⁰⁴ In Sheffield, however, as has been seen, the Conservative Women's Advisory Committee was not formed until 1930 and was primarily directed towards supporting male political activism, fund-raising and organising the women's vote for the Conservative cause. Elsewhere, it would appear, that if Beatrix Campbell's contention that Conservative women's

political orientation was towards the grand causes of Conservatism [the crusade against socialism, responsibility towards the Empire, preservation of the integrity of the family as a fundamental societal institution] rather than the detailed concerns of women themselves¹⁰⁵

is correct, the role of Conservative women's associations in stimulating and facilitating the political activism of members was less important than that of the Labour women's sections.

Women's Self-help and Educative Organisations

By the time normal electoral procedures were restored at the end of the First World War there existed a number of women's organisations which were making a determined effort to extend women's representation in public life. The Women's Local Government Society had been working since the early 1890s to encourage and facilitate women's participation in local government and had close ties with the NCW (founded as the NUWW in 1895).¹⁰⁶ In 1910 an NCW public service committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mrs Edwin Gray of York with the express purpose of encouraging members "to take advantage of any new opportunity of public service thrown open to women",¹⁰⁷ whilst Women Citizens' Associations which aimed to educate women in political affairs began to be formed

just before the War. By 1921 82 had affiliated to the NUSEC.¹⁰⁸

By 1920 it is clear that all these organisations had had some degree of success in mobilizing women for municipal service. Outside London, however, it is equally clear that there was not sufficient support for viable branches of all these groups to survive in one locality. Some towns, therefore, had only one. Rotherham, for instance, had a vigorous WCA; in Barnsley political awareness was maintained through the continued existence of the Barnsley branch of the NUWSS; Leeds had a Women Citizen's League; in Bradford and Huddersfield the most politically active women's organisation was the NCW. Nowhere in the North did the WLGS ever succeed in forming branches.

Where several of these organisations did exist in one locality, there were some who felt that there was a danger of loss of effectiveness through overlapping.¹⁰⁹ In Sheffield, for instance, where there was in the 1920s a flourishing branch of the NCW, a WCA which had evolved from the original NUWSS organisation in the city and the women's section of the anti-socialist municipal alliance, the Yorkshire Post suggested that "a multiplicity of meetings under different auspices [could not] be as effective as fewer and larger meetings."¹¹⁰

Moreover, it is evident that the older suffrage and feminist organisations with a commitment to seeking a wider role for women alongside men in public life such as the NUSEC and the WCAs were failing to appeal to a younger generation of women in the inter-war period. Many members of the Barnsley NUSEC, for instance, could trace their involvement back to the foundation of the group in 1913. Even in 1920 a number of members had discussed the desirability of disbanding as they felt their work was complete and it was only the encouragement

of Rose Hartop, a national organiser, which persuaded them to carry on "in view of much work for women to do in Public Life".¹¹¹ By 1932 the secretary had been in office for thirteen years. The number of reported retirements, illnesses and deaths point to a predominantly elderly membership and the reduction in the number of delegates they were entitled to send to the national conference indicates a falling membership, particularly after 1928 when female suffrage had been granted on equal terms with men.¹¹² Despite an ostensible commitment to furthering women's involvement in public, however, the group appears to have served mainly as a cosy social club for its members. Attendance at lantern lectures and social evenings such as fund-raising whist drives appears to have been higher than on occasions with a more serious content whilst the secretary's report for 1924-5 lamented the general lack of enthusiasm shown for issues raised by visiting speakers and the subsequent failure to maintain any serious discussion or questioning.¹¹³

Moreover, whilst the members of the branch endorsed and worked in support of the campaign of Mrs Handford, the first woman candidate for municipal election in Barnsley, she herself did not belong to the society and her candidature appears not to have inspired any of the existing members to seek election themselves.¹¹⁴ In 1933 Mrs Davies was obliged to retire from the secretaryship and a lack of volition on the part of members and a failure to find anyone willing to take on the secretary's duties left no alternative except dissolution.

Similarly, in Rotherham, although the WCA had worked enthusiastically in support of a woman municipal candidate in the 1920s and held regular, well-attended meetings at which feminist issues were keenly debated, in

the 1930s the association rapidly lost its appeal and many members appear to have preferred membership of the more domestically-oriented Townswomen's Guild which was formed in Rotherham after a visit from Mrs Corbett Ashby in February 1930.¹¹⁵ This declining interest in the older, more radical societies is evident elsewhere. In Bingley, for instance, the Women Citizens' League, "which for 20 years [had] exercised a useful influence in the public and social life of the town," disbanded in 1938 after a questionnaire circulated amongst the remaining members had revealed a marked falling off of interest in its aims and programme.¹¹⁶ In Sheffield, as in many other localities across the country, the WCA with its roots in the pre-war suffragist movement felt that it should disband in 1928 as its work appeared to be complete since equal suffrage had been achieved. Certainly a similar decision seems to have been taken in York where, after 1928, Edna Crichton who had originally been nominated by the Women Citizens, switched to being an Independent councillor. Even the WCG which before the First World War had been among the most progressively effective of the women's organisations lost some of its radicalness in the inter-war period.¹¹⁷

The NCW which had displayed such initial enthusiasm for women's wider involvement in the public sphere but which, by the 1930s at least, had become an essentially conservative organisation,¹¹⁸ also gradually abandoned its attempts to secure more women councillors for the reasons discussed in the following chapter. Local branches concentrated instead on more domestically-oriented issues such as the promotion of the interests of voluntary women workers and, particularly, of children. The annual reports of the Sheffield branch show that in the 1930s the major concerns were unemployment, housing, the welfare of children and the deteriorating international

situation. Even the campaign for women police stemmed more from concern for the moral welfare of the community than from a wish to widen employment opportunities for women.

By the end of the inter-war period, therefore, the push for women's increased involvement in public life on the part of women's organisations had all but evaporated. Unless a woman took the conscious decision to become a member of a political party, there were few channels left by which she could be drawn into public life. The overwhelming majority of women councillors in the West Riding were finding their political feet through membership of the women's sections of the two major parties. The only major exception, particularly in Sheffield, was a small number of WCG members but even their aims and membership tended to overlap with Labour party organisation. That the women's sections played a valuable role in the education of their members and provided women with a supportive milieu for the development of their organisational and debating skills is undeniable. Whether, if women had had to compete for municipal honours from the outset from the same political base as men, they would have been more or less successful is more difficult to determine. After all, as a writer in the Leeds Weekly Citizen suggested in 1929, "separate organisations of the sexes implies either superiority or inferiority,"¹¹⁹ and women's sections and the social issues with which they were expected to concern themselves, have undoubtedly been pushed to the political sidelines. Even so, it is arguable that total integration from 1918 would only have resulted in the swamping of individual women in male-dominated local parties and rendered the struggle for the acceptance of women as credible municipal candidates just as prolonged.

Footnotes

- 1 For the evolution of prominent women's organisations in the period 1888 to 1934 see Brian Harrison: Prudent Revolutionaries, pp 4 + 5.
- 2 See, for instance, Leeds Weekly Citizen, July 5 1929, p 5.
- 3 The Revd Eileen Orchard, for instance, minister at Ryan Street Congregational Church, Bradford, from 1937 to 1944, deplored any tendency amongst Congregational women ministers "to get into a huddle at county or other meetings." She similarly condemned gender-segregated professional groups - Letter to the author, 22 Feb 1989.
- 4 See Linda Walker: "Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890-1914", p 165.
- 5 For the Primrose League, see also Chapter 1 of Beatrix Campbell: The Iron Ladies, pp 5-33 and Martin Pugh: The Tories and the People 1880-1935, pp 47-66.
- 6 See The Brightside Ladies' Conservative Association Minutes March 12 1908 - March 17 1914, and in particular Minutes of Executive Committee meetings, May 20 1908, Feb 22 and 23 1909.
- 7 Linda Walker: op.cit, p 168.
- 8 Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, Nov 10 1891, p 7.
- 9 Linda Walker: op.cit, pp 185-6 + 176.
- 10 June Hannam: "'In the Comradeship of the Sexes Lies the Hope of Progress and Social Regeneration': Women in the West Riding ILP, c.1890-1914", pp 219 + 225-7.
- 11 Brian Harrison: op.cit, p 6.
- 12 Caroline Rowan: "Women in the Labour Party, 1906-1920", p 76.
- 13 Martin Pugh records that the new register in 1918 gave a parliamentary electorate of over twenty-one million - The Tories and the People 1880-1935, p 177.

- 14 Woman's Leader, Jan 30 1925, p 5 and Martin Pugh: op cit, p 178.
- 15 Martin Pugh: op cit, p 179.
- 16 Beatrix Campbell: op cit, p 48.
- 17 Caroline Rowan: op cit, p 86-7.
- 18 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland, p 41.
- 19 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Oct 24 1919, p 3.
- 20 Papers of the Labour Women's Council for the West Riding of Yorkshire: Report of Women's West Riding Conference held in Leeds, Oct 11 1919.
- 21 Leeds Weekly Citizen, 4 Nov 1932, p 8.
- 22 Labour Woman, July 1 1926, p 28.
- 23 See Margaret Gibb's report "Labour Women in the North East" in Labour Woman, Jan 1937, p 3. The North East area for which she was organiser in the 1930s encompassed Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire. At the time there were between 360 and 380 sections, ten advisory councils and an unspecified number of federations and central committees.
- 24 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: op cit, p 41. Reynolds and Laybourn give the date of the Huddersfield conference as 1926 but although it had been scheduled to take place in Huddersfield Town Hall in May that year, the conference was abandoned because of the financial constraints imposed on working-class families by the General Strike. The 1927 Conference took place in Huddersfield on 11 and 12 May - see report in Labour Woman, June 1 1927, pp 82 and 88-9.
- 25 Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book Jan 1933-Dec 1937, Minutes of meetings of the Management Committee, 10 Feb and 9 March 1936.
- 26 Pat Thane gives figures which show that generally women's membership of the Labour Party grew rapidly after 1918. It was about 120,000 by 1923 and fluctuated between 250,000 and 300,000 between 1927 and 1939. In some branches women constituted a high proportion of the individual members - "The Women of the British Labour Party and Feminism, 1906-1945", p 125.

- 27 Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party Shiregreen Women's Section Minutes of Meetings Oct 17 1923 - March 27 1928, Minutes of meetings, Oct 17 1923 and Feb 28 1928.
- 28 Minutes of the Brightside Divisional Labour Party May 1929 - Sept 1939, Brightside and Firth Park Women's Section Annual Report for the Year ended Dec 31st 1932.
- 29 Labour Woman, Feb 1935, p 24.
- 30 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 12 1926, p 6.
- 31 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 19 1926, p 6.
- 32 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 17 1928, p 8.
- 33 Doncaster Labour Party Women's Section Minutes 1920-29, Minutes of meeting, Oct 25 1920.
- 34 Minute Book of the Women's Branch of the Sheffield Central Conservative Association 23 Nov 1927 - 25 Nov 1935, Minutes of inaugural meeting, 23 Nov 1927; Minutes of meetings, April 3 1928, 18 Sept 1929, Oct 21 1929.
- 35 Rotherham Advertiser, Oct 13 1928, p 13.
- 36 Details of ward associations and their officers were assiduously listed in each edition of The Conservative Woman, a monthly paper used for propaganda work amongst local women Conservative party supporters. It seems not to have had a wide circulation and from June 1925 was published in junction with the national periodical Home and Politics. The Conservative Woman ceased to appear in 1929.
- 37 See The Conservative Woman, Aug 1922, p 7; Leeds Mercury, 18 Oct 1938.
- 38 Minute Book of the City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee April 14 1930 - 16 Feb 1932, Annual Report for Year ending March 31 1931 and Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 9 May 1932.
- 39 Beatrix Campbell: op cit, p 48.
- 40 Martin Pugh: op cit, pp 179-180.
- 41 The Sheffield Ecclesall habitation, for instance, annually chartered a train for its members' outing

- which was usually to a stately home. Trips as far south as Brighton were not unknown - Sheffield Telegraph, Oct 7 1930, p 4.
- 42 For the Dowager Lady Roberts - Sheffield Telegraph, May 1 1931, p 6. She died in 1941 - Telegraph and Independent, 26 Feb 1941, p 5 and 27 Feb 1941, p 4. For Lady Roberts - Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, 4 Aug 1937, p 6.
- 43 Sheffield Telegraph, Oct 7 1930, p 4.
- 44 Ecclesall Conservative & Unionist Association Minutes 1919-1946, Minutes of meeting of the executive committee, 17 March 1936 and 14 Dec 1936.
- 45 The personnel on the committee of the Ecclesall Conservative & Unionist Association and the Ecclesall Primrose League habitation overlapped. They would have no truck with the anti-socialist alliance on the city council and Ecclesall councillors sat as Independent Conservatives.
- 46 Martin Pugh: op cit, p 180.
- 47 Hannah Mitchell: The Hard Way Up, p 189.
- 48 Quoted in John Boughton: Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield, 1918-1931, p 327.
- 49 Conservative Woman, March 1929, p ii.
- 50 Conversation with Mrs Jessie Smith, 28 Nov 1989. (I am extremely grateful to Mrs Smith for giving me such a warm welcome and for her revealing and entertaining conversation.)
- 51 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 12 1926, p 6.
- 52 Minnie Pallister: Socialism for Women. In the 1920s the ILP information committee published a number of pamphlets and a series of notes for speakers for the use of socialist educationalists and students.
- 53 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 10 1933, p 4.
- 54 Sheffield Forward, May 1938, p 3.
- 55 Sheffield Citizen, July 1923, p 6; April 1924, p 6.
- 56 ibid, Feb 1924, p 7.

- 57 Mrs Carlton, in her report to the Leeds Women's Advisory Council's Annual Meeting in 1935, suggested that if the interest of women was to be upheld they needed to start holding weekend schools again "as in the past." Financial difficulties faced both by the Council and by individual party members, however, made this virtually impossible - Leeds Weekly Citizen, Jan 25 1935, p 6.
- 58 Rotherham Library's interview with Mrs Elizabeth Hardwick recorded on 25 Oct 1977.
- 59 Sheffield Independent, 4 Sept 1925, p 7.
- 60 ibid.
- 61 Sheffield Citizen, Aug 1923, p 6; Sept 1925, p 2.
- 62 Minute Book of City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee July 20 1932 - 10 Sept 1947, Annual report for year ended March 31 1933.
- 63 ibid, Annual report for year ended March 31 1938.
- 64 Minute Book of City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee April 14 1930 - 16 Feb 1932, Minutes of meeting, 14 March 1932.
- 65 Conservative Woman, Oct 1922, p 9.
- 66 Sheffield Forward, Aug 1924, p 1.
- 67 Alfred Green: Growing Up in Attercliffe, p 35.
- 68 Alfred Green: ibid, p 60; Minutes of the Brightside Divisional Labour Party May 1929 - Sept 1939, Brightside and Firth Park Women's Section Annual report for year ended Dec 31 1932.
- 69 Minutes of the Brightside Divisional Labour Party May 1929 - Sept 1939, Annual reports of the Burngreave Women's Section for years ended Dec 31 1932 and 1935.
- 70 An item on the work of women's sections in the Leeds Weekly Citizen suggested the introduction of such activities in order to increase the sections' appeal - Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 11 1932, p 8. There is little evidence that they were widespread. Most Labour women preferred to join in mixed-sex activities. The Clarion Rambling Club in Sheffield, for instance, was very popular in the inter-war period.

- 71 Conservative Woman, Aug 1922, p 11.
- 72 ibid, April 1923, p 12.
- 73 For Margaret Gibb, see Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol VIII, pp 83-8.
- 74 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 4 1932, p 8.
- 75 ibid, Nov 11 1932, p 8.
- 76 Labour Woman, Feb 1935, pp 24-5.
- 77 Leeds Weekly Citizen, April 19 1935, p 3.
- 78 Keith Teanby: 'Not Equal to the Demand', pp 133 + 131.
- 79 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 12 1926, p 6; Doncaster Labour Party Women's Section Minutes 1920-1929, Minutes of meeting, May 19 1926; Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party Shiregreen Women's Section Minutes of Meetings Oct 17 1923 - March 27 1928, Minutes of meeting, June 3 1926; Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party Shiregreen Women's Section Minutes of Meetings Sept 23 1936 - Dec 14 1938, Minutes of meeting, March 9 1938.
- 80 Hallam Divisional Labour Party Minute Book June 1933 - Dec 1937, Minutes of executive committee meeting, 12 July 1937.
- 81 City of Sheffield Women Conservatives' Bazaar Souvenir Handbook (1936) (in Sheffield City Library).
- 82 Ecclesall Conservative & Unionist Association Minutes 1919-1946, Selection committee meeting, 1 July 1935. The candidate had to agree to pay £400 p a for the agent's salary, all election expenses and 100 guineas to the agent at each general election whether the seat was contested or not. (If the same conditions obtained in the majority of Conservative safe seats, the absence of women candidates is understandable.)
- 83 In 1937-8 there were five women organisers working in Sheffield and the Advisory Committee made a grant to the Young Britons for a sixth to be engaged to help with their organisation - Minute Book of the City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee July 20 1932 - 10 Sept 1947, Annual report for the year ended March 31 1938.
- 84 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 11 1921, p 3.

- 85 ibid, March 19 1926, p 6.
- 86 Sheffield Citizen, July 1923, p 6 and Aug 1923, p 3.
- 87 ibid, Aug 1925, p 6.
- 88 Minute Book of the City of Sheffield Conservative Women's Advisory Committee April 14 1930 - 16 Feb 1932, Annual report for year ending 31 March 1932.
- 89 Quoted in Beatrix Campbell: op cit, p 58.
- 90 Leeds Weekly Citizen, July 24 1931, p 5.
- 91 Sheffield Forward, July 1927, p 3.
- 92 See Margaret Gibb's report "Labour Women in the North East" in Labour Woman, Jan 1937, p 3.
- 93 Labour Woman, Aug 1937, p 126.
- 94 The Council had sixty elected members in 1921 and was heavily dominated by trade unions who provided forty-four of the members compared with four each from the Railway Women's Guild, the WCG, the Fabian Society and the Labour Party women - Papers of the Labour Women's Council for the West Riding of Yorkshire.
- 95 Papers of the Labour Women's Council for the West Riding of Yorkshire: Letter from the Council to Arthur Henderson dated Jan 1922 with copies to all women's sections.
- 96 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland, pp 141-3. Constitutional revision was quickly abandoned in the face of trade union hostility which succeeded in stifling debate in constituency parties.
- 97 Doncaster Labour Party Women's Section Minutes 1920-1929, Minutes of meeting, Dec 8 1920.
- 98 Brightside and Burngreave Labour Party Shiregreen Women's Section Minutes 1923-1928, Minutes of meeting, Jan 30 1924.
- 99 ibid, Minutes of meeting, Feb 6 1924.
- 100 ibid, Minutes of meeting, July 8 1925. They argued that if women paid a lower affiliation fee than men they would only have second-class status.
- 101 See Beatrix Campbell: op cit, p 50.

- 102 It seems to have been the tradition that at mixed-sex public meetings organised by the Conservatives, the speech-making was left to the men whilst wives and women officers in the party showed their support by their silent platform presence. Labour women did, however, address public meetings alongside the men - Florence Mattison was, for instance, the Leeds Labour Women's Advisory Council's speaker at the May Day rally in the city in 1934 - Minute Book of the Leeds Labour Women's Advisory Council. Jan. 13. 1932 - Jan 24 1940, Minutes of meeting, April 11 1934.
- 103 Sheffield Forward, May 1938, p 3. In Leeds, in 1929, a similar fund was mooted in support of working women parliamentary candidates - Leeds Weekly Citizen, June 21 1929, p 8.
- 104 For Gertrude Dennison, Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 Feb 1960, pp 3 + 5; for Gertrude Halbot, Leeds Searchlight, No 1 (June 1946), pp 2-3.
- 105 Beatrix Campbell: op. cit., p 63.
- 106 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 317-24 + 25-7.
- 107 H Pearl Adam: Women In Council, pp 64-5.
- 108 Brian Harrison: Prudent Revolutionaries, p 322.
- 109 David Doughan argues that some of the loss of impetus in the women's movement nationally in the inter-war period can be attributed to the failure to identify agreed mass objectives and the fragmentary effect of a number of relatively small specialist pressure groups individually lobbying members of the government or governmental bodies with no concerted approach. See Lobbying for Liberation: British feminism 1918-1968, pp 5-6.
- 110 Yorkshire Post, Oct 26 1923, p 4.
- 111 Barnsley Women's Suffrage Society Minutes Dec. 4. 1913. - Nov. 27. 1933, Minutes of meeting, Oct 27 1920.
- 112 ibid, Minutes of meeting, Feb 5 1931.
- 113 ibid, Annual Report for year 1924-5.
- 114 ibid, Annual Report for year Oct 27 1920 - Nov 1921. After her unsuccessful attempt, they did not even retain the literature obtained from the NUSEC headquarters which included copies of the leaflet, "Why Women are Wanted on Town Councils". These were all

passed to Mrs Handford - Minutes of meeting,
Nov 17 1921 - but could have been of little use to
her as she did not stand again.

115 Rotherham Advertiser, Feb 1 1930, p 3.

116 Yorkshire Post, 18 Oct 1938, p 7.

117 The Guild, founded in 1883, evolved from its initial
role as a social club into a radical educative body
which endeavoured to inform its members on political
and social issues and campaigned for welfare reforms
destined to have a major impact on women's lives. To
help achieve reforms the Guild encouraged its members
to stand for election to local government bodies.
See Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 242-6. Caring
and Sharing: The Centenary History of the Co-
operative Women's Guild was published in 1983. At
grassroots level, however, very little material has
survived. The activities of Guild women appear to
have been virtually ignored by the wider Labour
movement and by the local press.

118 Brian Harrison: op.cit, p 6.

119 Leeds Weekly Citizen, July 5 1929, p 5.

CHAPTER THREE

A sensible, active, broad-minded sort of woman¹:
Women Town Councillors

On Tuesday 11 November 1919, just over two weeks before Lady Astor became the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons, the local government correspondent of the Sheffield Independent reported that "for the first time in Sheffield's history, the Strangers' Gallery at Mayor-making was more dominated by women than men."² Much of this new interest in municipal affairs on the part of women may be attributable to the fact that on the same day Mrs Gertrude Wilkinson, in supporting the election of Councillor Roberts as Lord Mayor on behalf of the Labour Party, became "the first lady member of the Council to speak in the Town Hall", a task she performed "with a quiet charm and refinement that showed that the debating power of the Council [had] been strengthened."³ Gertrude Wilkinson and her Labour colleague, Mrs Eleanor Barton, had been elected at the first fullscale municipal elections to be held after four years of bitter and bloody fighting during which women's sterling contributions to the war effort had not only succeeded in winning for them that Parliamentary franchise that they had so tenaciously but so profitlessly been seeking before but had given them a taste of greater freedom, greater belief in their own potentiality and new vistas of what could be achieved should they be allowed the opportunity.

However, women were not new to local government service in 1919. They had been eligible for election to school boards since these were first constituted by the 1870 Education Act and several had served with distinction.⁴ Even when the functions of the school boards were taken

over by local education authorities in 1903 the government had agreed, in response to considerable pressure from the Women's Local Government Society, that local education authorities should be required to co-opt women.⁵ Since 1875 women had also begun to appear as Poor Law guardians and, following the removal of the property qualification in 1894, their numbers had risen rapidly.⁶ Women were likewise eligible for election to parish and district councils which were also introduced in 1894 whilst the WLGS's campaign to open town and county councils to women achieved a measure of success in 1907 when women ratepayers were enabled to "seek election to the country's three hundred and fifty borough and sixty-two county councils."⁷

It was the stipulation that women candidates should be property holders that posed a severe limitation on their numbers before the First World War. Only wealthy widows and single women with their own household qualified. Patricia Hollis has shown how difficult it had been for women to win seats between 1907 and 1914 and that those who were successful were clustered in and around London and "in the spa, sands, and spires towns of England."⁸ They were much less successful in the industrial towns and cities of the North, although the need for women's involvement in local government was widely recognised. A memorial, for instance, signed by influential members of Sheffield City Council, co-opted members of the city Education Committee and local Poor Law guardians was sent, in 1909, to the President of the Local Government Board expressing support for the Local Government Qualification Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Dr Shipman. This was designed to enable married women and others to stand for election to county and town councils on a residential qualification since, as the memorial pointed out, the community was being deprived of

the considerable experience and talents of many women who were not qualified to stand for election as they lived in a relative's household. In the case of married women, for instance, it would seem

that an intelligent mother who has successfully brought up her own family might make a most useful city councillor, but, as the law stands, the citizens must wait until she is left a widow before they can avail themselves of her services.⁹

This was particularly the case in industrial cities like Sheffield which had little to attract residents who did not rely for employment on the city's economy. Very few of the women who had already taken a prominent part in the public, political or philanthropic life of the city were themselves house-holders and consequently the Act of 1907 which allowed women to serve on borough councils was "likely to be a dead letter in Sheffield unless the qualification be made a residential one."¹⁰

A similar situation pertained in Bradford where, in October 1910, Alderman Priestman, Quaker and Liberal, addressed the Women's Liberal Association on the valuable contribution women could make as members of education, libraries and health committees. Mrs Derwent pointed out, however, that the Bradford WLA had endeavoured to get lady representatives on the Council but without success. With the vast majority of married women barred from offering themselves for election, they "had not yet come across anyone in the position to stand."¹¹ When Miss Mary Wilson, a retired headmistress, did come forward as a candidate in the aldermanic by-elections in late November 1910, it was acknowledged that "there would be a certain amount of prejudice to overcome."¹² In a three-way contest Miss Wilson was squeezed out and came a poor third. The Liberal party equally adopted women candidates in Huddersfield - Mrs Julia Glaisyer stood in

1910 and 1912¹³ - and in Sheffield where Miss Maud Maxfield, a co-opted member of the Education Committee, contested the Conservative held Hallam Ward in 1912.¹⁴ Neither was successful. In the city of Leeds and in the other smaller towns of the area no women appear to have sought a seat. In those large northern cities like Manchester and Liverpool where women were elected Patricia Hollis attributes their success to the fact that they were women of "outstanding reputation".¹⁵

The right to election was finally extended to married women in 1914 but the outbreak of war in August saw the suspension of municipal elections for five years and any vacant council seat filled by a nominee of the party which already held it. The war had, however, made increasing demands on women's service in the local community. They had been invited to serve on distress and food control committees and munitions tribunals. They had initiated war savings schemes, organised municipal kitchens, administered Red Cross enquiry offices and introduced women police patrols. In 1917 the government established a Ministry of Reconstruction and an all-woman sub-committee was appointed to it "to report on the housewife's needs in the design of new state-built houses"¹⁶ which were seen as the only answer to the enormous housing crisis. Some local authorities also sought the views of local women.¹⁷

Thus, by the first post-war municipal elections in 1919, with all remaining legal anomalies swept away by the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act which was passed that year, women's experience, political standing and self-esteem had changed radically. Women themselves had greater confidence. Some were well versed in committee procedures. Some had had experience of public speaking. In the immediate post-war years, at least, women had

greater expectations of the possibilities they believed were open to them.

However, as the First World War had opened up many new spheres of activity to women and had, at least temporarily, changed society's perception of women's role, so it was to the abnormal circumstances of wartime conditions that the first woman councillor in the West Riding owed her appointment. In 1918 when John Arnold, a worsted spinner and former Lord Mayor of Bradford died suddenly, his wife, Annie, was persuaded to take over her husband's seat on the Council.¹⁸ The following year twenty-three women stood as candidates in municipal elections in the West Riding.

The November 1919 municipal elections were fought under very different conditions from the last pre-war elections in 1913 and the outcome was difficult to predict. The extension of the local government franchise in 1918 had approximately doubled the number eligible to vote in municipal elections and a large number of these were women who presented an unknown quantity. In addition there was a strong challenge from the Labour Party which had evolved as a national party during the First World War and was much strengthened by the adoption of its new Constitution and the establishment of constituency organisations throughout the country. In Sheffield, for instance, where union membership had increased dramatically during the war, the continuation of repressive Government legislation into 1919 and mounting industrial unrest had contributed to an "unprecedented" increase in membership of the Party.¹⁹ Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn found that in West Yorkshire from 1917 a majority of the constituency Labour parties had embarked on a process of organisational restructuring. In Bradford a city Labour Party was constituted in April

1919 which united "the ILP, the Trades Council and the Workers' Municipal Federation into one Labour organisation for the first time." Four constituency parties and twenty-one ward organisations were also established. A similar process took place in Leeds where the City Labour party was reorganised in 1918 and constituency parties formed in the six Leeds divisions.²⁰

Moreover, in the face of the increased challenge from Labour and with the continuation of a national Coalition government after the 1918 general election many towns witnessed the formation of anti-Socialist municipal alliances. In Sheffield there had already been "QUIET but effective" electoral agreements between Liberals and Conservatives in 1906, 1908 and 1909 in wards in the east of the city where the challenge from Labour was greatest and these culminated in a formal electoral alliance in 1913.²¹ By 1919 an anti-Socialist alliance seemed inevitable as the Tory Sheffield Telegraph argued: "It seems to us quite impossible that while Conservative and Liberals maintain the Coalition in Parliament, we can ignore it in Sheffield."²² In Leeds no formal alliance existed but until 1926 Conservatives and Liberals co-operated informally and rarely opposed each other in municipal contests.²³ Thus as the November 1919 elections approached, with the possibility of a fierce contest in many seats, it was difficult for parties to assess whether the adoption of a woman candidate would have any significant effect on results.

Moreover, as the inter-war period progressed, political fortunes diverged markedly in the towns and cities of the West Riding and frequently hinged on the existence or non-existence of anti-socialist alliances. After a poor performance by Conservative candidates and a disastrous performance by Liberal candidates in Sheffield in 1919

the alliance, formed initially for a three year trial period purely for the purposes of fighting municipal elections, evolved into a fullscale coalition - the Citizen Group - which adopted an ostensibly non-sectarian ideology and a policy of promoting prominent businessmen as candidates at municipal elections on the grounds that they alone had the necessary experience to manage the affairs of a huge corporation.²⁴

Nevertheless, despite the existence of this anti-socialist group, in 1926 Sheffield became the first city in which Labour gained outright power which it retained with the exception of the municipal year 1932/3.

The Labour Party also gained significant ground in other South Yorkshire localities. By 1926 the Independents only clung to power in Barnsley by virtue of the mayor's casting vote; after a setback in 1930 Labour were firmly established in control by 1933.²⁵ In Rotherham Labour first gained control in 1928. In Doncaster, with the exception of the 1931 general election, a Labour member of parliament was regularly returned from 1922. At the municipal level, however, an informal agreement between Conservatives and Liberals operated in 1920 in the face of Labour successes the preceding November. This evolved into a fullscale coalition from 1921 and, in consequence, Labour candidates had little success. After the last pre-war elections in 1938 they achieved a maximum 25 per cent representation with a total of nine seats.²⁶

Further north, in Leeds, the informal anti-Socialist alliance worked effectively until 1926 when the defection of five Liberal councillors to the Conservative group galvanised the Leeds Liberal Federation into putting up Liberal candidates in all wards. The resulting three-way contests opened the door for Labour to become the largest group on the city council. They subsequently held

outright power from 1928 to 1930 when major boundary revisions worked markedly in favour of the Conservatives who retained control throughout the 1930s with the exception of the two years 1933 to 1935.²⁷ In Bradford, on the other hand, although Labour constituted the largest municipal group from 1926 to 1937, "the Liberal Party was able to share power with the Conservative Party for most of that period."²⁸ In the area around Huddersfield and Halifax Liberal-Conservative alliances also worked strongly in favour of the Liberals. The Liberal Party remained the largest political group on Halifax Town Council throughout the 1920s and 1930s, whilst, by 1930, "Huddersfield was the only English borough under Liberal control."²⁹ Similarly, in the City of York, a "pattern emerged of sitting Liberals and Conservatives being given a clear run against Labour" and even after 1929 when a new and younger leadership emerged amongst the Conservatives, Tory ward associations could not be persuaded to oppose sitting Liberals. Thus, between 1914 and 1939 Labour's representation on the City Council had only increased from six to nine seats.³⁰ The West Riding, therefore, affords a broad-spectrum political backdrop against which the success or failure of women's performance in local government elections can be analysed. However, although a few women such as Lady Mabel Smith, Miss Hermione Unwin, Mrs Emily Wragg and Mrs Jessie Smith had long and distinguished careers as members of the West Riding County Council, the difficulty of obtaining information about the relatively tiny number of women who were elected to the country's largest administrative unit in the inter-war period has dictated the omission of any systematic account of women's experience as county councillors.³¹

In November 1919 there were 444 women candidates for municipal office throughout England and Wales but no less

than 245 of these were standing in London.³² Of the twenty-three women candidates in the West Riding, one stood one in Huddersfield, one in Morley, two in Harrogate, two in Ripon, three each in Sheffield, Halifax, Leeds and York, five in Bradford. Patricia Hollis has shown that before the First World War the majority of women candidates for municipal election had been the widows and economically independent sisters and daughters of a town's civic elite.³³ Was this still the case in 1919 or does the example of the West Riding show that the type of woman candidate had changed?

In Sheffield Eleanor Barton and Gertrude Wilkinson were both members of the Labour movement and women of considerable standing in the local community. Mrs Wilkinson, a former school teacher, had been secretary of the Sheffield Fabian Society from 1907 to 1909 and as local organiser of the National Federation of Women Workers during the war had successfully increased membership from only 350 in 1914 to some 5000 by June 1918. She had also achieved prominence on the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council and was vice-president in 1919. The following year she was one of the Trades and Labour Council's delegates in the proposed merger discussions with the Sheffield Federated Trades Council and became the first president of the newly formed body.³⁴

Eleanor Barton was a member of the Independent Labour Party and of the Co-operative movement. She had already unsuccessfully contested the Attercliffe ward at a by-election in January 1919 and was enabled to stand in November when the resignation of Councillor Short, recently elected member of parliament for Wednesbury, gave rise to two vacancies, thus enabling Labour and the Co-operative Party to come to an amicable arrangement over seats. Mrs Barton's husband was already a local

councillor but she herself had given many years' service to the co-operative movement which she first joined in 1901. She had served her apprenticeship as secretary of the Hillsborough Women's Co-operative Guild for a number of years before securing election to the regional and subsequently national committees. In 1913 she became national treasurer and in the difficult year of 1914 national president. In November 1910 she had been called upon to give evidence on behalf of the Guild before the Royal Commission on Divorce and as soon as the war was over accepted an invitation from the Labour Party of America to lecture on maternity and child welfare to American audiences.³⁵ In Sheffield, where a formal agreement between the Labour and Co-operative parties in 1918 had already resulted in the allocation of Neepsend, Walkley and Hillsborough wards to Co-operators, Mrs Barton had the full support of the Labour political machine. However, in the absence of any formal national co-ordinating body such electoral arrangements did not pertain throughout the West Riding. In Huddersfield the only woman candidate in 1919 was a member of the Women's Co-operative Guild like Eleanor Barton but she faced an uphill struggle against opponents from all three major parties.

In Leeds, when nominations were received for the first post-war municipal elections three women were among the candidates. Mrs Beetham, wife of a local general practitioner, was nominated by the Liberals in her home North Ward. Although Mrs Beetham was not a member of any public body, she was well-known in the district and for many years had taken a keen interest in child welfare improvements.³⁶ As a former nurse and a doctor's wife, she had had "unique opportunities of studying health questions" and had close contacts with many of the voters which, the Yorkshire Evening News, suggested "had

provided her with valuable experience just suitable for the spheres of activity to which she now aspires." Such spheres were deemed to be the health of the community, the welfare of children and improvements to the homes of the workers where her experience

would enable her to take more than a passive interest and part in such work on committees. She would not be afraid of speaking her mind when such subjects are under discussion, as many men appear to be.³⁷

Mrs Beetham's socialist opponent in North Ward was Mrs Candler, the wife of a Labour councillor. The third woman candidate was Miss Beatrice Kitson of the prominent Leeds engineering family. She had served on the Leeds Board of Guardians for eleven years, was heavily involved in charity work and stood as an Independent with the backing of the Leeds Women Citizens' League. Miss Kitson's campaign was the most overtly feminist and she was not slow to point out that whereas 63 women had been serving on 48 town councils in England and Wales during the past year, Leeds had yet to elect a woman.³⁸

The determination of women to secure female representation on local councils in 1919 is well illustrated in Halifax where Miss Holdsworth and Mrs Burn were the nominees of the NCW. After a long career in teaching Miss Holdsworth had become a co-opted member of the town's education committee and served on the council of the Workers' Educational Association. It was not the absence of any experience of teaching amongst the members of Halifax Council that concerned her so much as the necessity of ensuring that the woman's point of view was heard in local government administration. Miss Holdsworth and her NCW colleague, Mrs Burn, who emphasised that she had no connection with any political party, accepted that in principle those best qualified to

grapple with the town's affairs were members of the local business community. However, she also argued that, particularly in the spheres of housing and welfare services, the best results would only be guaranteed if male councillors could seek the advice of women whose domestic experience could prove of inestimable value in such areas as the design of houses and the provision of child and maternity services. Anxious to allay any fears that women might be seeking to swamp the council chamber with their presence, they suggested two women councillors were quite sufficient to guarantee that the "women's point of view [was] represented on all committees" and they sought to forestall accusations of unwomanly aspiration to political honours by emphasising that they "had come forward not to gratify any personal inclination, but on the grounds of public need, and to fulfil a public duty."³⁹

Harrogate's two women candidates were equally members of the NCW but were also affiliated to the local Citizen's Association, a group of both men and women who took a keen interest in the civic life of the town but believed that the invasion of local government by party politics was not in the best interests of the community. Like their fellow NCW-colleagues in Halifax, Mrs Thompson and Mrs Titley felt the need to justify their candidatures with the argument that there were specific areas of local government service in which women had a useful role to play. Thus Mrs Thompson declared that whereas only a few years ago she would not have had the courage to stand, she felt that in the changed climate after the war when the question of reconstruction was a central one,

no administrative body would be complete without the co-operation of women. There were questions with which women were specially capable of dealing, from their own experience.

Like other women she mentioned in particular the areas of housing and maternity and child welfare and also suggested that women were needed to ensure that more nursery schools were opened in the town so that "women at a small cost could leave their children safely and under good conditions."⁴⁰ Two of the three women candidates in York were equally the nominees of a local women's organisation, the York Women Citizens' Association.⁴¹

The National Coalition between Conservatives and Lloyd Georgian Liberals in the 1918 general election occasionally prompted independent Liberals to contest municipal seats in November 1919 where previously Conservative-Liberal alliances in the face of the rising challenge from Labour had operated. Such was the case in the East ward of Halifax where for several years the Conservatives had been given a free run against socialist opponents. Liberal organisation in the ward had remained moribund throughout the war but a revitalised organisation which saw the election of the first two women to the executive committee in October 1919 voted, with one dissentient, to adopt Miss Alsop as its candidate for the forthcoming municipal elections. Miss Alsop "came of a good Liberal family" and her father had once contested the ward. Thus, Miss Alsop's political credentials were exemplary but a hint of judicious calculation can also be detected when one member pointed out that there were more female than male voters in the ward.⁴²

There were only three Liberal women candidates in the West Riding in 1919. Besides Mrs Beetham in Leeds and Miss Alsop in Halifax, Mrs Mary Duff also stood in the Heaton ward of Bradford.⁴³ Mary Duff was the wife of one of the tutors at the Yorkshire United Independent College which trained Congregational ministers and for many years

had been a visitor to women and girls at Armley Gaol, a service she combined with regular attendance as an observer and adviser at the local magistrates' court.⁴⁴ Once again, she, more perhaps than Miss Alsop in Halifax who based her appeal to the electors primarily on the choices thrown up by national and local political developments, based her candidature on gender rather than party political issues and argued that "the practical experience of a few women would be of very great help to the Council in discussing many present-day questions."⁴⁵ Of the other four women candidates in Bradford in November 1919 three, like Mrs Wright in Huddersfield and Eleanor Barton in Sheffield, were the nominees of the Co-operative movement. Minor party women candidates were Miss Elisabeth Vaughan in Bradford and Ada Cumming, a former schoolteacher and active supporter of the NUWSS, in Sheffield.⁴⁶ Both were the nominees of the National Democratic Party, the nationalistic, militaristic working-class group which, after 1918, continued, unlike the national Labour Party, to support the Coalition government.

Thus, by 1919, the background of women standing for municipal election had broadened considerably. The removal of the barrier to married women seeking election had evidently been welcome to many; of the twenty-three women candidates in 1919 seventeen were married women and the percentage of married women continued to increase. Of the eighty-seven women councillors in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the inter-war period only nine were unmarried. Moreover, while some women were still being drawn into local government because they were members of politically active families others were seeking election as members of women's organisations or through individual political activism. In addition, the growth of the Labour movement and the politicising role of the WCG had

contributed to the emergence of women candidates from a much wider range of social class.

Nevertheless, the majority of these women candidates, as their predecessors had done, continued to argue the desirability of their election on the strength of the distinctive contribution that they, as women, could bring to local administration, a view that many continued to propound in the 1920s. Thus, the first woman candidate in Doncaster, a member of the Doncaster branch of the NUSEC, stood in 1920 as an Independent. She was Miss Hannah Clark from a prominent local Quaker family whose record of civic work went back over several generations. Her father, for instance, had been an alderman. Hannah Clark who had been involved in maternity and child welfare development and had acted as chairman of the Women's Housing Advisory Committee in the town, argued that "no public body could be nearly perfect unless it represented the point of view of both men and women" To illustrate her point she cited the example of the town's baby clinic to reach which a mother, heavily encumbered with her baby and her shopping bags, had to climb a steep flight of stone steps. "Could [the electors] imagine that state of affairs [arising] if women had had a say in the matter?" When accused by the chairman of the Tramways Committee of seeking to step outside woman's natural domestic sphere, Miss Clark agreed that the place for the majority of women was in the home but recognition of that situation constituted all the more reason for a woman to be returned to the council as "women ought to have a say in the making of the homes in which they had their place."⁴⁷

Her views were echoed in Batley in 1921 when Lavinia Almond, a member of the WCG, identified certain areas of local government "in which an earnest working woman may

be of service to the Ratepayers". These areas included education, housing and maternity and child welfare.⁴⁸ Mrs Handford, an Independent candidate in Barnsley in the same year, also premised her candidature on the need for women's views to be represented in local government. Before putting herself forward for election in her home ward Mrs Handford sought the support of the Barnsley branch of the NUSEC and although she was not a member of the society it was agreed that members would canvass on her behalf as well as distributing 2000 copies of the leaflet "Why Women are wanted on Town Councils" hastily obtained from the NUSEC's headquarters.⁴⁹

In Brighouse, in 1920, one of the Conservative candidates was Mary Sugden, the middle-aged, leisured daughter of the owner of a flour-milling firm. In the vein of other single middle-class women of good education like Hannah Clark in Doncaster and Beatrice Kitson in Leeds, Mary Sugden came from a Nonconformist family with a long tradition of public service in the town and had herself already had some experience of public life as a governor of the Brighouse Girls' Secondary School and as a member of the food control committee during the war. She, too, in a low key letter to electors argued that as

women now have a vote it seems to me right that they should have a share in the affairs of the Borough, and I also think that they can help in some ways, particularly in connection with matters relating to health.⁵⁰

Although less marked than in the pre-war period, a tradition of family involvement in local government remained a significant element in fostering an active political role among women in the West Riding. Of the nineteen women councillors in Leeds in the inter-war period, eight have been positively identified as having a father or a husband who served on the city council and,

if Beryl Gott whose husband had been Lord Mayor although not a member of the council is also included, this accounts for just over fifty per cent.⁵¹ In Bradford it was five out of the eight married women on the Council, whilst Margaret Law, the only single woman, overlapped for a number of years with her brother who was also a councillor.⁵² In Barnsley Mrs Dennis joined her husband on the council and Mrs Laura Soper inherited her husband's seat after he had become National Liberal member of parliament for Barnsley in 1931.⁵³ There were only two women councillors in Halifax in the inter-war period; Miriam Lightowler whose husband until his death in 1918 had served as a councillor for six years and Jennie Latham, a former Poor Law guardian, who contested her husband's seat in 1934 after he had resigned.⁵⁴

Elizabeth Vallance, in her study of women in the House of Commons, has pointed out how, contrary to some people's expectations, it was not well-known, committed feminists who were the first to win parliamentary seats: on the contrary, the first three women members all took over seats already held by their husbands. Having worked loyally and effectively side by side with their husbands, such women would already be well-known in their constituency and their candidacy could be seen primarily as "the extension of their acceptable roles as wives" rather than a personal bid for power.⁵⁵

Similarly, in local elections, to be the wife or daughter of a Council member guaranteed acceptability amongst the selectors, legitimised a candidacy in the eyes of the electorate and smoothed the path to winnable seats. This was particularly so amongst Conservative women as, in the inter-war period, the selection of candidates was much more a matter of the agreement of a relatively few important individuals in the ward organisation than the

more centralized procedure prospective Labour candidates had to face. Labour candidates would have most likely had to serve a lengthy apprenticeship within the party before being nominated to the panel of candidates. Conservative candidates may not even have necessarily been active party members but may have been members of local voluntary organisations who would be approached by the "sitting Conservative Councillor or party officer with an invitation to stand for election with Conservative backing."⁵⁶ although this practice does not appear to have been widespread in the inter-war period. Frequently Conservative ward adoption meetings would be presented with only one candidate, any 'deals' with other vested interests in the local organisation having been resolved before the adoption meeting. Thus, in December 1921, at the aldermanic by-election in Brunswick Ward, Leeds, for which her husband was already a member, Blanche Leigh's candidature was assured when it was agreed before the adoption meeting that the Jewish Conservative workers in the ward would work on her behalf on the understanding that their candidate, Mr Hyman Morris, would be guaranteed adoption for the November elections the following year when Mrs Leigh would be due for re-election. Mr Morris was subsequently found a seat in the mainly business Central ward and Mrs Leigh was able to hang on to Brunswick.⁵⁷

As the example of Blanche Leigh illustrates, the value of civic connections was particularly marked in the case of Conservative women in Leeds and may account in part for the considerable success of Conservative women candidates at the polls in that city. Thus, although the total number of women Conservative candidates was not large, in 83 per cent of the contests at which they stood they were successful. This would suggest a pattern of a few

candidates having repeated successes which the table on the following page confirms.

Blanche Leigh's success in Leeds in 1921 prompted the Yorkshire Observer cautiously to claim

a precedent in municipal representation which is probably unique in the whole country. For the first time husband and wife will sit in the Council as co-representatives of the same constituency.⁵⁸

They were certainly not the first husband and wife team on any council as Eleanor and Alf Barton were both members of Sheffield Council in 1919 although representing different wards. Four of the nineteen women councillors in Leeds in the inter-war period sat in the council chamber with their husbands and there were also husband and wife teams in Wakefield, Bradford, York and Barnsley where Mary Dennis not only shared her husband's interest in local politics but also shared the management of the family business with him.⁵⁹ The prospect of a husband and wife serving together on a small council was not always viewed with equanimity as Mrs Dwyer found in Dewsbury in 1925. Mrs Dwyer, who was nominated by the NCW, conducted a vigorous campaign but it was felt that "she suffers from the fact that her husband is already a member of the Council, and there is an indisposition in many quarters to support her on this account."⁶⁰ Mrs Dwyer was unsuccessful.

It was in Sheffield, the city where Labour women had their most marked success, that the importance of a woman councillor's civic connections was least significant. Apart from Eleanor Barton, the only other woman believed to have had family links with local government was Mrs Longden. Geo Longden & Son, founded by the grandfather of Mrs Longden's husband, were highly successful building

TABLE I

Length of service of women councillors elected to county and non-county borough councils in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1919-1938⁵⁸

	<u>Leeds</u>	<u>Sheffield</u>	<u>Bradford</u>	<u>York</u>	<u>Other Towns</u>
- Conservative ⁺	10	5	2	1	12
- Labour*	9	15	6	2	11
- Liberal ⁺⁺	-	-	1	-	3
- Independent	-	-	-	2	8
Total elected	19	20	9	5	34
under 10 years					
- Conservative	0	3	1	1	6***
- Labour	3**	11	4	2	4 [#]
- Liberal	-	-	1	-	2
- Independent	-	-	-	1	3
10 to 20 years					
- Conservative	7	1	1	-	3
- Labour	1	3	1	-	3
- Liberal	-	-	-	-	1
- Independent	-	-	-	-	3**
21 - 30 years					
- Conservative	1	1	-	-	2
- Labour	2	-	-	-	2
over 30 years					
- Conservative	2	-	-	-	-
- Labour	3	1	1	-	2
- Independent	-	-	-	1	1
became Aldermen (not necessarily in the inter-war period)					
- Conservative	6	1	-	-	3
- Labour	3	1	1	-	6 [#]
- Independent	-	-	-	1	4

⁺ Includes National Liberal councillors and members of Citizen/Progressive alliances

* Includes ILP and Co-op councillors

⁺⁺ As far as can be ascertained these are Independent Libs

^{**} One died in office ^{***} Two died in office

[#] One was elected an Alderman although she had not previously been a councillor

contractors whose success was due in no small measure to the driving force of Mrs Longden. Her husband took much greater pleasure in the delights of country sports than those of the boardroom and was happy to leave the day to day running of the business in the capable hands of his wife.⁶² Mr Longden died at the age of fifty-one in the early part of 1922 and in October Mrs Longden's name went forward as the Citizen Party's candidate in her home ward of Hillsborough. Mrs Longden was the epitome of the Citizen Group candidates, a wealthy highly-respected member of the local business community who saw her primary responsibility as the defence of the interests of the ratepayers against unnecessary and "profligate" expenditure; she attributed her initial interest in public work, however, to her father-in-law who had preceded her on the city council.⁶³

Like Mrs Longden, a number of women who were widowed became city and town councillors in the West Riding during the inter-war period. If you were well provided for, widowhood could have its compensations as Violet Markham's mother was advised by her formidable Cousin Emma. On Mr Markham's death Cousin Emma descended on the household at Tapton on a visit of consolation and, after a suitable display of grief, judiciously reminded Mrs Markham that "for a woman of independent means left with a property and an adequate income, the position of a widow has many advantages and is one not at all to be despised."⁶⁴

Nevertheless, for the majority of married women brought up to accept a caring and serving role in which their own interests were secondary to those of the male members of their family, the death of their spouse meant that the focus had gone out of their lives. This was particularly so if there were no children or other immediate family to

make demands on their time. Thus, whereas a few women like Annie Arnold in Bradford in 1918 may have allowed themselves to be persuaded to take over their husband's council seat and seen themselves purely as stopgap candidates who were enabling their husband's party to bridge an awkward hiatus, some women who were widowed saw local government service as a legitimate form of occupation, as a natural progression from the part-time, voluntary social work that had come to be accepted as an appropriate sphere of activity for women of their class. They proved to be hardworking and dedicated and gave many years of service. Gertrude Dennison, for instance, the widow of a general practitioner, stood in Leeds in 1921.⁶⁵ The Yorkshire Evening News suggested at the time that on her husband's death she had been invited to contest the West ward in his stead.⁶⁶ Mrs Dennison, revealed later, however, that the initiative had come from herself:

There was a fearful gap in my life to fill . . . and I decided to enter local politics. First I went to see Sir Charles Wilson, then leader of the Conservatives on the Council, and told him I wished to stand.⁶⁷

She was well-known in the ward having been chairman of the Burley Road polling district since 1909. Both her father and her husband had been in practice there so she understood the needs of the local people well.⁶⁸ In undertaking to continue her husband's work for the ward and the city, she inherited a viable seat and carried the electorate with her. Gertrude Dennison was in her mid-forties when she was first elected; despite Sir Charles's initial reservations about women candidates, she was in her mid-seventies when she finally retired from the Council.⁶⁹ Similarly, Mrs Lightowler, whose husband predeceased her by forty years, served on Halifax town council from 1924 to 1952.⁷⁰

Whilst women like Miriam Lightowler and Gertrude Dennison may have had their path to election smoothed by their adoption in seats previously held by their husbands, not all women councillors who were widows at the time of their first election had been preceded on the local council by their husbands. Thus, before she was appointed the Labour Party's woman organiser in the north-east, Margaret Gibb served on Sheffield city council for one year after the death of her husband who had been Labour agent for the Sheffield Central division,⁷¹ whilst Kathleen Sykes who had moved from London to Bradford as the wife of the headmaster of one of the city's largest schools and had acquired practical knowledge of local government as an urban district councillor and as a member of the Bradford food control committee during the First World War became a Bradford city councillor in 1921 after the death of her husband. After a struggle she eventually achieved her wish of becoming a member of the education committee.⁷² In Leeds Beryl Gott's husband had never been an elected member of the city council but he was Lord Mayor of the city in 1917-18 at a time when the Conservative party had adopted a policy of asking prosperous local businessmen to accept the mayoralty.⁷³ When Mr Gott, who was a land agent and auctioneer, died suddenly in 1920 he had no children and left his wife a very wealthy woman. As a member of one of the elite Leeds families identified by Kitson Clark,⁷⁴ she was already deeply involved in local civic life as a member of the Court of Leeds University, a governor of the Leeds Girls High School and a member of the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education. Her charity work included the Mothers' Union, the Red Cross and the Council of Social Service. A winnable seat was found for Mrs Gott and, after only six years' service, she became the first woman alderman.⁷⁵ Widows like Margaret Gibb, Kathleen

Sykes and Beryl Gott can be seen as identifying a suitable sphere of activity for themselves in areas which were allied to their husbands' former interests.

Such women were, however, anxious to stress that civic service should always come second to a woman's family commitments. As Mrs Elisabeth Lund, the widow of a Pudsey manufacturer, rather wistfully explained when she was elected Pudsey's first woman councillor at a by-election in August 1927 and found that a few people refused to vote for her because they believed a woman's place was in the home:

I agree that where a woman has home duties she should attend to them . . . but there are women in my position who would be only too glad to have home duties. When their home ties are broken up and they have no work in the home, I do not think they should be debarred from taking part in public life.⁷⁶

Whilst family civic activism thus remained a significant factor in motivating women to stand for municipal election in the West Riding, the politicising effect of individual women's involvement in a number of spheres should not be overlooked. Several women councillors, for instance, particularly in Sheffield, had experience of trade union organisation. Thus, Helena Mitchell and Edith Birch had,⁷⁷ like Gertrude Wilkinson, been pioneering members of the NFWW in Sheffield as had Jeannie Arnott in Leeds.⁷⁸ Local women organisers in the NFWW had conducted a particularly spirited defence of the interests of women workers during and immediately after the war but once the decision had been taken that the Federation should amalgamate with the National Union of General Workers in 1919, the number of women organisers had fallen.⁷⁹ The male-dominated general union, in which women's issues and interests were marginalised, no longer afforded the same local power base for women that an all

woman union had provided. Even the textile unions had few women officials. The only one identified who entered local government was Bertha Quinn in Leeds. She was one of a group of women in the city who had become active in labour and socialist politics prior to the war when widespread labour unrest had resulted in increased unionisation amongst women.⁸⁰ Bertha Quinn became a local organiser for the Tailors and Garment Workers' Union in 1914 after twenty-five years' employment in Leeds clothing factories. She had also been one of the very few actively militant members of the WSPU in Leeds and was imprisoned on five occasions for her suffrage activities.⁸¹

It was, however, primarily through service as Poor Law guardians that many women came to seek election to a wider range of duties on town and city councils - eight out of nineteen councillors in Leeds, five out of twenty in Sheffield, both women councillors in Halifax. Many women who stood unsuccessfully as municipal candidates throughout the inter-war period had also been Poor Law guardians. Ada Moore when pleading with Sheffield city council to co-opt women guardians to the new public assistance committees which were to assume many of the guardians' responsibilities in 1930 suggested to the councillors that their work was "child's play compared with what we have to do in Poor-Law administration."⁸² As Mrs Moore implied, the task of a Poor Law guardian was both an onerous and unpopular one. Nevertheless, by the post-war period it was also accepted as a task that women could perform efficiently and effectively. Indeed, the 1909 Poor Law Commission had singled out their work for special praise.⁸³

Since 1857 when Louisa Twining first founded her Workhouse Visiting Society women had a record of sterling

service. As visitors they had endeavoured to humanize the workhouse, to improve facilities, brighten up dreary and depressing living areas and improve standards of care.⁸⁴ Brabazon schemes, run by women, had introduced an element of occupational therapy into bleak lives.⁸⁵ In 1875 the first woman had stood for election as a guardian. Martha Merrington in Kensington was well-received by her male colleagues but other women found it more difficult both to qualify for election and, if successful, to overcome the hostility of many male guardians.⁸⁶ However, with the support of the Women Guardians Society formed in 1881, more women began to be elected, although in the North only in towns like Leeds and Bradford where there were single and widowed women who were substantial ratepayers and which had "a strong women's movement based on philanthropic and suffrage work". These cities had their first women guardians by 1883.⁸⁷ Ten years later there were still only 119 women guardians outside London.⁸⁸

The 1894 Local Government Act enabled women to make a significant advance numerically. With the abolition of the property qualification married women, both middle and working class, were empowered to offer themselves for election along side those wealthy spinsters and widows who until then had often been the lone female presence on a board. In 1893 there had been 159 women guardians. In 1895 there were 875, many of these being elected in the North where over eighty were successful in Yorkshire.⁸⁹ Thus, in December 1894, Mrs Elizabeth Chappell, a member of the Brightside Women's Liberal Association, was elected to the Sheffield Union which, unlike the Leeds and Bradford unions had had no women members before that year.⁹⁰

The administration of the Poor Law not only guaranteed that women guardians were well-known in their wards and amongst members of their party but had given them a firm grounding in the minutiae of local government proceedings. However, since the publication of the Majority and Minority Reports of the Poor Law Commission in 1909 the continuation of the Poor Law system in its existing form had been in doubt. In 1926, in the face of the increasing politicisation of the administrative procedures and the manifest failure of the system to cope adequately with the problems posed by widespread unemployment, a major reorganisation of local government was proposed. Among women guardians, Labour women, in particular, were convinced that reform of the Poor Law was long overdue. Mrs Barringer in Rotherham, for instance, suggested that radical change was necessary since as long as the system continued in its present form many deserving people would still be deterred from seeking help: "There were people living on the starvation line because they would not be degraded by seeking Union pay."⁹¹

The impending demise of the Poor Law Boards ,however, provoked considerable concern amongst the majority of women guardians and women's organisations who argued that if local councils refused to co-opt to the new public assistance committees it would close the door to many who had wide experience of Poor Law work and this would include the vast majority of women guardians. By 1930, for instance, there were sixteen women out of a total of fifty-six in Sheffield, thirteen out of fifty-one in Leeds and nineteen out of fifty in the Rotherham Union. With the prospect of increasing officialdom some women felt that "the poor will lose that direct touch of humane friendliness which in the past has been so successful between them and the Guardians."⁹² Mrs Booth, a

Conservative guardian in Leeds, took a similar view when she admitted that she would not like to see the Poor Law system abolished if it entailed "losing personal touch with the people who needed help and sympathy so badly."⁹³

In Sheffield the ruling Socialist group decided not to coopt on the grounds that all members of public bodies should be responsible to the electors, a decision which provoked some opposition, particularly on the part of Ada Moore who had three years' experience of Poor Law work and felt that most councillors were fundamentally unaware of how much effort was involved. She made a plea that at least some of the women members should be co-opted but Councillor Rowlinson, the Labour leader, suggested that if they desired to continue their work, they should stand for election to the Council in November of that year.⁹⁴ It was obviously not possible for all women guardians to find viable council seats so quickly and the services of many were lost, including those of Labour women who had been less willing to condemn the principle of co-option than male Socialists. The Labour Woman, for instance, pointed out that local authorities would face considerable difficulties in coping with "the enormous amount of detail work which the giving of Public Assistance entails" and, since the work of women on the Boards of Guardians had been universally praised, there seemed to be a case for women to be co-opted, at least temporarily.⁹⁵

In Leeds, however, the city boundary reorganisation in 1930 gave women guardians the opportunity of standing in force for the local council and those guardians who were not successful that year were co-opted to the public assistance committee and thus enabled gradually to find council seats without loss of continuity. Insisting that if they were elected as councillors their experience of

overseeing children in the care of the guardians and of running Poor Law infirmaries would prove invaluable to Health and Children's committees, their credibility was firmly established. It was perhaps, therefore, surprising that in Bradford which was considered to have one of the most advanced boards in the country and had had some twenty women members before 1914, women did not carry their experience of poor law service onto the city council. Of the nine women councillors in Bradford in the inter-war period only one Conservative, Mrs Hannah Drake, had previously been a guardian.⁹⁶

It would also seem likely that it was the impending demise of the Poor Law that finally prompted the selection of women candidates in winnable seats in Wakefield and Barnsley which were, by 1929, among a group of some six boroughs in the West Riding which had still not elected any women councillors. Both Fanny Stott who was first won a seat at a by-election in Wakefield in 1929 and Mary Dennis, elected in Barnsley in 1930, had had considerable experience as guardians of the poor.⁹⁷

At no time during the ten years after the first post-war municipal elections did the number of women candidates in the West Riding exceed that of 1919. It seemed that in the optimistic climate of the immediate post-war period, women were inspired by the euphoria engendered by their newly won political emancipation to push for a substantial improvement in women's representation on local councils. As can be seen from Table 2 on the following page, however, this momentum was not maintained in the 1920s and if the decline in the number of women candidates in subsequent years was due to waning interest on the part of women themselves, then this may in part be attributable to the difficulty they experienced in actually winning seats. In November 1919, for instance,

TABLE 2

Number of women candidates and number of women elected to county and non-county borough councils in the West Riding of Yorkshire at annual municipal elections, 1919-1938⁹⁸

Municipal Year Beginning November	<u>No of Women Candidates</u>	<u>No of Women Elected</u>	<u>Percentage Elected</u>
1919	23	5	22
1920	15	3	20
1921	9	3	33
1922	10	5	50
1923	7	3	43
1924	12	5	42
1925	14	3	20
1926	13	6	46
1927	20	6	30
1928	17	7	41
1929	35*	12	34
1930	48+	18	37
1931	35	16	46
1932	22	12	55
1933	26	11	42
1934	31	17	55
1935	29	16	55
1936	21	13	62
1937	41++	18	44
1938	28	10	36

*Seven new wards created in Sheffield where 12 women candidates stood

+Ward redistribution in Leeds where 27 women candidates stood

++Ward redistribution in Bradford where 15 women candidates stood

of the twenty-three women candidates, only five - Eleanor Barton (Co-op/Lab) and Gertrude Wilkinson (Lab) in Sheffield, Harriet Fawcett (Lab) and Edna Crichton (Ind/WCA) in York and Jane Clayton (Co-op/Lab) in Bradford were successful. Five months later Mrs Thompson, the Citizens' Association and NCW candidate in Harrogate, was elected at a by-election by just two votes. Three years after the 1919 elections, however, only three of the six women who had been elected in 1919 were still councillors.

As can be seen from the preceding table the number of women candidates increased little in the 1920s. In 1922, for instance, councillors for a total of 203 seats in the eleven county boroughs and nine of the eleven municipal boroughs in the West Riding - (Ripon and Goole are excluded) - were to be chosen. Assuming again that there were to be straight fights in all these wards, and this was far from the case, the number of candidates would have totalled 406. And yet there were only ten women. It was not until 1929, the year following the extension of the franchise to women on identical terms with men, that there was any significant advance. However, the figures for 1929 and 1930 are exceptional as these were years when major changes in municipal boundaries occurred. Thus, in Sheffield, in 1929, seven new wards were created whilst in Leeds, in 1930, a major city extension in which the number of wards was increased from 17 to 26 necessitated the election of a new, greatly enlarged, city council. Similarly a new city council was elected in Bradford in 1937 after radical restructuring of the ward boundaries.

However, reflecting as it does the picture at the November municipal elections, the table fails to account for the large number of women who were first elected at

by-elections. Patricia Hollis found that in the pre-war period women "seem to have done rather better at by-elections which did not usually disturb the political balance."⁹⁹ Aldermanic by-elections, in particular, were usually created in safe wards and the alienation of some voters which many feared a woman's candidature would engender could be contemplated without worries about possible lost seats. Thus Wakefield's first Labour and Conservative women councillors were both elected at by-elections in 1929.¹⁰⁰ Seven of Leeds nineteen women councillors in the inter-war period first entered the Council at a by-election, six of Sheffield's twenty. Moreover, it appears that once one party had decided to field a woman candidate, ward associations recognised that the question of gender became secondary should they decide to do likewise. Hence, particularly in the early years, there are several incidences of women standing against other women; in Bradford, in 1919, Elizabeth Vaughan (NDP) had a straight fight against Jane Clayton (Co-op/Lab) as did Eleanor Barton against Mrs Casey (Citizens) in Sheffield in 1920, whilst in Leeds in 1919 two of the three women candidates fought the same ward, a pattern that was repeated in 1920 and 1921.

The table would appear to indicate that the chances of a woman being elected improved in the 1930s. However, the figures are misleading as they merely reflect the fact that, as the number of women elected slowly increased, a greater number were coming up for re-election and the success rate among women who were already members of local authorities was vastly higher than among those who were seeking election for the first time. Paradoxically the number of women councillors actually declined in some towns in the 1930s.

TABLE 3

Date of first election of women councillors and
years in which they achieved maximum representation
on county and non-county borough councils
in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1919-1938

	Date of First Election of woman Councillor	Maximum Number Attained in any one year	Percentage of Total Council Number	Years in which Maximum Represent- ation Attained
Bradford	1918	4	4.5	1925-30
Sheffield	1919	13	13.5	1930-31
Doncaster	1920	4	11.0	1938
Leeds	1921	15	14.5	1932-35
Rotherham	1924	3	8.5	1934-39
Wakefield	1929	4	9.0	1935-38
Barnsley	1930	3*	8.5	1938

Totals include women aldermen in Bradford and Leeds

*This figure includes Mrs Annie Marsh who was elected an Alderman in 1938 although she was not a sitting member

Other towns like Huddersfield, Halifax, Dewsbury and even the City of York never had more than one or two women councillors at any one time throughout the period. Harrogate's only woman councillor in the inter-war period served for just seven months in 1920. No women were elected at all in Keighley, Todmorden, Morley or Ossett and in Goole it was 1945 before the first women candidates even appeared. Particularly in the smaller towns where wards were frequently uncontested and local government appeared to be in the hands of a self-perpetuating group of local businessmen, it seems that women were not welcome or at best it was accepted that one woman representative might be tolerated to lend credibility to policies involving women and children's issues; but one woman was enough.

In the major cities, the pattern was different. Given the radical heritage of women like Margaret McMillan on the Bradford School Board and of Julia Varley, the trade union organizer, and philanthropic women like Florence Moser and Edith Priestman on the board of guardians,¹⁰¹ it is difficult to account for the failure of women to appear on Bradford City Council in the inter-war period in any significant number. Obviously by the 1920s such women were elderly and not in a position to contemplate service as local councillors themselves. However, it appears that it was in Bradford in the inter-war period that patriarchy was most firmly entrenched. In several years, for instance, there were more women municipal candidates in Bradford than in Leeds or Sheffield but they were invariably adopted in "hopeless" seats. Alternatively, after 1932 when the Independent Labour Party disaffiliated from the Labour Party over the issue of Standing Orders, it appears that women's membership of the ILP with its history of egalitarianism and strong support for women's suffrage and pacifism remained fairly high. The ILP subsequently fielded a number of women municipal candidates in Bradford, particularly in 1937 and in 1938 when the decision of the Bradford Labour Party to contest Tong ward which had hitherto been the preserve of the ILP prompted the ILP to contest seven wards which it had not previously fought. Of the seven candidates, five were women. By this time, however, the ILP was but a shadow of its former self and since 1932 only three ILP candidates had been successful in municipal elections in Bradford. None of its women candidates in 1938 came near to winning.¹⁰²

In all, just nine women were successful in Bradford throughout the period although the situation did not go unnoticed at least in the local socialist newspaper. Thus, when Nora Fienburgh, the daughter of Joseph Burgess

who had been a founder member of the ILP,¹⁰³ stood in the Tory stronghold of Thornton in 1932, the Bradford Pioneer commented that there were not

sufficient women on the Council. Their place on certain committees cannot be filled adequately by men, and yet we leave the women to struggle¹⁰⁴ in wards where there are least workers

and, by implication, least Labour voters. It could be argued that, whereas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries radical women in Bradford had owed their relative success in public life to their membership of the influential Women Liberal's Association, by the post-war period the vicissitudes of the women's suffrage campaign and the divisions in and inexorable decline of the Liberal Party had deprived Bradford women of an effective powerbase for which they had been unable to find a viable alternative.

Women achieved their best results in Sheffield in 1929 when in five of the seven wards where three new councillors were required, the Labour Party put forward one, if not two women. Whether this was because they felt the inclusion of a woman presented a balanced ticket to the voters, which would lend weight to those who argue that women would make a better political showing under a system of proportional representation, or whether it was because not enough men could be found to contest so many new seats is difficult to determine. Judging from the failure of the majority of Labour women elected in 1930 to hang on to their seats for any length of time, it would seem that the latter theory is more plausible. Of the eleven Labour women candidates in 1929, seven were successful on 1st November and three at the subsequent contests after the aldermanic elections. However, by 1934 only three of these ten were still members of the

Council. Women were similarly elected in some numbers in Leeds in 1930 when eleven were successful in the elections for the new city council, and two more at the subsequent aldermanic by-elections. Seven of these thirteen were new members.

As "Labour's women candidates at general elections consistently outnumbered those of other parties,"¹⁰⁵ so the Labour Party fielded considerably more women candidates in municipal elections in the West Riding during the inter-war period than did the Conservatives and Liberals. Labour women candidates outnumbered Conservative and anti-Socialist alliance candidates by nearly two to one. Labour women were particularly successful in Sheffield where 71 per cent of all the individual Labour women who stood as candidates were elected, although often only after several attempts. However, only thirty-two per cent were successful in Leeds and twenty-three per cent in Bradford. Conservative women were more successful in Leeds, sixty-seven per cent compared with only fifty per cent in Sheffield. In Leeds and Sheffield, therefore, the evidence shows that there was not, at municipal level, the same pattern of women standing time and again in "hopeless" seats as there was at the parliamentary level. Many women municipal candidates lived in their ward and if they belonged to the right political party and could persuade their ward association to accept a female candidate, barring unforeseen hiccups, they could be certain of victory. In the smaller boroughs, however, it seems that women candidates were not particularly welcome and had to face similar contests to that fought in 1937 by Miss Durkin, the Labour candidate in Barnsley West Ward "where Labour's chances approximate[d] to those of the camel confronted with the task of skipping through the needle's eye."¹⁰⁶

Candidates fielded by groups other than the major political parties had little success. The campaigns of the nominees of women's organisations and of the Citizens' Association in Harrogate in 1919 and 1920,¹⁰⁷ for instance, endeavoured to convince electors that party politics should be kept out of local government. Thus, Beatrice Kitson of the Leeds Women Citizens' League, in her electoral address in 1920, wrote:

My years' experience of public life have convinced me that the introduction of party politics into the government of municipality is detrimental to the best interests of the community¹⁰⁸

She, like so many others, argued strongly for the presence of women on the Council because of the special qualities they could bring to certain aspects of municipal work:

there are many cases in which [women's] natural aptitude for detailed work, and knowledge of domestic management, would be peculiarly useful. For instance, there are in our elementary schools 73,000 children between the ages of two and fourteen. In the oversight of their accommodation, health and training, the advice of women is surely needed.¹⁰⁹

Beatrice Kitson's priorities were those that would have particularly appealed to women - nursery schools, more facilities for handicapped children, more play space in the parks, cleaner milk, improved street cleansing, better housing, cheaper and more frequent public transport. She was right about the contribution women could make to local government work. Her municipal programme was admirable. Miss Kitson and the other representatives of women's organisations were, however, behind the times.

Patricia Hollis has shown how the majority of successful women candidates before the First World War had stood as

Independents, although many of them were probably "closet" Liberals. The Women's Local Government Society, founded in the 1880s, had expressly encouraged women to stand as Independents "in order to foreground their claims of gender rather than party or class," in the hope that they would "pick up Tory women and clerical votes."¹¹⁰ After 1918 when women no longer had one overriding cause to unite them and the growing strength of the Labour party was introducing new party political issues into local government, the truly Independent, as opposed to Liberals and Tories masquerading as members of putative "Independent" alliances, candidate was consigned more and more to the the political wilderness. Local parties, in the race for seats, could not afford to sacrifice a viable ward. Thus, when the Huddersfield branch of the NCW resolved in the wake of the defeat of their two candidates in 1919 to approach the local political parties to request their assistance in securing the election of one or two women councillors, the Liberals agreed that they would not oppose any woman candidate put forward by the NCW, "provided the other two parties would consent to do likewise."¹¹¹ Such agreement was not forthcoming.

The inability of small organisations to mount a viable campaign was one of the explanations put forward in an article in The Woman's Leader, only a week after the 1920 municipal elections, in an attempt to account for women's dismal performance in the town council contests. Whilst admitting that women may have been justified in their disillusionment with Conservative and Liberal politics when neither party had been prepared officially to endorse women's suffrage, the writer urged women to reconsider their position for

as the years go by the tendency to amalgamation between the Municipal and the Parliamentary machines grows stronger, and the fact that

women candidates resist this tendency, which is to their credit in many ways, works considerably to their disadvantage.¹¹²

As Mary Stocks suggested of Eleanor Rathbone who did succeed in being regularly returned as an Independent member of Liverpool City Council from 1909 to 1935:

Independents needed to be of high personal quality and must be widely known to be of high personal quality because a considerable electioneering effort will be required and no permanently established party machine is available.¹¹³

It was this absence of a large personal organisation that handicapped the nominees of women's organisations as the article in The Woman's Leader went on to emphasize. Although the Women Citizens' organisations were doing sterling work, they were comparatively small in numbers. Rather than put forward candidates themselves, they should concentrate on educating women in their duties as citizens and on convincing the electorate that women, whatever their political persuasion, had a vital role to play on local councils.¹¹⁴

It would have been virtually impossible to achieve much of Miss Kitson's and similar programmes without the backing of a strong party group as the issues she was proposing to tackle were politically controversial and implied the redistribution of "public resources and the social wage from richer to poorer wards."¹¹⁵ Equally, by mounting a campaign entirely organized and run by women, such candidates laid themselves open to accusations of gender sectarianism, a stance not likely to appeal to the Conservative woman voter in particular who was most likely to have been anti-suffragist in the pre-war period. Thus a writer in The Conservative Woman in Leeds, commenting on woman police Commandant Mary Allen's parliamentary campaign in St George's, Westminster, in

1922, suggested that a feminist approach was no longer relevant. Her refusal to use any men at all in her campaign, even to the extent of using only women drivers to take voters to the polls, was highly criticised:

"There would be many - a majority I should say - of men and women thoroughly disgusted with such pointed anti-men proceedings!"¹¹⁶

Thus in the post-war period questions of party quickly came to override those of gender. As Stanley Baldwin shrewdly observed when introducing the equal franchise legislation in 1927:

There has been a unity amongst them [women] which has been evoked by the struggle in which they have engaged to obtain these elementary rights. And with the obtaining of these rights, that particular unity which bound them together in the pursuit of a common end will be gone and they will judge of political affairs according to their temperament and according to their experience, in exactly the same way as we do.¹¹⁷

In parliamentary and municipal elections such a reorientation had already taken place.¹¹⁸ For Gertrude Dennison, the winning Conservative councillor in West ward in Leeds in November 1921, the needs of her ward were paramount.¹¹⁹ For the winning candidate in East ward, Maud Dightam, the wife of a city draper, however, service in the cause of Socialism was her overriding concern although the demands of the women's suffrage campaign had for a while taken precedence over class loyalty before the war. In 1913, for instance, Maud Dightam had joined members of the WSPU and of the Women's Labour League in heckling Phillip Snowden when he visited Leeds "on the grounds that the Labour Party had fallen away from its ideals in refusing to support sex equality."¹²⁰ Nevertheless, she had given long and faithful service to the Labour movement particularly in

the initial organisation of women's sections in the wards and as founding treasurer of the West Riding Labour Women's Advisory Council.¹²¹ Moreover, she was anxious to play down her suffrage activity and stressed that she wanted to be seen as a Socialist and not merely as a woman member of the Council:

I fought throughout [the campaign] as a Labour candidate and not at all as a feminist and in the City Council I shall stand for the Labour and not for the feminist point of view.¹²²

Thus, only Edna Crichton, who was elected as a WCA nominee in York in 1919, Mrs Thompson who served for just seven months as a Citizens' Association representative on Harrogate town council in 1920, Margaret Watts, the NCW candidate in Dewsbury in 1923 and Mary Maclagan, a member of Rotherham WCA, who became the town's first woman councillor in 1924, were successful candidates specifically put forward by women's organisations. Mary Maclagan, who campaigned under the suffragist colours of red, white and green, was unopposed by the Socialists and in a straight fight with the Conservative candidate succeeded in attracting the progressive vote but she was only able to hang on to the seat for three years.¹²³ Margaret Watts, a university woman who was already a co-opted member of the education committee, became Dewsbury's first woman councillor in 1923.¹²⁴ Again, in the absence of a socialist candidate, she appears to have attracted the progressive vote.

In York, Edna Crichton, a Quaker, whose husband was in charge of welfare at the Rowntree factory until his death in 1921, had disassociated herself from the Liberal Party in 1918 and stood as an Independent with the backing of the York Association of Women Citizens.¹²⁵ Throughout her long career on York City Council, from 1919 to 1955, Mrs Crichton continued to maintain an independent stance

and regularly argued that party politics did not concern her. Party labels were, she believed, "often a hindrance to people with a genuine desire to accomplish something practical in the work of municipal administration."¹²⁶ Consequently, as she told a meeting attended predominantly by women residents of Clifton ward in 1937, "I sincerely believe that I can best serve you by keeping out of party politics."¹²⁷ Edna Crichton's success as an Independent candidate was, however, exceptional.

It seems plausible that the majority of Independent women candidates, who were overwhelmingly from Nonconformist backgrounds, would previously have been members of local WLAs. In their eyes, however, the pre-war Liberal Government had consistently failed to espouse the cause of women's suffrage and from 1912 when the Labour Party Conference had resolved that no future franchise bill which did not include women would be acceptable to the Labour and Socialist movement, members of the NUWSS, many of whom were Liberals, had accustomed themselves to the idea that except where a Liberal candidate was known to be sympathetic, their efforts would be directed towards supporting Labour candidates. Given, therefore, the divisions within the Liberal party in the post-war period and its manifest failure to appeal to the majority of the newly enfranchised electorate, it is not surprising that they should choose to divorce themselves from their former political allegiance. Moreover, many Independent women were anxious to see the implementation of what could be considered fairly progressive ideas and with the Liberal Party singularly devoid of attractive policy proposals, felt themselves more in sympathy with social programmes advocated by members of Labour groups. When Violet Markham stood as an Independent Liberal candidate for Mansfield in the 1918 general election, for instance, she confirmed a Socialist friend's view that her position

was very close to that of her Labour opponent who, indeed, was "formerly an old friend and ally", when she subsequently admitted to the Liberal agent that she could see no future for the Liberal Party and that, should she be forced to choose between Labour and Conservatives, she would take her place, not among the Conservatives but among their opponents.¹²⁸ In Doncaster, particularly in the early days of her membership of the town council, Hannah Clark, although an Independent, was frequently asked to address the members of the Doncaster Labour Party's women's section about her work and on one occasion even urged that more Labour councillors, with whose aims she was in sympathy, were desperately needed in the council chamber.¹²⁹

Thus, although Independent women municipal candidates regularly advocated farsighted and far-reaching reforms, they were handicapped by their lack of party support and were only rarely successful. When they did succeed, however, they were regarded in some localities as token women who had a peculiar sphere of activity; on some occasions they were not even opposed at municipal elections. Edna Crichton was unopposed in York in 1925, 1928 and 1931 and when the Labour Party decided to field a candidate against her in 1937 there was some indignation at such ungentlemanly behaviour. It was suggested that since Mrs Crichton had a record of effective service, particularly in the field of housing which was considered

a sphere which [was] essentially that of a woman, a sphere in which it would be folly to throw aside the experience Mrs. Crichton [had] gained, a sphere which [demanded] that there should be continuity in her representation,

she "might fairly have been allowed an unopposed return."¹³⁰

An approach which could have been deemed more likely of success was that adopted by the Bradford WCA in 1917 which, in an attempt to secure the return of women to the Council, resolved to submit the names of suitable candidates to the central executives and to the ward committees of the political parties and to urge these organisations to adopt one of the women proposed as a candidate when the next vacancy arose. They further determined that once the wartime party truce came to an end, they would co-operate with the women's political associations in support of women candidates in contested elections.¹³¹ The adoption of this tactic by the Bradford WCA may help to explain why there were proportionately more women candidates in Bradford in November 1919 than in other towns in the area. This approach was subsequently pursued by the Bradford NCW, a deputation from which interviewed Margaret Law (Lib) and Amy Sykes (Lab), the two women candidates at the municipal elections in 1922. When satisfied that the two women were sincere in their commitment to progressive reforms in such areas as housing and education and of their concern with such women's issues as the need for the appointment of women police officers, the Bradford NCW agreed to support their candidatures in the belief that "more women are urgently needed on the Council, and that these two women have the interests of the city deeply at heart."¹³² Margaret Law's campaign in 1922 was successful but judging from women's subsequent performance in Bradford municipal elections, however, this does not appear to have proved a fruitful strategy in the long term.

Elsewhere, in the absence of women candidates, members of the NUSEC adopted a policy of sending a series of questions to male aspirants to local office designed to establish the degree of support they purported to give to

the principles of women's social, economic and political rights.¹³³ Women were then encouraged to give their vote to the candidate who responded most favourably. Over in Manchester the extremely active WCA which was formed in January 1914 "to work for a better, cleaner, and brighter city, and [to provide] a non-party and non-sectarian meeting ground for women of all kinds of experience",¹³⁴ went so far as to publish a "Black List" of the candidates it believed should be vigorously opposed in the municipal elections of 1923 in emulation of the Black and White lists published by Lady Rhondda's feminist journal, Time and Tide, at the general elections in 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1929 which gave the names of parliamentarians whose performance was judged favourably or unfavourably in relation to the Six Point Group's programme.¹³⁵ There is no evidence, however, that a similar tactic was adopted elsewhere.

It is impossible to determine whether many electors did abstain from voting for women on the grounds of gender. Gertrude Dennison in Leeds in 1921 suggested that it was the women voters who had ensured her victory, that men were still prejudiced against the idea of women councillors. Maud Dightam, however, found she met with very little prejudice during her campaign:

There was a fear that sex might play a prejudicial part . . . but I found that electors have preferred to consider the claims and policy of the candidate.

Nevertheless, she had encountered a few voters, women in particular, who did dislike the idea of a voting for a woman.¹³⁶ In Huddersfield, however, it was the adverse comments of the voters that deterred Mrs Richardson, a Conservative who stood with the backing of the Huddersfield NCW in 1929, from offering herself as a

candidate again.¹³⁷ It seems plausible, however, that Gertrude Dennison's contention in 1921 that the

'relics of sex prejudice' are a diminishing factor, and that eventually both men and women electors will vote for or against candidates for reasons of principle and policy, irrespective of sex¹³⁸

became increasingly valid.

The question of whether gender played a significant role in determining voting intentions apart, in the years immediately after the First World War at least, women's appearance as candidates in municipal elections did help to overcome some of the apathy with which municipal elections were normally greeted even if interest only took the form of derogatory heckling which questioned the suitability of women for council work. Turnouts were usually higher in wards where women were standing. The average turnout in Doncaster in 1920 was 63 per cent. In Wheatley Ward, where Hannah Clark was standing, it was 74 per cent. Over the border in Derbyshire Blanche Eastwood's candidature in Chesterfield in 1925 resulted in a 60 per cent turnout whereas in no other ward did it exceed 50 per cent.¹³⁹ Mary Maclagan's Clifton Ward in Rotherham in 1927 where the candidate was assisted by the determined efforts of a large band of lady supporters saw a 76 per cent turnout. It appears that this pattern became less marked in the 1930s when the electorate had become more accustomed to the presence of women candidates.

For women councillors like Ada Moore in Sheffield, Jennie Latham in Halifax and Edna Crichton in York, who had previously been Poor Law guardians, whilst party politics were important, they were not paramount. As Lizzie Naylor in Leeds explained: "I did not go into politics for politics. I went in as a means of helping people. I

found you had to get inside to do things."¹⁴⁰ Lizzie Naylor is typical of the majority of women who stood for election to town and city councils in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the inter-war period. They were not politically ambitious. Many considered they had a natural constituency to represent the interests of women and children, the old, the poor and the sick. They were concerned with the welfare of individual constituents, with building a bridge between local citizens and the town hall. The majority were unassuming, conscientious members of their council, more concerned with the everyday problems of their fellow men and women than with the broad policy sweeps of local government. Often living in the ward they represented Labour women in particular were well aware of and sometimes shared the many difficulties and hardships faced by their constituents and were not averse to turning their homes into readily accessible information centres where people seeking help were warmly welcomed.¹⁴¹ Theirs was a humanitarian expression of citizenship. They would have found common cause with Winifred Holtby who wrote at the beginning of South Riding in a dedicatory letter to her mother, an alderman on East Yorkshire County Council,:

when I came to consider local government, I began to see how it was in essence the first-line defence thrown up by the community against our common enemies - poverty, sickness, ignorance, isolation, mental derangement, and social mal-adjustment. The battle is not faultlessly conducted, nor are the motives of those who take part in it all righteous or disinterested. But the war is, I believe, worth fighting.¹⁴²

Chapter four looks at the contribution women councillors made to the battle against these common enemies.

Footnotes

- 1 Woman's Leader, Oct 15 1920, p 797.
- 2 Sheffield Independent, 11 Nov 1919, p 7.
- 3 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Nov 11 1919, p 6.
- 4 For instance, Mrs Sarah Wilson in Sheffield, Mrs Rhoda Cannon in Leeds, Margaret McMillan in Bradford. See Patricia Hollis: 'English Provincial School Boards 1870-1903' in her Ladies Elect, pp 132-94.
- 5 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, p 392.
- 6 See "The Election of Ladies 1875-1914" and "The Work of Women Guardians 1875-1914" in Patricia Hollis: op.cit, pp 195-246 and 247-99. After the 1894 Act the number of women guardians in London had doubled by 1901 to eighty-six. In 1890 there had been eighty women guardians in England and Wales; by 1895 there were 893, although this figure does include Rural District Council members who automatically served as guardians for the unions in which their districts lay. It was not until after 1894 that the first women guardians were elected in Sheffield although they had appeared on both the Leeds and Bradford boards by 1883. See Patricia Hollis: op.cit, pp 237 + 239 and her Appendix B.
- 7 Patricia Hollis: op.cit, p 392.
- 8 Patricia Hollis: op.cit, p 398.
- 9 Municipal Journal, March 12 1909, p 208.
- 10 ibid.
- 11 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 11 1910, p 4.
- 12 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Nov 16 1910, p 4.
- 13 See Women's Local Government Society Annual Report, 1910-1911, p 10; Huddersfield Examiner, Oct 26 1912, p 6.
- 14 Sheffield Independent, 17 Oct 1912, p 5.
- 15 Patricia Hollis: op.cit, p 398 - Margaret Ashton (1908) in Manchester, Eleanor Rathbone (1909) in Liverpool.

- 16 Deirdre Beddoe: Back to Home & Duty, p 90.
- 17 Hannah Clark, Doncaster's first woman councillor in 1920, had been chairman of the town's Women's Housing Advisory Committee - Doncaster Gazette, Oct 29 1920, p 3.
- 18 See her obituary in Yorkshire Weekly Post, May 30 1925, p 19.
- 19 Helen Mathers: Sheffield Municipal Politics 1893-1926, p 198.
- 20 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland, pp 38-9.
- 21 Helen Mathers: op.cit, pp 225-6.
- 22 Quoted in Helen Mathers: op.cit, p 227.
- 23 Michael Meadowcroft: "The years of political transition 1914-39", p 424.
- 24 Helen Mathers: op.cit, p 229.
- 25 See Judith Watts and Donald Nannestad: The First 50 Years: Half Century of Labour Rule in Barnsley.
- 26 Keith Teanby: 'Not Equal to the Demand': Major Concerns of the Doncaster Divisional Labour Party 1918-1939, pp 73-5.
- 27 Michael Meadowcroft: Transition in Leeds City Government 1903-1926, pp 150 + 208-11 and "The years of political transition 1914-39", pp 420-1.
- 28 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland, p 48.
- 29 ibid, pp 48-9.
- 30 Rodney Hills: "The City Council and Electoral Politics, 1901-1971", p 267.
- 31 Miss Sarah Cockshutt and Lady Mabel Smith were the first women elected to the West Riding County Council in 1919. Female membership remained static at 1.7% in the 1920s and then rose to seven (5.8%) by 1937. Lady Mabel Smith who served as a Labour councillor from 1919 until her death in 1951 was the second sister of the seventh Earl Fitzwilliam and was considered a black sheep by the family. An unconventional and outspoken woman, she was an invaluable member of the Education committee and tackled housing

problems with relish - see B J Barber and M W Beresford: The West Riding County Council 1889-1974 (West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, Wakefield, 1979), pp 47 + 195-196; The Times, 28 Sept 1951, p 6. I have discovered one educational pamphlet that she wrote for the Women's Co-operative Guild in the inter-war period entitled Education and the Workers! Right to Live. A copy can be found in Rotherham Central Library Archives. Hermione Unwin served from 1922 to 1937 and was also interested in education. Her father was a Bradford wool merchant and some-time chairman of the Yorkshire Liberal Federation. Emily Wragg was a Conservative county councillor from 1934 to 1946. She was the widow of Leonard Wragg who had been a partner in the family firm of Thos Wragg, firebrick manufacturers, of Loxley. She fought valiantly for the appointment of women police by the WRCC - see Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, Sept 1 1937, p 6 and chapter one of this thesis, p 51. Socialist Jessie Smith's distinguished and fascinating career from 1934 to 1974 has recently been recorded as part of an oral history project by Calderdale Libraries and a regrettably short and lightweight account of her life can be found in Pennine Magazine, Vol 6:3 (Feb/March 1985), pp 27-8.

- 32 Women's Local Government Society, Minutes of Council October 1919 to April 1921, Minutes of meeting on Nov 5 1919
- 33 Patricia Hollis: op.cit, pp 396-7.
- 34 J Mendelson et al: The Sheffield Trades and Labour Council 1858-1958, pp 74 + 79. It was sixty-five years before Mrs Blanche Flannery became the second woman president of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council.
- 35 Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol I, pp 38-40; Sheffield Independent, 11 March 1931, p 9; The Vote, Aug 26 1921, p 585. For her municipal election campaign in 1919, see Sheffield Independent, 30 Oct 1919, p 5. Her election leaflet for the 1920 municipal elections is in the Sheffield Local Studies Library. In addition to the evidence she gave to the Royal Commission on Divorce 1912-1913 and her Co-operative pamphlet Through Trade to the Co-operative Commonwealth mentioned in the Dictionary of Labour Biography, her writings include Married Women and Paid Position: A Plea for Solidarity Amongst the Workers, A National Co-operative Plan: Five Stepping Stones to the Co-operative Commonwealth, A New Way of Life - to Peace, Women in the Home, the Store and the State, and The National Care

- of Motherhood, all published by the WCG or the Co-operative Union in the inter-war period. She also wrote the Introduction to the section on the Co-operative Movement in The Women's Year Book 1923-1924, pp 570-2 (reviewed in The Vote, Feb 16 1923, p 54).
- 36 Yorkshire Evening News, 9 Sept 1919 in Newspaper Cuttings - Leeds People, Vol 7, p 119.
- 37 Yorkshire Evening News, 30 Oct 1919 in Newspaper Cuttings - Leeds People, Vol 7, p 146.
- 38 Yorkshire Evening News, 24 Oct 1919 in Leeds People, Vol 7, p 143. See also Margaret L Suttentall: Miss J. Beatrice Kitson Leeds! first woman Lord Mayor 1942/3.
- 39 Halifax Courier, Oct 25 1919, pp 7 + 8.
- 40 Harrogate Herald, Oct 8 1919, p 5 and Oct 29 1919, p 5.
- 41 Yorkshire Gazette, 11 Oct 1919, p 7.
- 42 Halifax Courier, Oct 18 1919, p 5.
- 43 Bradford Weekly Telegraph, Oct 24 1919, p 1.
- 44 Violet Markham papers: Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee, Final List of women recommended, p 28.
- 45 Bradford Weekly Telegraph, Oct 24 1919, p 1.
- 46 Bradford Weekly Telegraph, Oct 24 1919, p 7; Sheffield Telegraph, March 9 1944, p 3 and March 10 1944, p 2.
- 47 Doncaster Gazette, Oct 15 1920, p 5; Oct 22 1920, p 7; Oct 29 1920, pp 3, 7 + 8; Doncaster Gazette & Chronicle, Oct 17 1963, p 24 (obituary).
- 48 Batley News, Oct 29 1921, p 5.
- 49 Barnsley Women's Suffrage Society, Minutes, Dec 4 1913 - Nov 27 1933, Minutes of Committee meeting, Oct 18 1921.
- 50 Brighouse and Elland Echo, Oct 29 1920, p 7; Nov 5 1920, p 7 and Oct 5 1923 (obituary).
- 51 They were Conservatives Gertrude Dennison (husband), Beatrice Ives (husband), Blanche Leigh (husband) and Gertrude Stevenson (father) and Labour Jeannie Arnott

- (husband), Lilian Hammond (father), Ada Hewitt (husband) and Mary Pearce (husband). Lizzie Naylor's husband joined his wife on the city council in 1941.
- 52 The married women were Annie Arnold (Con) and Harriet Grundy (Lab) who inherited their deceased husbands' seats. Hannah and George Drake (Con) and Amy and George Meggison (Lab) were husband and wife teams. Mary Sutton's husband had been an alderman.
- 53 For Mary Dennis, Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, 28 April 1937, p 4; for Laura Soper, ibid, 26 May 1937, p 4.
- 54 Halifax Courier, 31 March 1956, p 3.
- 55 Elizabeth Vallance: Women in the House, p 27.
- 56 For a discussion of this point, see Stephen Bristow: "Women Councillors - An Explanation of the Under-representation of Women in Local Government", p 84.
- 57 Yorkshire Evening Post, 9 Dec 1921, p 10 and 13 Dec 1921, p 5.
- 58 Yorkshire Observer, 21 Dec 1921.
- 59 The family owned a shop which sold fruit and vegetables and flowers. Mary Dennis managed the florist side of the business. Letter from Mrs Jean Dennis, Dec 7 1989.
- 60 Dewsbury Reporter, Oct 31 1925, p 12 and Nov 7 1925, p 4.
- 61 Compiled from election details in local newspapers, council year books and obituaries.
- 62 Conversation with Mr J D W Longden, 5 Jan 1988.
- 63 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Aug 4 1930, p 4; Sheffield Independent, 18 Feb 1931, p 9; Sheffield Telegraph, April 22 1931, p 6 and Aug 13 1952, p 3 (obituary).
- 64 Violet Markham: Return Passage, p 15.
- 65 Yorkshire Evening Post, 22 Oct 1921 in Newspaper Cuttings - Leeds People, Vol 9, p 46.
- 66 Yorkshire Evening News, 2 Nov 1921, p 5.
- 67 Yorkshire Evening News, 27 Aug 1953, p 4.
- 68 Yorkshire Evening Post, 10 Feb 1960, p 3 (obituary).

- 69 Yorkshire Evening News, 27 Aug 1953, p 4.
- 70 Untitled newspaper article dated 6 May 1952 in author's possession, probably from the Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian.
- 71 Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol VIII, pp 83-8.
- 72 The Vote, May 23 1930, p 161; H Hird: How A City Grows, pp 122-3. Kathleen Sykes subsequently re-married and, as Kathleen Chambers, served until her death in 1965.
- 73 Yorkshire Post, 6 Sept 1917, p 4 and 8 Sept 1917, p 6.
- 74 G Kitson Clark: "The Leeds Elite", pp 233 + 239-40.
- 75 The Conservative Woman, Nov 1924, pp 1-2.
- 76 Armley and Wortley News, Aug 12 1927, p 12.
- 77 Helena Mitchell who had started work in a cutlery warehouse became an NFWW organiser and recruited amongst laudresses, boxmakers, confectionery and cutlery works in Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Derby - Sheffield Co-operator, Sept 1933, p 5. Edith Birch (nee Airey) spoke at the official launch of the NFWW in Sheffield in December 1910 and was one of the first organisers of the branch - Catherine Burke: Working Class Politics in Sheffield 1900-1920, p 68; Sheffield Guardian, Sept 30 1910, p 2.
- 78 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Oct 3 1930, p 5.
- 79 Jane Lewis: Women in England 1870-1950, p 176.
- 80 June Hannam: "'In the Comradeship of the Sexes Lies the Hope of Progress and Social Regeneration': Women in the West Riding ILP, c 1890-1914", p 236.
- 81 Armley and Wortley News, Nov 4 1927, p 9; Leeds Weekly Citizen, April 6 1951, p 1 and April 13 1951, p 3.
- 82 Sheffield Independent, 5 Sept 1929, p 6.
- 83 The Liberal Woman's News, Feb 1930, p 372.
- 84 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 198-200.
- 85 ibid, pp 200 + 280-1.
- 86 ibid, pp 207-8 + 231.

- 87 ibid, p 239.
- 88 ibid, p 241.
- 89 ibid, pp 241-2.
- 90 Sheffield & District Who's Who, 1905, pp 190-1;
Sheffield Daily Telegraph, July 16 1927, p 13
(obituary).
- 91 Rotherham Advertiser, Oct 27 1928, p 6.
- 92 The Liberal Woman's News, Feb 1930, p 372.
- 93 Armley and Wortley News, 26 March 1926.
- 94 Sheffield Independent, 5 Sept 1929, p 6.
- 95 The Labour Woman, Nov 1 1929, p 165.
- 96 Yorkshire Observer, Sept 18 1930.
- 97 Wakefield Express, 27 May 1961, p 1 (obituary);
Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, 28 April 1937, p 4.
- 98 Figures compiled from election details in the
Yorkshire Post and local newspapers.
- 99 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, p 403.
- 100 They were former Poor Law guardian, Mrs Fanny Stott
(Con) whose father had been mayor of Wakefield in
1890 and Mrs Effie Crowe (Lab), an ex-teacher, whose
husband was already a member of Wakefield Council.
- 101 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 183-5 and 293-4.
- 102 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland,
pp 106-9; Yorkshire Observer, 18 Oct 1938, p 7.
- 103 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: op.cit, p 91.
- 104 Bradford Pioneer, Oct 21 1932, p 5.
- 105 Brian Harrison: Prudent Revolutionaries, p 129.
- 106 Daily Independent, 1 March 1938, p 13.
- 107 See, for instance, Harrogate Herald, Oct 8 1919, p 5
and Oct 29 1919, p 5.
- 108 The Leeds Woman Citizen, No 21 (Oct 1920).
- 109 ibid.

- 110 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, p 405.
- 111 National Council of Women Occasional Paper No. 99 (June 1921), pp 29-30.
- 112 The Woman's Leader, Nov 12 1920, p 877.
- 113 Mary Stocks: Eleanor Rathbone, p 67.
- 114 The Woman's Leader, Nov 12 1920, p 877.
- 115 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, p 406.
- 116 The Conservative Woman, Dec 1922, pp 6 + 8.
- 117 Quoted in Noreen Branson: Britain in the Nineteen Twenties, p 207.
- 118 Christabel Pankhurst, as the Woman's Party candidate in Smethwick at the 1918 General Election, was the only "couponed" woman candidate. She was defeated and the Woman's Party disappeared. See Brian Harrison: Prudent Revolutionaries, p 306. In 1922 Mrs Philip Snowden refused a Labour party invitation to contest Lady Astor's seat in Plymouth with the argument that "I am a Labour woman, but the work which Lady Astor is doing for women and children both in parliament and the country makes her services invaluable" - quoted in Deirdre Beddoe: Back to Home & Duty, p 143. Such gender solidarity was short-lived.
- 119 Yorkshire Evening News, 2 Nov 1921, p 5.
- 120 June Hannam: "'In the Comradeship of the Sexes Lies the Hope of Progress and Social Regeneration': Women in the West Riding ILP, c 1890-1914", p 234.
- 121 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Dec 30 1931, pp 4 + 6.
- 122 Yorkshire Evening Post, 2 Nov 1921, p 6.
- 123 Rotherham Advertiser, Nov 1 1924, pp 3 + 16.
- 124 Dewsbury Reporter, Oct 6 1923, p 9; Leeds Mercury, Sept 1 1930, p 6.
- 125 Rodney Hills: "The City Council and Electoral Politics, 1901-1971", pp 259 + 281 (note 31); Yorkshire Gazette, 11 Oct 1919, p 7.
- 126 Yorkshire Gazette, 16 June 1923, p 6.
- 127 Yorkshire Gazette, 15 Oct 1937, p 2.

- 128 Violet Markham: Return Passage, p 157; Violet Markham papers: Letter to Violet Markham from W P O'Carroll, 2 Dec 1918; Letter from Violet Markham to J E Alcock, Sept 13 1920.
- 129 Doncaster Labour Party Women's Section Minutes 1924-29, Minutes of meetings, April 18 1923 and March 25 1925.
- 130 Yorkshire Gazette, 15 Oct 1937, p 8.
- 131 Women's Local Government Society Annual Report 1917-1918, pp 41-2.
- 132 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 27 1922, p 9.
- 133 See Appendix E for the questions posed.
- 134 The Woman's Leader, Oct 10 1924, p 297.
- 135 The Woman's Leader, Oct 26 1923, p 306; Dale Spender: Time and Tide Wait for No Man, pp 135-43.
- 136 Yorkshire Evening News, 2 Nov 1921, p 5; Yorkshire Evening Post, 2 Nov 1921, p 6.
- 137 Leeds Mercury, Oct 3 1930, p 6.
- 138 Yorkshire Evening News, 2 Nov 1921, p 5.
- 139 For Blanche Eastwood, see Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, May 5 1937, p 4. Her uncle was an alderman.
- 140 Yorkshire Post, 7 May 1968, p 6.
- 141 See, for instance, the article on Sarah Ager, a co-operative and Labour candidate who was defending her Firth Park seat in Sheffield in 1931 - Sheffield Co-operator, Nov 1931, p 5.
- 142 Winifred Holtby: South Riding, p vii.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The human side of public administration"¹:
Women's Work on Town Councils

It was difficult for individual women councillors to make much impact when first elected. It took time to feel their way into the minutiae of committee work and the complexities of Council proceedings. Fanny Stott in Wakefield, for instance, told a group of voters when she was seeking re-election after two years on the town council, that "it had taken her a considerable time to become accustomed to [the work]".² Whilst women, no less than new male councillors, might be in a position to achieve minor improvements on behalf of their constituents - the provision of a bus-shelter, the extension of a tram route to a new housing estate - the overall determination of policies of wider impact was usually in the hands of leaders of party groups or well-established committee chairmen who sat on the powerful aldermanic bench.

During the inter-war period women were slow to achieve the influential positions on councils; Brenda Powell found, for instance, that, in Leeds, women had to serve as councillors for much longer than men before they became aldermen.³ Moreover, it appears that Labour women in Leeds were not unaware at the time that they were being discriminated against since, at a meeting of the Labour Women's Advisory Council in 1933, considerable dissatisfaction was expressed over the Party's failure to elect any aldermen from among the Labour women councillors.⁴

Brenda Powell's conclusions for Leeds would seem to be equally applicable in other municipalities in the West

Riding and particularly in the smaller towns. In Sheffield only two of the women councillors elected in the inter-war period and only Kathleen Chambers of the nine Bradford women councillors ever became aldermen. It was twenty-six years before Hannah Clark, the first woman councillor in Doncaster, became an alderman and similarly, in other towns, the majority of women councillors had to wait for over twenty years. Barnsley had one woman alderman in 1938 but she was a non-Council member brought in to avoid the necessity of fighting an aldermanic by-election in a marginal seat and only served for seven years.⁵ Ripon was the only town where one place on the aldermanic bench appears to have been consciously allocated to a woman councillor. Margaret Steven was elected to fill the aldermanic vacancy caused by the death of Gertrude Wells in 1939. Mrs Garner followed Mrs Steven when she too died in office in 1942.⁶

Apart from the chairmanship of maternity and child welfare sub-committees, it was equally unusual for women to chair committees in the inter-war period. In the few instances when they were promoted to full committee chairmanships they were for the most part the "soft" committees like Parks or Libraries, the Cinderella areas of local government which had to compete for the slender resources remaining once the more high profile committees had claimed the lion's share. In Manchester, on the other hand, not only were aldermen elected strictly according to seniority but a three-year rule which restricted an individual's tenureship of a Committee chairmanship to three years was applied. As a result of this more flexible and less ossifying system, women's progress was more rapid.

Those committees which were concerned with a city's utilities - electricity, gas, water, transport - and for

service on which it was considered that technical qualifications and business experience were desirable were usually the sole province of male councillors. Equally women were virtually excluded from the powerful Finance and Parliamentary and General Purposes committees which were dominated by senior members of the council. In Bradford women found that even the Health Committee to which most aspired was at first beyond their reach. Kathleen Chambers in her mayoral speech in 1945 recounted how, when she first joined the Council in 1922, she had hoped to be appointed to the Education and Health Committees. Although she was the only woman on a Council of eighty-eight at the time, it was seven years before she made it to the Health Committee, membership at that time being according to seniority.⁷ Margaret Law also reported to a ward meeting held in 1925 when she was seeking re-election that she

had not succeeded in her attempt to get on the Health Committee which dealt with important matters like maternity, hospitals and housing. It was a committee essentially for women yet no woman had been a member of the Council long enough to qualify. "If you want to get a woman on that committee, you will have to keep returning the same woman for some time, otherwise she will not have the seniority to qualify her."⁸

Despite this paradoxical situation in Bradford which precluded women from serving on the one committee where many were agreed their talents could be best utilised, the majority of women in other towns and cities did succeed in their desire to put their experience of domestic management, child caring and philanthropy to work for the benefit of the community. Many, indeed, tended to regard the community as an extended familial group and, as their own families grew up and required less attention, it seemed natural that they should offer their services and experience to this larger "family", a

term used, for instance, by Mrs Burn, the NCW candidate in Halifax in 1919 who felt it "her duty to offer to this larger family - the community - the experience she had gained [as a married woman and a mother]." ⁹ Jeannie Arnott, in Leeds, saw local government service as a translation from domestic to municipal housekeeping and argued that "year by year the work of the City Council bears a closer resemblance to that of a home." ¹⁰ Consequently women clustered for the most part on those committees concerned with the welfare of the electors - education, public health, housing and, after the abolition of the Poor Law in 1930, the newly formed public assistance committees. It was after all the work of these committees that affected most closely the lives of women constituents and, as Mary Pearce in Leeds suggested, it was essential that women served on them as male colleagues were inclined to overlook the humanitarian issues when reaching their decisions. This was particularly the case with housing as she had found in her own ward of Woodhouse where the Council's policy of slum clearance had shown what could happen when "a Committee thought only in terms of bricks and mortar and not in terms of human beings." ¹¹ In the same way that the Women's Housing Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction had tried at the end of the war to take on board the demands of working-class women when considering the optimum design of municipal housing and had found themselves at variance with the wholly male Tudor Walters Committee whose proposals were determined solely by the desire to keep down costs, ¹² so women councillors believed it was vital that a woman's view should be heard on housing committees. They were convinced of the necessity for slum clearance but felt it was their brief to temper the euphoria engendered among male colleagues by the architects' and planners' "visionary" schemes with pleas that the needs of the tenants should be given real

consideration, especially the needs of women and children whose natural sphere was the home and who consequently spent so much of their time within it. Such was Mary Pearce's line of argument when she opposed the proposed erection of a block of flats at Camp Fields in Leeds in 1938 on the grounds that with no lifts included in the scheme "to ask mothers and children to walk up four storeys was unreasonable and unjust."¹³

Women councillors saw, therefore, such issues as housing, health and child welfare as their natural province, areas to which they could bring a fresh and frequently gender-oriented point of view. Their commitment to "welfare committees" is well illustrated by the record of service of women councillors on Sheffield and Leeds City Councils shown on the following two pages.

Nevertheless, even on these committees women were not working in isolation but in concert with the council's professional employees, providing the necessary environment in which medical reforms, educational initiatives and town improvements could be accomplished. They often worked, too, in conjunction with local women's organisations. Where a lone female voice might have been ignored, concerted appeals were occasionally more successful. It was, then, unusual for an individual woman councillor to play any pioneering role in the manner of her female predecessors on school and poor law boards. Their work can, therefore, only be approached in the wider context of the on-going day-to-day routine of council business, although it should be borne in mind that many women councillors considered they had a special remit to represent the interests of women and children as well as underprivileged groups in the community - the sick, the mentally and physically handicapped, the aged. In Sheffield Eleanor Barton, for instance, in her 1920

TABLE 4

Women on Sheffield Council Committees, 1919-1938¹⁴

	<u>Year commencing 1st November*</u>								
	<u>1919</u>	<u>1922</u>	<u>1924</u>	<u>1928</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1934</u>	<u>1937</u>
Total No of Women Councillors	2	2	2	2	12	13	10	7	8
City Hall								1	2
Education	1	1	-	-	2	1	1	1	2
Electricity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Establish- ment	-	-	-	2	-	4	4	-	-
Estates	1	1	1	-	2	4	4	2	2
Finance	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Health	2	2	2	2	4	7	7	6	7
Highways & Sewerage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Libraries	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-
Markets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Old Age Pensions	-	-	1	1	4	4	3	2	2
Parks & Burials	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	2
Parliamentary & G Purposes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public Assistance					7	12	10	4	4
Rating	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Transport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Watch	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	2	3

*Significant Years

TABLE 5

Women on Leeds Council Committees, 1921-1938¹⁵

	Year commencing 1st November*								
	<u>1921</u>	<u>1924</u>	<u>1926</u>	<u>1928</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1934</u>	<u>1936</u>	<u>1938</u>
Total No of Women Councillors	2	3	4	3	14	15	15	13	13
Assessment							1	1	-
Blind					1	2	3	3	2
Cleansing	2	1	1	-	1	1	1	1	1
Education	2	1	2	3	4	4	4	6	3
Electricity	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Finance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Health	-	-	1	-	3	4	9	5	6
Highways	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Improvements ⁺	-	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	3
Libraries & Galleries	-	1	1	2	2	4	4	2	3
Local Pensions	1	1	-	1	2	3	1	2	
Markets	-	2	-	-	2	1	2	1	-
Mental Health	2	2	2	2	8	7	3	4	4
Parks & Burials	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	2	2
Property			1	1	1	3	2	2	1
Public Assistance					9	10	12	9	9
Sewerage	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Watch	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Water	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Works & Supplies							1	3	4

*Significant years

⁺Superseded by the Housing Committee in 1933

municipal election leaflet styled herself "The true friend of the Women and Children", whilst Mrs Tansley, for some years the only woman councillor in Huddersfield, exhausted herself in her attempts to cover all the areas she felt touched on the interests of women and children.¹⁶ Margaret Law believed that there was an urgent need for more women on Bradford City Council because it was quite impossible for just four women "to deal adequately with all questions concerning members of their sex."¹⁷ The majority of women councillors, therefore, posited a sexual division of labour in their approach to Council work.

For Socialist women the causes espoused by Labour groups frequently coincided with their own. They were, for instance, "committed to council housing from the start."¹⁸ For non-Socialist women councillors it was more difficult and when consideration of facilities for women and children and issues of family welfare arose they tended to move closer to the Socialist viewpoint than their male colleagues. They were constantly trying to balance the welfare requirements of the less privileged groups in the community with the perpetual cries for economy voiced by the ratepayers who constituted the backbone of support for the non-socialist groups. As Mrs Vickers, Conservative candidate in Sheffield's Darnall ward in 1930 and 1931, told the electors: "she was not tied down by pledges or promises" even though she was a member of the Conservative party.¹⁹ Equally Mrs Lightowler in Halifax, although a Conservative, was said never to allow "party interests to interfere with what she regarded as her duty to the public whom she has delighted to serve."²⁰ On issues that particularly impinged on the daily lives of the female electorate, it was not unknown for women councillors to unite across parties. Thus, in

Chesterfield, in 1937, all four women councillors were united in pressing for combination grates in new council houses. They knew that they involved less work for the women who would have to clean them, that they provided greater heat and comfort for the weary housewife as she snatched a few minutes' rest in a chair in the kitchen, that they offered a greater surface area on which to heat cooking utensils. Male councillors, however, wanted the traditional Yorkshire grates. They cost less.²¹ The need for the appointment of women police was another widely accepted cross-party issue and women councillors of all political persuasions found, too, that it fell to them to defend the interests of council women employees.

Community care

The majority of women councillors served at some stage on maternity and child welfare committees. Indeed many had served as co-opted members or, like Mrs Green and Mrs Moorhouse in Rotherham, as voluntary workers at clinics,²² before entering public life. Much attention had been paid to the question of infant mortality since the turn of the century when the evidence of social surveys and reports from medical officers of health revealed the sheer scale of the wastage of infant lives.²³ In England and Wales in 1899 163 babies out of every 1000 born died within twelve months²⁴ but figures for the industrial cities were much higher - 200 per 1000 in Sheffield²⁵ and 200 per 1000 in Wakefield in 1900.²⁶ Piecemeal action by local authorities and voluntary organisations to tackle the problem determined the pattern of development of future services.

In Sheffield Mrs Greenwood was appointed as a sanitary inspector in 1899²⁷ and, as she informed the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904

whose findings stressed the need to safeguard the lives of children in the national interest, part of her work involved offering advice on infant and child care to mothers in the three most overcrowded districts in the city where infant mortality rates were as high as 234 per 1000 compared with 112 in the best residential area.²⁸ As Mrs Greenwood pointed out she had insufficient staff to be able to visit all the houses in slum districts²⁹ and consequently it was decided that five centres should be opened where mothers could take their babies for advice and to purchase dried milk at cost price. Opened in 1907 following a conference organised by the Local Government Board the previous year, it was originally intended that the centres would only operate during the summer months when many babies were at risk from infantile diarrhoea. However, the centres became so popular that the scheme was extended and in 1910 centralised in Bainbridge Buildings in Norfolk Street.³⁰

In addition, a group of women doctors and voluntary workers, including the wives of some city councillors, Mrs Chappell, a Poor Law guardian, and Mrs Scurfield, the wife of the city's medical officer of health, had formed a committee in 1906 to organise a course of four lectures on motherhood to be given at eight different centres in the city. This group became the Sheffield Motherhood League and lectures were given to mothers' meetings, model baby garments displayed and baby shows organised.³¹ The local authority provision for maternity and child welfare was, however, so comprehensive that the Motherhood League disappeared after the First World War.

In Leeds, however, the most vigorous response came from members of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council for Education who opened four voluntarily-run Babies' Welcomes in 1909 under the presidency of Mrs Kitson Clark.³² Unlike

Sheffield where facilities were centralised on the grounds of efficiency and in the belief that the city's excellent tram service would make it easy for mothers from all over the city to attend, in Leeds it was felt preferable to have a number of small centres within easy reach of the mothers.³³ The system worked so effectively that when the 1918 Maternal and Child Welfare Act gave local authorities permissive powers to provide a full maternal and child welfare service, it was agreed that the scheme should continue to be run as before although with financial aid from the city council. By 1926 there were eighteen centres³⁴ and members of the city maternal and child welfare committee liaised with the managing committee of the Babies' Welcomes over the provision of services.

The Babies' Welcome in Wakefield predated those in Leeds by three years and claimed to be the first in the country.³⁵ The Welcome was founded by Miss Boileau who had been appointed as a health visitor in 1903 by the Wakefield Sanitary Aid Society which endeavoured to generate interest in public health amongst the citizens of Wakefield and to press the local authority into carrying out sanitary reforms as a major contribution to the reduction of Wakefield's appallingly high infantile mortality rate of 200 per 1000 live births in 1900. The Babies' Welcome was originally envisaged as a provident society which encouraged mothers to save for their confinement but when the need was realised extended its activities to supplying clothing and food.

Unlike Leeds where the initially voluntarily run Babies' Welcomes formed the basis of the maternity and child welfare service and Sheffield where the service was supplied entirely by the local authority, albeit with the aid of some voluntary helpers, Wakefield saw a

"marriage"³⁶ between the original Babies' Welcome and its own child welfare centres; in the early days, for instance, when there were insufficient official staff to provide a comprehensive service, the Babies' Welcome recruited a team of some twenty-four women who were entrusted with certain cases by the health visitors. Later the Babies' Welcome made itself responsible for the supply of voluntary workers at the centres and for the provision of refreshments for the mothers. Although the first woman was not elected to Wakefield Council until 1929, women had served as co-opted members of the Mental (sic) and Child Welfare committee³⁷ for a number of years and the first two women councillors, Effie Crowe (Lab), a former teacher, and Fanny Stott (Con), a former nurse, were rapidly made chairman and deputy chairman of the committee.³⁸ Thus, Fanny Stott, when seeking re-election in 1931, drew attention to her work for child welfare and expressed concern that although the infantile mortality rate in Wakefield had dropped impressively since the turn of the century to a figure of 58 in 1930, her own ward of Eastmoor continued to record the highest figure. In her eyes

that position ought not to continue, and all efforts in the future should be directed to removing the causes. Unemployment, lack of nourishment, bad housing, and many other things work against good health. Some of these are beyond our control, but others we can remedy,³⁹

Jane Lewis has shown how governmental efforts to improve babies' health focussed more on attempts to educate mothers in baby care, household management and on the provision of sterilised milk supplies than on the underlying causes of infantile deaths - poor housing, inadequate systems of drainage and refuse disposal, low wages resulting in malnutrition and the neglect of health.⁴⁰ As Fanny Stott's words suggest, women in

Wakefield, as in the West Riding and throughout the country, "found it impossible to separate the need for personal health care services from the broader social and economic issues raised by maternal and child welfare."⁴¹ Fanny Stott's words also reveal her awareness of the limitations on what individual women could achieve. Similarly, throughout the West Riding the response of women workers and councillors was necessarily a pragmatic one which, whilst acknowledging the link between overcrowded homes and poor housing and high infant death rates, attempted to make the best of prevailing conditions and concentrated on those areas in which they, as women, had the greatest experience. Thus they espoused a policy which focussed on educating mothers rather than addressing the wider issues involved and utilised their own domestic skills to run clothing clubs and sewing meetings, knit garments, organise social evenings, and encourage mothers to take part in competitions.

As well as their involvement with the routine running of centres, after the First World War it fell to members of council maternity and child welfare committees to press for the introduction of improved facilities and the new services local authorities were empowered to provide under the 1918 Act. Thus, in Sheffield, Mrs Longden engineered the move of the Maternity and Child Welfare clinic "from the dark and inconvenient rooms on Norfolk street" to more modern and welcoming premises in Orchard Place.⁴² A new departure was the adaptation of two redundant children's homes as a place where children could be looked after for two weeks while their mother was confined.⁴³

The difficulties women had to contend with during confinements are typical of the kind of issues to which

women councillors could bring a gender perspective. They were sometimes able to persuade fellow committee members, predominantly male and middle-class, to stop short and think again. Miss Wright recalled, for instance, how her mother, who was a co-opted member of the Public Health Services committee immediately after the First World War, was horrified when the majority of members, who still subscribed to the belief that women should have their babies at home, felt there was no need for a maternity home to be opened in Barnsley under the permissive powers of the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act. She went round the table, addressed each member in turn and demanded to know where his wife had spent her laying-in period which it was generally accepted should last at least ten days. Most of the wives had been confined at home but had had the assistance of live-in private nurses and of domestic servants. Mrs Wright then recalled her own experience when, at a fairly late age, she had struggled to nurse a new-born baby while the older children rampaged around her, made constant demands and allowed her no time for rest and recuperation. She could not afford help. A year or two later Barnsley had its maternity home.⁴⁴ Similar arguments to Mrs Wright's were voiced by Mrs Bonell in Leeds who, in 1933, described a visit by Labour women to the Leeds Maternity Home and pointed out the great chance it offered to mothers for rest and recovery which were "almost an impracticability where working-class life [was] concerned."⁴⁵ Therefore, it was not surprising that women councillors in the Leeds and Bradford areas welcomed Mrs Kitson Clark's suggestion in 1928 when there was only one small convalescent home for mothers and babies in the whole area that the Yorkshire Federation for Maternity and Child Welfare should establish a home for mothers and babies on the East Coast where a fortnight's rest for a mother, along

with her baby, would ensure that she "would be better able to start the difficult life ahead of her."⁴⁶.

Maternity homes were also seen as an important weapon in the fight against maternal mortality which in the 1930s was giving considerable cause for concern. Although infant mortality rates had been falling during the inter-war period, maternal mortality rates did not decline correspondingly and reached a peak of 4.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in England and Wales in 1934.⁴⁷ Thus in Wakefield, armed with the knowledge that it was more dangerous for a woman to give birth than it was to be a miner in one of the many pits surrounding the town, Arthur Greenwood MP, accompanied by Effie Crowe, chairman of the Mental and Child Welfare committee, opened the new maternity home in 1935 with the words

It is monstrous in the twentieth century that, in spite of all the improvements we have made in the health of the people, we seem unable to reduce this loss of life resulting through what is a perfectly normal function. Maternity is the most dangerous occupation in the country.⁴⁸

Hospitalisation of childbirth was seen as one way of reducing the maternal mortality rate.

Educating mothers and improving the physical health of their children was recognised as work eminently suitable for women. Attempts to help mothers improve their own health by enabling them to control the size of their families was more controversial. Birth control had rarely been mentioned in public before the First World War. Victorian taboos on the discussion of all issues relating to sexuality, the hostility of both Church and medical men to the subject and belief that birth control was an dangerous practice which would undermine public morality stifled debate⁴⁹ even though the falling birth rate indicates that some form of family limitation was

being practiced in many, primarily middle-class families.⁵⁰ The greatest advocate of birth control in the pre-war period was the Malthusian League which saw family limitation as a cure for poverty, itself a product of over-population, but such a philosophy attracted little public support.⁵¹ Eugenacists, too, had seen in birth control a method of selectively limiting the procreation of the "unfit".⁵² Although a number of the writers who responded to the Women Co-operative Guild's call for women to provide details of their experience of pregnancy and childbirth,⁵³ had spontaneously suggested the desirability of family limitation, it was only after the First World War that women began to demand access to knowledge about contraception on a wide scale.

The opening of Marie Stopes's clinic in North London in 1921 and the publication of her sex and marriage guidance books, in particular Wise Parenthood which dealt with the question of birth control more thoroughly than Married Love, offered a more acceptable justification for the use of contraceptives than had the Malthusian League⁵⁴ and prompted many women's groups like the WCG and the Labour women's annual conference to press for maternal and child welfare clinics to provide birth control information if it was felt to be medically desirable for a woman to be offered it. Other more middle-class groups like the NUSEC, the WLAs and the NCW also gradually came out in support of birth control, not on Malthusian or eugenicist grounds but as a practical response to the widespread suffering and chronic ill-health of women subjected to continual child-bearing and to the growing recognition that poverty was frequently linked with large families.⁵⁵ Not all were in agreement. Bertha Quinn from Leeds caused uproar at the 1927 Labour Women's Conference when she proclaimed that birth control was "capitulation to

capitalism" and the wrong way to tackle poverty. Miss Quinn was a Roman Catholic.⁵⁶

It was 1930 before the government would sanction access to birth control information in local authority clinics and even then it was stipulated "that only sick women whose reproductive experience was likely to prove 'wasteful' were to be assisted."⁵⁷ Moreover, the enabling legislation was again permissive so that by 1937 only 95 out of 423 maternity and child welfare authorities had established birth control clinics.⁵⁸ Even in Sheffield with its progressive policies the existence of such a facility was rarely publicised and only twenty-one women were given advice at the Orchard Place maternity and child welfare centre during 1937.⁵⁹ Consequently the main burden of providing information fell on the voluntary National Birth Control Association which, under the presidency of Lady Denman, endeavoured to recruit sufficient numbers of concerned people in different localities to establish voluntarily run clinics. Even in the face of widespread consternation at the falling birth rate in the 1930s such clinics could be justified on health grounds, although the emphasis shifted from limiting to planning families.⁶⁰ It was of little benefit to the country if a woman had six children in quick succession and they subsequently died. Spaced families and family limitation on economic grounds guaranteed healthier as well as happier families.

The Sheffield NBCA clinic was opened in 1933 under the chairmanship of Cllr Mrs Baker, the wife of a general practitioner.⁶¹ It was managed by a voluntary committee of ladies, medical personnel and the chairman and women members of the Public Health Committee which made an annual grant towards the running expenses of the centre. Known as the Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic, it was

held in Attercliffe Vestry Hall once a week in the evening and less frequently in the afternoon.⁶² Such centres remained few and far between. As those closest to Sheffield were the clinic started by Mary Stocks and Charis Frankenberg in Manchester⁶³ and centres in Leeds and Nottingham, women came to Sheffield from as far away as Doncaster and a postal service was established for the convenience of distant patients.⁶⁴ A similar clinic was established in Halifax in 1934.⁶⁵

Although the clinic nominally catered for women of all classes the majority of patients were poor women who had frequently been advised by their own doctor that for health reasons they should avoid any further pregnancies.⁶⁶ The study of contraceptive techniques did not form part of the medical curriculum and through sheer indifference or continued hostility few family doctors could offer their patients practical advice on exactly how further pregnancies could be prevented.⁶⁷ Hilda Cunnington, secretary of the Sheffield centre, deplored the lack of interest shown by local doctors when a meeting for medical practitioners on the subject of "Birth Control Technique" was held in the city in 1936:

In view of the fact that many patients tell us that their own doctors have told them not to have any more children, and have not instructed them how to achieve this, the audience was disappointing.⁶⁸

Other women came who had purchased supplies privately, unaware that some items were unsuitable and that caps had to be the correct size and professionally fitted after an initial gynaecological examination. Others had resorted to various kinds of soluble pessaries which had proved ineffective.⁶⁹ Moreover, it was considered that the risks desperate women ran in their attempts to terminate unwanted pregnancies were undermining attempts to reduce

the high incidence of maternal mortality. Whilst it was widely suggested that poor nutrition was a major contributor to maternal mortality, in Sheffield, which was blacklisted for its high rate, the majority of maternal deaths were attributed to high abortion rates.⁷⁰ The city general hospitals treated 403 abortion cases in 1937.⁷¹ It was hoped the welfare centre could offer a safe alternative to women who had been forced to pay "staggering amounts of money - up to two guineas a box - . . . for dangerous pills, and even larger amounts to equally dangerous abortionists."⁷²

Between October 1933 and March 1939 the clinic treated 1,890 women, the majority of whom had been recommended to attend by friends and past patients. Of the 440 new patients in 1938-9 114 were anxious to avoid further pregnancies because of ill-health. Twenty women had had eight or more pregnancies. One hundred and sixty were found to have gynaecological disorders. Other women came for advice on how to space their families or how to treat sterility.⁷³

Whilst the honorary medical staff interviewed and advised women patients, the organising committee undertook propaganda work. Speakers were provided to address local organisations. As Mary Stocks found: "the subject was in great demand at women's meetings" in particular.⁷⁴ Public meetings and conferences were organised. Courses of marriage guidance lectures were arranged. A small library was established.⁷⁵ They also raised funds. In April 1937 a deputation from the Committee was invited to address the local Trades and Labour Council. As a result the Secretary, Hilda Cunningham, was asked to speak to a meeting of Trades union delegates "who confessed that they had been in ignorance of the aims of the Clinic and were astonished at the scope of the work." An appeal for one penny per member per year was suggested.⁷⁶

Women councillors were well aware that there was little point in encouraging mothers to raise healthy babies if poverty and neglect later undermined their health and produced ailing children unable to benefit from education. As Clara Adams, the assistant secretary of the Leeds Labour Party pointed out during her municipal election campaign in 1927, although the majority of babies were born healthy, by the age of two many children were rickety as the mothers were obliged to concentrate attention on "their youngest babies and the older ones were neglected."⁷⁷ Confronted with the economic constraints of the inter-war period, women councillors frequently found themselves defending the welfare reforms introduced by the 1906 Liberal government. Thus in Leeds, when economies were proposed in the wake of Government grant reductions in 1922, Maud Dightam vigorously opposed the introduction of charges for dental and medical treatment for school children. She argued that the School Medical Service had been showing excellent results, attendances had increased and many children were displaying an increased capacity to benefit from their schooling. If charges were introduced according to parents' ability to pay, valuable resources would have to be diverted into paying for the necessary clerical staff and investigation of family circumstances would be highly resented and act as a deterrent to parents. She spoke out equally against the withdrawal of free supplies of malt and cod liver oil and the reduction in the number of free meals given to necessitous children.⁷⁸ In Sheffield Eleanor Barton and Gertrude Wilkinson were similarly vociferous in their opposition to the Citizen Party's decision to privatise the municipal milk supply.⁷⁹

Drawing on her experiences in Bradford Margaret McMillan had long been arguing the value to children's health and education of nursery schools. Although ill-health and overwork had forced her to leave Bradford in 1902, keen interest continued to be shown in the city in the progress of her experimental nursery work in Deptford. In 1917 the two co-opted women members of the Elementary Education Sub-committee, Mrs Burnley and Miss Margaret Law who become a city councillor five years later, attended a nursery conference at Manchester University. As a result of their report the Committee passed a resolution asking for a definite scheme for a nursery school. In 1919 members of the Committee visited the Rachel McMillan School and requested that nursery schools on the Deptford pattern should be established as soon as possible. The first, St Ann's, opened in 1920. The value of nursery school provision in impoverished urban areas was quickly revealed: of the thirty-five children first enrolled at St Ann's only two were found to be perfectly healthy. "Malnutrition and lack of common cleanliness were at the root of most of the ailments: rickets, ringworm and lice prevailed." By 1927, when eighty children were examined, almost all were clean and only one had rickets. Bradford's nursery school provision was further extended in the 1920s with the opening of two purpose built nurseries and of nursery classes attached to infant schools in depressed areas.⁸⁰

In her mayoral speech in 1945 Kathleen Chambers rather sorrowfully suggested that, although she was proud of Bradford's pioneering record in the introduction of welfare services such as free meals for schoolchildren, medical inspection of schools and the provision of clinics and nursery schools, in the inter-war period the city seemed to have lost its way and, at times, she felt "Bradford was living on its past reputation."⁸¹ One of

the welfare services that had fallen victim to penny-pinching policies in the early 1930s was nursery school provision when the newly opened Swain House nursery was forced to close and plans for a new nursery at Eccleshill had to be abandoned.⁸²

Although a fierce debate had been taking place amongst educationalists as to the relative benefits of nursery schools or of nursery classes attached to existing schools, it was purely economic considerations that prompted a Council resolution in 1932 that the Lilycroft nursery and infant schools should be amalgamated and that Swain House should close. This proposal attracted the wrath of women's organisations throughout the city, not only of predominantly working-class groups like the Bradford WCG but equally of middle-class bodies like the Bradford branch of the NCW.⁸³ Women from all classes were united in their condemnation so much so that the socialist Bradford Pioneer welcomed the Bradford NCW's stance and rejoiced that "women not associated with Labour [were] prepared to resist the hardfaces of the Citizens' League and their soulless helots on the City Council."⁸⁴ At the ensuing acrimonious Council debate which took place on what the reporter from the Bradford Pioneer dubbed "Black Tuesday", Labour women councillors were particularly vociferous in their defence of the city's nursery schools.⁸⁵ Their arguments stemmed not so much from the necessity for the provision of childcare facilities, although it was admitted that many of the children did come from areas where women were forced to seek work as their husbands were unemployed, but from the medical and educational benefits nursery schools provided for children who came from very poor backgrounds. In defence of her argument that nursery schools were invaluable in facilitating a general improvement in the health of young children, Kathleen Chambers cited the

findings of George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health, that

defects in children below school age were entirely preventable, but the entrants of five years old show 25% suffering from defects that could have been cured if those children had been in nursery schools.

Harriet Grundy brought up the educational advantages of nursery schooling and declared that nursery children were more alert and disciplined than others. With a veiled hint to the underprivileged background of many of the children, she declared that only

a very fortunate woman could provide the right environment for the child. The ordinary mother can only do her best by training, she cannot provide the right environment outside her home, whatever she did in it.

In her view, it was very shortsighted on the part of councillors to cut back a service which afforded needy children such tangible benefits. It would only mean storing up problems for the future and, as nursery education was already run on a shoe-string, a reduction in the service would allow little in the way of saving. For the overwhelmingly middle-class members of the Liberal-Conservative alliance which included a number of unmarried men, however, the prospect of municipal savings, even if it were only a derisory one-tenth of a penny rate, was sufficient argument for nursery school closures and amalgamations.

Women councillors' concern for the welfare of young children also extended to the deaf or "delicate" child. In Sheffield Maud Maxfield, the first woman to stand for election to the city council, albeit unsuccessfully, and a co-opted member of the Education Committee for over forty years, pressed for the establishment of a day school for deaf children. Opened in 1921 it was one of

the first in the country and enabled deaf children to live with their families rather than being shipped off to large, inhospitable institutions in cities as far away as Manchester and Leeds.⁸⁶ Similarly women were intimately involved in the development of open-air schools. In Sheffield, for instance, Ellen Miller and Maud Maxfield served on the House Committee of the residential Bents Green open-air school which opened in 1930 and, together with two male colleagues, were responsible for furnishing the premises and appointing the non-teaching staff.⁸⁷

Women councillors who had formerly been Poor Law Guardians continued to take a maternal interest in the children who had previously been in their care. Although the functions of the guardians were taken over by local authorities in 1930, there was little change in the provision of services. Children in the care of the guardians, for instance, merely passed to the care of the local authority committees and the desire for continuity of contact with their former charges may well have prompted many of the women who had previously been guardians to opt for service on these committees when they became councillors. Hence, ex-guardian, Ada Moore, continued to make a visit every third week to the Children's Scattered and Cottage homes in Sheffield as did Helena Mitchell after she was elected to the Council in 1934. Women councillors would befriend the children, discuss diets and clothing and the day-to-day running of the homes.⁸⁸

Women councillors' interests were not, however, confined only to the welfare of children. In 1930 eight of the fourteen women councillors in Leeds were on the Mental Health Committee. As members of public assistance committees they could not only oversee the welfare of children in council care and of the elderly inmates of

workhouses which had changed little but in name but also the needs of sick or destitute members of the wider community. This they did by sitting on relief committees which, given the difficult economic conditions of the early 1930s, frequently involved long hours, "often from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m."⁸⁹ Ada Moore, in Sheffield, estimated that in one day at the Crookesmoor Road station a relief committee of two dealt with 700 ordinary relief cases and some 300 unemployment cases. In many cases this only involved signing papers as not all applicants were interviewed weekly. Nevertheless it was tedious work that frequently had to be performed in "dirty, dingy, cold, and thoroughly disagreeable places." The Prince of Wales Road station in Darnall, for instance, was in a cellar basement which was clammy and dirty and totally degrading for all concerned.⁹⁰

Labour women, in particular, were anxious to press for decent treatment for the poor and unemployed. Thus, Winifred Shutt in Leeds made a specific promise in 1934 that if elected she would seek to serve on the "very unpopular" public assistance committee,⁹¹ whilst for Lizzie Naylor it was the poverty of the Leeds Hunslet district and her desire to help those in need that propelled her into the Labour party and from there onto the Leeds City Council and Public Assistance Committee.⁹²

Urban Amenities

Women like Councillor Ada Hewitt who lived in the overcrowded and decaying area of Holbeck in Leeds were well aware of the intolerable conditions that working-class women had to grapple with. Not least of these were the serious inconveniences of wash day when in the poorly ventilated back-to-back houses which lacked any garden or yard, wet clothes and bed linen would be strewn around

the living rooms or, should the weather be fine, rows of fluttering washing would be strung across the streets.⁹³ For some women councillors the provision of public washhouses was seen as a vital element in the fight against dirt and ill-health. Citing the benefits of the first washhouses opened in Glasgow in the 1870s, the value of such an amenity had been strongly argued by the Women's Labour League before the First World War and deputations had been sent to local councils to request the provision of such services.⁹⁴ Little progress was achieved, however, until women began to appear on public health committees and thus were in a better position to argue the case effectively.

In Leeds Jeannie Arnott's arrival on the baths committee coincided with the adoption of plans for the first washhouse in Leeds. Opened in 1928 in Stocks Hill, Holbeck, the facilities were immediately oversubscribed and the washhouse quickly became one of the centres of local community life.⁹⁵ In the first year there were 49,049 attendances and within three years this had risen to 52,596.⁹⁶ The Stocks Hill washhouse was quickly followed by two more in equally depressed areas of the city, Kirkstall and Armley. Jeannie Arnott was eager to emphasize the value of washhouses both for the health and the convenience of working class families - for their health because up-to-date machinery guaranteed a cleaner wash and for their convenience because they eliminated the most onerous of the housewife's duties and enabled

a mother to make home more "homely" for her family, instead of driving the children out in the streets to play because of the congestion in the house. They help towards a healthier home life, they leave the house cleaner, by reducing the number of smoky chimneys they help to abate the smoke nuisance⁹⁷

However when she pressed for the provision of further washhouses in 1933 Mrs Arnott also drew attention to their somewhat unexpected social value. "Never in our anticipation of their ultimate success . . . did any of us think that a splendid social and corporate life would evolve out of them." Dances were held. Children's parties were organised. Day trips were arranged in the summer.⁹⁸

After Mrs Arnott's death her place on the baths committee was taken by Lilian Hammond, the daughter of John Badlay, one of the early members of the Labour Party in the city and mayor in 1937-8,⁹⁹ and the committee took the logical step of acquiring a van to collect and deliver heavy bundles of washing although the women still had to do the washing themselves. Due to heavy demand for the van's services, however, a two day delay in returning washing prevented many families from availing themselves of this service as, too poor to acquire a second set of bedding, they were obliged "to strip their beds, wash the clothes and put them back on the same day." Mrs Hammond pleaded for the introduction of more vans so that the waiting period could be reduced.¹⁰⁰

Other amenities that women identified themselves with were the provision of public library facilities and the acquisition of parks and gardens where families with little living space would have room to expand and children a safe play area. Thus Lizzie Naylor urged that rather than sell off small pieces of land not suitable for building requirements the Council should convert them to play grounds for children.¹⁰¹ After all, as Jeannie Arnott argued, if the city wanted vigorous and alert children, then playing fields and recreational facilities were essential.¹⁰² To much committee work women could bring a fresh point of view as illustrated by Hannah

Mitchell's experience over in Manchester. She found that her male councillors on the parks committee had a different concept of the role of the city's parks from herself:

Parks to me meant trees, flowers and rest; to my male colleagues they seemed to mean football, bowling greens and tennis courts . . . I also thought facilities for refreshment should be both better and cheaper. Tired mothers who had trundled prams and 'go-carts' all afternoon should not have to drag them home again before they could have a cup of tea.¹⁰³

Jobs for women

Throughout the inter-war period women's organisations, and the NCW in particular, argued strongly for the inclusion of more women in the country's police forces. It was the NCW which had organised and trained the first women patrols, a body of volunteers who patrolled in parks and amusement areas in both London and provincial cities during the First World War.¹⁰⁴ In Leeds this volunteer body was known as the Women's Patrol Committee and from December 1914 its members patrolled the streets of the city and were particularly concerned with the behaviour of women and young girls.¹⁰⁵ The degree of success which they achieved in promoting a higher moral code among girls is indicated in a report by the Chief Constable in 1916:

While deploring the total of juvenile crime, it is highly satisfactory to be able to note that only 6% of the juveniles brought before the court during the 12 months were young females, and I am firmly of the opinion that the work of the Women's Patrols in Leeds has in a large measure been responsible for the figures being kept so low.¹⁰⁶

In 1918 the NCW in Leeds persuaded the Watch Committee that the success of this body in the control of sexual

morals justified the appointment of a salaried woman officer, under the direction of the Chief Constable, to take charge of the women's patrol.¹⁰⁷ Reflecting the difficulty many women had in finding work commensurate with their qualifications, over forty applications resulted from the subsequent advertisement and Mrs Florence Parrish who had been the chief patrol officer of the voluntary patrols was appointed. A married woman in her mid-forties, Mrs Parrish was a certified teacher but was also experienced in social work and held a diploma from Leeds University in social organisation and public service. She was joined by Annie Brown, another ex-teacher and the daughter of a Church of England canon, in April 1921.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, in Sheffield, NCW member, Miss Firth, and "her devoted band of helpers" had patrolled parks, streets and less reputable licenced houses. Between October 1916 and October 1917 12 women carried out 192 patrols, 261 girls were "spoken to" and 42 visits paid to cinemas. Reports on these were subsequently sent to the Licencing Committee.¹⁰⁹ The satisfactory outcome of this work had convinced the Watch Committee that two women officers should be appointed in 1917 for a probationary period of six months. These were Gwendoline Lovell and Elizabeth Wynne, a former pupil of the Leeds Girls' High School.¹¹⁰

There was, however, considerable opposition to the appointment of policewomen, partly from Watch committees who were unconvinced of the value of women police and who preferred to allocate limited resources to the recruitment of more male constables, but primarily from the newly formed Police Federation which was anxious to protect the jobs of the male force and regularly employed the argument of "the distinction between legitimate male and female work."¹¹¹ Moreover, since the implementation

of Home Office recommendations concerning women police was left to the discretion of local authorities, the response was patchy and non-uniform. It was, frequently, only where women councillors were prepared to offer their support that the claims of women police could be defended. In Leeds, for instance, where Mrs Parrish had resigned in 1921, the Watch Committee seized on the Geddes Committee recommendation in 1922 that the newly created London women's police force should be disbanded, as an excuse to dispense with the services of the remaining woman officer.¹¹² This decision produced a flood of letters to the local press including one from Emily Ford,¹¹³ the younger sister of Isabella Ford, the well-known Leeds socialist, trade union organiser and suffragist.¹¹⁴ Emily Ford's views were close to those of Ruth Fisher, the daughter of the vicar of All Hallows, who deplored the Watch Committee's recommendation and argued that

if such a decision is acted on, there will be removed one of the most effectual and necessary safeguards to the moral welfare of our city. I have come in direct contact with the work of our policewoman, and consider that she has rendered an inestimable service to the community.

Miss Fisher went on to point out how very little money would be saved by such a move and called upon the four women councillors on Leeds city council to urge the referral back of the recommendation at the forthcoming Council meeting.¹¹⁵

Although of different political affiliation, both Blanche Leigh and Maud Dightam, supported by male colleagues, requested at this meeting that the Watch Committee's recommendation should not be allowed to go through until the matter had been debated by the full Council. After considerable procedural arguments, it was finally agreed

that the Watch Committee's minutes would be approved but only on the understanding that, in the light of what had been said, its members would reconsider their decision at their next meeting.¹¹⁶ The subsequent meeting of the Watch committee was attended by all the women members of the Council who, armed with petitions from a number of women's organisations in the city, urged that a woman officer should be retained.¹¹⁷

The Watch Committee would only agree, however, that should the women's patrol be continued on a voluntary basis they would "favourably consider the making of a contribution towards the cost of the employment of a whole-time welfare worker."¹¹⁸ Not content with this anodyne offering, women in Leeds decided to take the issue to the voters and swung their support behind Mr Horrell, the Citizens' Municipal party candidate, who was opposing Mr Haigh, the Conservative chairman of the Watch Committee, in Headingley ward and declared himself willing, if elected, to work for the restoration of women police in the city.¹¹⁹ At a women's meeting in the ward, Beatrice Kitson who had been a municipal candidate herself in 1919 and 1920, argued that as chairman of the Watch committee, Mr Haigh was primarily to blame for the departure of policewoman Brown, refuted his claims that his hands were tied by pointing to the examples of London and Birmingham where some policewomen had been retained despite the Geddes recommendations and suggested that "Leeds needed not only one, but a good many women police to undertake patrol work."¹²⁰

Mr Haigh was resoundingly defeated at the municipal election and the Watch Committee, bowing to the weight of opinion, agreed that a female enquiry officer should be appointed to the force. She was Florence Strickland, a widow and ex-schoolteacher, and a few months later she

was established as a regular policewoman.¹²¹ By the mid-1920s there were again two policewomen in Leeds but a campaign to oppose the dismissal of one of these in 1930 when economic constraints were again severe was unsuccessful.¹²²

Throughout the inter-war period women councillors in Leeds continued to press for the appointment of more women officers. Thus, Mary Pearce writing in the Leeds Weekly Citizen in 1933 argued that there was a wealth of work women could undertake in the police force. Even if their role were limited to work among women and children as recommended by the Home Office, they had a valuable contribution to make. She cited successful incidents of women police being employed in Bristol, Bolton, Nottingham and Sheffield, stressed the preventative nature of their work and how they could reinforce attempts to enforce the norms of sexual morality.¹²³ Little progress was, however, possible in the face of continuing hostility from many quarters and the economic difficulties faced by local councils, particularly in the early 1930s.

The campaign was not restricted to the major cities. In Rotherham, in 1923, a meeting of the WCA, presided over by Emily Slack,¹²⁴ one of the town's first women magistrates, was addressed by Alison Neilans of the Association for Social and Moral Hygiene on the issue of compulsory notification of venereal disease and by Commandant Mary Allen on the need for women police.¹²⁵ Commandant Allen had worked under Miss Damer Dawson during the First World War as one of a trained body of uniformed women, known as the Women Police Service, who were responsible for controlling women workers in government munition factories and for "acting as agents of morals control" in towns like Grantham where large

numbers of soldiers were stationed.¹²⁶ After the war the WPS had been eschewed by Sir Nevil Macready, Commissioner of the Police for the Metropolis, on the grounds that the women were too closely linked to the militant suffrage movement and of too high a class and too well educated to blend in successfully with the male force. He preferred to recruit and train his own women, "broadminded, kindly, sensible women who would bring to bear common sense in their dealings with their sisters. . . ."¹²⁷ Commandant Allen had subsequently transformed the WPS into the Women's Auxiliary Service which provided trained women for service in Ireland and on the Rhine and embarked on a countrywide propaganda campaign on the need for more women police.¹²⁸

She pointed out to her audience in Rotherham that women police were needed to patrol the streets, parks and open spaces where their presence would act as a deterrent not only to children but to men and women and help to reduce the number of child abuse cases. Other work which they could successfully undertake was the taking of statements from children, inspecting cinemas and dealing with female prisoners from the time of their arrest which should only be entrusted to women to their appearance in court when they should always be accompanied by a woman.¹²⁹

Following Commandant Allen's visit a deputation approached the Rotherham Watch Committee which appeared to accept the necessity for women police but resolved to defer any decision for twelve months on the grounds of cost.¹³⁰ A decision was again deferred in 1924 and despite the success of the Rotherham WCA in securing the election of their candidate, Mary Maclagan,¹³¹ to the Rotherham Town Council in November of that year, all subsequent approaches to the Watch Committee met with similar prevarication.¹³²

In 1924 Commandant Allen visited Halifax where she again argued that there were certain police duties which women were better equipped to carry out than men and listed similar examples to those she had given in Rotherham. She was also careful to stress that women would not be employed instead of men, that they would complement the work of the male constabulary, that they "wished to bring a different point of view into the police force."

Commandant Allen's arguments evidently found favour with her audience as a committee was formed to interview the watch committee and press the case for the appointment of two policewomen. This delegation included Mrs Lightowler, recently elected as the town's first woman councillor, and all the women magistrates. Lady Fisher-Smith JP, speaking on behalf of her colleagues, said all women magistrates would welcome the assistance of women police, particularly when they were dealing with young girls who would feel more at ease in the presence of a policewoman and consequently offer fuller and more satisfactory evidence.¹³³ Halifax Watch committee could not agree and continued to use the services of a policematron throughout the inter-war period.

It was in the towns of the West Riding like Rotherham and Halifax where police forces were smaller and women and children were not deemed to be so vulnerable to the moral dangers of the big cities, that the campaign for the appointment of women police officers was least successful. In Barnsley where there were only two women councillors, neither of whom was appointed to the Watch Committee, the 1935 NCW petition requesting all watch committees to ensure that local police authorities appoint an adequate number of trained policewomen

who shall include among their duties the taking of statements from women and children when allegations of sexual offences are under

investigation and such detective duties as can most appropriately be performed by women"

was totally ignored.¹³⁴ In Bradford, however, when Kathleen Chambers was made a member of the Watch Committee although she had not expressly sought to serve on it,¹³⁵ she immediately commenced a campaign to secure the appointment of a woman officer and after several deputations from the city's women's organisations had approached the Watch Committee one was appointed in 1925 and her services were retained throughout the inter-war period.¹³⁶ Dr Margaret Sharp reported to the NCW Women and Police Patrols Sectional Committee in 1932 that the woman officer had been working effectively in Bradford for the past five years but she equally stressed the problems that had to be addressed: the reluctance of the Chief Constable to use a uniformed woman on patrol work, the difficulty of persuading the force to provide suitable accommodation, the disadvantage the woman officer faced in not having the power of arrest. In her opinion one of the greatest difficulties lay in finding the right type of woman with a proper training for the work.¹³⁷ Attempts to implement a more comprehensive scheme with the addition of more women police when a new, more sympathetic Chief Constable was appointed in 1931, were unsuccessful.¹³⁸

In Sheffield the Watch Committee's decision not to replace one of the policewomen who resigned in 1921 was attacked by Gertrude Wilkinson and Alderman Harry Marsh whose wife was a member of the NCW's national magistrates' committee. They argued that rather than reduce the number of policewomen, in the interests of women, young girls and children their numbers should be increased and extended use made of their services.¹³⁹ Following the publication of the Home Office's report on women police in 1924 Councillor Mrs Longden who, although

a member of the Citizens' Group was supported by the Labour member, Councillor Humberstone, waged a year long battle with her colleagues on the Watch committee in an attempt to secure the appointment of four more women officers in Sheffield. On two occasions she engineered the referral back by full Council of the Watch Committee's decision not to recommend the appointment of any additional policewomen. Instead she persuaded the full Council to recommend that four additional women be appointed, secured her own appointment to the Police Force sub-committee that dealt with recruitment and encouraged a deputation from the Sheffield NCW and the local women Justices of the Peace to attend a meeting of the Watch committee. After further prevarication the Watch committee reached a compromise solution and agreed to the appointment of two additional women.¹⁴⁰

In 1932 a lively debate took place in the Council chamber when a number of male councillors questioned the decision of the Watch Committee further to increase the number of policewomen. Revealing a widespread misunderstanding of the nature of a policewoman's duties they queried in particular the role of women constables in the courts, a role that was stoutly defended by Mrs Moore and Mrs Longden although their efforts were somewhat hampered by a marked reluctance to elaborate on the delicate side of the work involved. Ada Moore took refuge in a sarcastic retort to one of the unmarried male critics:

The duties of policewomen do not consist of sitting in the police court. Their work is done behind the scenes. I hope some day some lady will take charge of Councillor Chambers and make him think.¹⁴¹

When Alderman Thraves, Chairman of the Watch Committee, had confirmed that a policewoman's duties were particularly involved with collecting evidence and making

enquiries of a kind which it would be difficult or almost impossible for a man to make, the two new appointments were confirmed.¹⁴² Sheffield, together with Birmingham and Glasgow, had the largest establishment of women police in the provincial cities during the inter-war period and, as Commandent Allen advised the Annual Meeting of the Manchester, Salford and District Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, a policewoman was assigned to every case in which a woman was involved and no policemen were allowed to take statements from women.¹⁴³

Mrs Hall JP when addressing the NCW Women and Police Patrols Sectional Committee on whether they should support Ellen Wilkinson's bill asking for the amendment of the 1882 Municipal Corporations Act to include "a sufficient number of fit women to be Borough constables", argued that such an approach did not get to the root of the problem. In her view the successful appointment of women police in Sheffield was due primarily to the efforts of Mrs Longden as a member of the Watch Committee. If the NCW wished to secure the appointment of women police in other towns they should concentrate on securing the admission of women to Watch Committees where, moreover, they would be in a position to ensure that the women police were fully attested and pensionable as they were in Sheffield.¹⁴⁴ This was not the case in many other towns. Mrs Longden's presence on the Watch Committee may have been effective in Sheffield but Mrs Hall's supposition was not universally valid as both Halifax and Manchester had women councillors on their Watch Committees and they were unable to sway their male colleagues; Annie Lee in Manchester did manage to secure the appointment of a woman police surgeon.¹⁴⁵

As in so many other areas, however, not all women were united over the desirability of women police. Many Working-class women, in particular, although admitting that valuable work could be performed by women officers, considered their appointment unwarrantable on the grounds that it would offer middle-class women a further excuse to interfere in their lives. The introduction of what was widely seen as merely another branch of welfare work was keenly resented by many.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the majority of Labour women councillors seem to have supported the campaign.

There were other forms of work that women councillors considered were particularly suitable for women. In 1929 Jeannie Arnott defended the Leeds Improvement Committee's decision to recommend the appointment of two women house property managers who would be responsible for implementing the Octavia Hill system of rent collection. There was strong opposition to such a proposal on the grounds of cost, that the women would be taking jobs from male clerks and that the "welfare" aspect of their work represented unacceptable interference in the lives of council tenants. Jeannie Arnott argued, however, that it was in the interests of the Council that they should be appointed as many tenants were not ideal householders and would benefit from the advice and guidance these women could give. Hopefully their homes would consequently be better maintained. Women councillors were not, however, unanimous in their views. Conservative councillor, Mrs Blanche Leigh, whilst admiring the work of Octavia Hill, deplored any official interference in family life: "the idea that a woman should go and try to reform another in her own private house was loathsome, and the adoption of it would only arouse indignation." She also made an appeal to provincial pride; why should they have to turn

to women from the South "to find out how to keep the house."¹⁴⁷

Only a few towns appointed women house property managers in the inter-war period. Again it often took a woman with knowledge of the Octavia Hill system and the conviction that the work of women rent collectors was of considerable value to secure their appointment. Thus, in Chesterfield, the management of council houses had initially been divided between various officials. In 1923, however, when a large number of tenants were rehoused in new homes a health visitor had been placed in charge of the houses. She was succeeded by a woman with experience of social work but no training in property management. Two years later the Joint Estates Committee which consisted of members of the Council and of tenants' representatives was persuaded with the help of Violet Markham to visit two London housing estates managed under the Octavia Hill system. "This proved a revelation in what close attention can do for house property and removed the prejudices of the Council against women managers."¹⁴⁸ Consequently, in 1927, Chesterfield became the first local authority to appoint a woman house property manager. With her intimate knowledge of the needs of the people of Chesterfield through her involvement with the Chesterfield Settlement Violet Markham saw the woman house property manager as essentially a social worker. She could understand why some people considered the appointment of women with degrees and a technical training which necessitated paying them at a rate proportionate to their qualifications as "mere foolishness." In her opinion, however, such women if they performed their duties with knowledge, experience, tact and sympathy, were "valuable instruments of social progress."¹⁴⁹ In the next two

years 22 women managers and assistants were appointed by 14 local authorities.

Jobs for single women in the police force or as property managers who, as in other professions, were expected to retire on marriage, were defensible. Indeed, despite continuing assumptions on the part of government and trade unions that women would marry and leave the workforce, women themselves came increasingly to realise that there existed an often overlooked body of older, single women who had no alternative means of support. Frequently struggling to meet the needs of elderly or ailing dependents they had difficulty in keeping or finding positions as they grew older and few survived long enough to benefit from the meagre pension paid to insured working women when they reached the age of sixty-five.¹⁵⁰ Poorly organised and virtually ignored by male society the claims of the impoverished spinster could only be defended by other women.

Women councillors pressed for equal pay and terms of service. Despite the determination of non-Socialist groups to keep down the rates, women councillors were not prepared to see women penalised. Blanche Leigh in Leeds, for instance, argued the injustice of women teachers receiving lower salaries than men when many would never have an opportunity of marrying.¹⁵¹ Four years later, in 1932, when the tiny Liberal group on Leeds City Council moved referral back of the Education Committee's minutes approving the appointment of two women to the headship of mixed schools with children up to eleven years of age on the grounds that women were not competent to deal with boys, Labour member, Bertha Quinn, not only poured scorn on such a suggestion but deplored the fact that the women were to be paid lower salaries than men holding similar positions.¹⁵² Ada Moore, in Sheffield, openly admitted

that "as far as women's wages were concerned she was prepared to go against the usual parsimonious view of her party" when defending the right of retired charwomen who had been in the employ of the Council to a reasonable pension.¹⁵³ Her sympathies for the plight of the single working woman prompted her to become president of the Sheffield branch of Florence White's National Spinsters Pensions Association which campaigned in the late 1930s for the pensionable age for women to be reduced to fifty-five.¹⁵⁴

Attitudes to married women's work were less clear cut. The Victorian ideology of the paramountcy of motherhood and devotion to family which had excluded middle-class married women from the workplace was reinforced in the inter-war period by the economic weapon of the marriage bar which was rigorously enforced by local authorities anxious to be seen to be taking some action to combat high levels of unemployment. Thus, whereas in Sheffield a shortage of teachers in the immediate post-war period had prompted the Education Committee to recommend in 1920 that "efficient" married women teachers should be placed on the permanent teaching staff,¹⁵⁵ this decision was rescinded in 1923 when the Elementary School Management Sub-Committee resolved

that it be a condition in all future appointments of women teachers that the engagement shall be terminable by one month's notice, in writing, on either side, or immediately on the marriage of the woman teacher.

A policy of interviewing all married women teachers and recommending that their engagement should be terminated unless they could prove extenuating circumstances was also adopted.¹⁵⁶

Women councillors in Leeds, Sheffield, and Rotherham, all of which imposed a marriage bar against women

teachers,¹⁵⁷ rarely opposed the dismissal of women teachers on marriage. In other towns like Barnsley and Keighley there were no women councillors and co-opted members of education committees had little influence. In Keighley, for instance, where there was widespread public opposition to the dismissal of Mrs Bellfield, Headmistress of Eastwood Girls' Council School, a parental petition with over 400 signatures and a strike by most of the girls failed to secure a reversal of the decision.¹⁵⁸

In certain cases, however, women councillors questioned the wisdom of dismissing married woman professionals, particularly where their work was intimately involved with the needs of women and children. Hence, in 1934, when Sheffield Health Committee proposed to dismiss four married women doctors who worked on a part-time basis at the infant welfare clinics, Mrs Longden was associated with her NCW colleagues and representatives from the Federation of University Women and the Women's Freedom League in requesting the committee to reconsider its decision "having in view the peculiar qualifications of married medical women for the work in question."¹⁵⁹

Moreover, a blanket dismissal of all local authority women employees did not always go unchallenged. In Barnsley, in 1939, a Council resolution that no married women should be employed unless their husbands were without work and that a regular review of the circumstances of such women should be made provoked little opposition.¹⁶⁰ However, when the Leeds Establishment Committee had proposed in early 1938 that married women, "except in special circumstances, are not to be eligible for appointment to permanent posts, and girls occupying such posts must retire on marriage", there was vigorous opposition on the part of both Conservative and Labour women councillors. Despite Socialist and trade union

espousal of the concept of the "family wage" which, it was argued, should be sufficient to ensure that a working-class woman need not work, and the adoption of middle-class values that viewed the ability to maintain a wife as a measure of male respectability, Labour women councillors defended a married woman's right to freedom of choice and to economic independence. In an atmosphere reminiscent of the heady days of the women's suffrage movement, Lilian Hammond passionately declared her belief in the equality of the sexes and in companionate marriage that did not constitute a fulltime career for the woman but a mutual agreement between husband and wife. "If a woman feels she should continue in employment when she is married, it should not be the work of the Corporation to say that she is banned." Another Labour member, Mary Pearce, whilst accepting that the majority of women would want to stay at home, rounded on her male colleagues who belonged to a "Party which is supposed to stand for equality and liberty and freedom" for supporting the resolution and denying women who had no children or women who preferred to work the right to choose: "Why should we say to a gifted woman, 'You must cease using your brains and stay at home and wash up'?" Winifred Shutt further pointed out that many homes needed the wife's earnings to supplement the low wages of the husband: "There are many working-class homes which are only able to keep going because the wives are able to earn their own living."¹⁶¹ Most vehement of all was Conservative councillor, Gertrude Stevenson, who argued that the Council's proposal represented an unwarrantable interference in an individual woman's freedom to control her own life. Invoking the demographic disquiet of the period, she suggested that to expect women to give up work on marriage was counterproductive: the dilemma the whole principle presented to women forced to chose between

work and marriage would only encourage "our finest women to remain single."¹⁶²

The question of married women's right to work was addressed by former Sheffield councillor, Eleanor Barton, in her Women's Co-operative Guild pamphlet Married Women and Paid Positions: A Plea for Solidarity Amongst the Workers. Mrs Barton was equally convinced that women should have the freedom to chose their own destiny. She pointed out that not all women were suited to a domestic role and if specially qualified for a particular job, it was nonsensical for such a training to be wasted and for all women to be compelled to do only one kind of work.¹⁶³ She pleaded for more freedom for self-development, not only for women but equally for men and whilst admitting that even for men the choices were frequently constrained, argued that there was no reason why, for women, there should be even fewer opportunities.¹⁶⁴ She dismissed arguments that the employment of married women would take jobs from those without work; as unemployment was highest amongst unskilled workers it seemed improbable that many would be able to step into the shoes of skilled married women. Moreover by generating additional income married women would rather be in a position to create employment amongst tradesmen and less skilled women: "Would it lessen unemployment to compel her to do her own homework and discharge a domestic servant?"¹⁶⁵

Eleanor Barton's analysis of the problem went further than purely personal and economic considerations. She recognised that attempts to foment tensions between single and married women over the right to work were creating divisions in the Women's Movement. She warned that the "outcry . . . against the married woman holding a paid position . . . is playing into the hands of those

who have always been against the forward movements of women."¹⁶⁶ Moreover she recognised that the exclusion of married women from the formal economy was depriving them of political power and condemning them to a marginal position:

It is especially important to have married women in paid positions because of the necessity of married women being represented by married women in Parliament, on public bodies, and such bodies as Trade Union Executives, Co-operative Boards and Committees.¹⁶⁷

It seems unlikely, however, that her arguments would have carried much weight amongst other Co-operative women who were, for the main part, members of the respectable working-class and subscribed to traditional views of the married woman as homemaker. They are, nevertheless, representative of the wider view among Labour women in general which was reflected in an essay competition for readers of Labour Woman in 1934 on the subject "Should Married Women Work?". This attracted over a hundred entries and was won by Marie Singleton of Mexborough whose advocacy of married women's right to work was echoed by 75 per cent of the entrants.¹⁶⁸ Far from being isolated voices, therefore, those women councillors who did oppose Council resolutions to bar married women from the workplace were articulating a widespread and growing discontent with male-defined patterns of working imposed upon them in the inter-war period.

First Citizen

Although the mayor of a town or city is without executive power, the position confers a substantial degree of prestige and prominence. Moreover the duties of chief citizen entail a considerable sacrifice of time and considerable personal expense. In the inter-war period a mayor's duties involved presiding at full Council

meetings, membership of all Council committees and, by virtue of the office, chairmanship of the local bench. Moreover, there were, as there are today, a great number of ceremonial duties to be performed.

As mayors women were even more in the public eye than they were as councillors and considerable comment was expressed when they were first elected. The first woman mayor had been the elderly Elizabeth Garrett Anderson who had retired to the Suffolk town of Aldeburgh and became mayor in 1908, one year after her initial election to the town council.¹⁶⁹ In Oldham, in 1910, Mrs Sarah Lees's immense wealth and local munificence precipitated her into the mayoralty, although as Lady Frances Balfour wrote "the fierce masculine mind simply shuddered at the idea." Paradoxically "the anti-suffragist Asquith found himself required to invent suitable honours to bestow on ladies who were serving as mayors while unable at parliamentary level to vote."¹⁷⁰ Misgivings in the mind's of many as to women's competence to perform the duties of mayor satisfactorily lingered. At the close of Mrs Longden's year of office as the first woman Lord Mayor of Sheffield, for instance, the Sheffield Telegraph, suggested some of the doubts, that had been entertained when she had been chosen:

That some anxiety was felt when Mrs. Longden was invited to become Lord Mayor is true enough . . . How possibly could a lady attend the functions and gatherings at which hitherto only men had been present? Could she manifest the versatility and readiness of speech needed on all sorts of occasions? Would she let the city down? Would she be able to stand the physical strain?¹⁷¹

In the inter-war period the financial burden of the mayoralty was considerably alleviated by the introduction by most councils of a mayoral "salary" to compensate for

the expense involved in carrying out the duties and ceremonial obligations of office. In Sheffield a mayoral allowance of £1,000 was introduced in 1915.¹⁷² Until the close of the First World War the expense involved in performing the office of Lord Mayor in Leeds had frequently resulted in non-Council candidates being approached, especially wealthy retired people or prominent industrialists. This practice changed when remuneration of £2,000 for the Lord Mayor was adopted in 1918.¹⁷³ Mayors of Batley were paid an honorarium from 1929.¹⁷⁴

Nevertheless the women mayors in the West Riding between 1918 and 1939 were wealthy women and, moreover, as either widows or spinsters, were responsible for the administration of their own finances:

TABLE 6

First Women Mayors
West Riding of Yorkshire, 1918-1939

<u>Year of Election</u>	<u>Town</u>		<u>Party</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>
1927	Pudsey	Elisabeth Lund	Con	Widow
1932	Batley	Elsie Taylor	Lib	Spinster
1934	Halifax	Miriam Lightowler	Con	Widow
1936	Sheffield	Ann Longden	Con	Widow

TABLE 7

First Women Mayors
West Riding of Yorkshire, post-1939

1940	Wakefield	Fanny Stott	Con	Married
1941	Ripon	Margaret Steven	Ind	Married
1941	York	Edna Crichton	Ind	Widow
1942	Leeds	Beatrice Kitson	Lib	Spinster
1943	Rotherham	Frances Green	Lab	Married
1945	Bradford	Kathleen Chambers	Lab	Married
1945	Hudders- field	Mary Sykes	Lab	Spinster
1949	Harrogate	Mary Fisher	Con	Widow
1951	Doncaster	Rose Hodson	Lab	Married
1956	Barnsley	Mary Brannan	Lab	Married
1962	Dewsbury	Violet Ferrari	Prog	Married

TABLE 8

First Women Mayors
Some other Northern Towns, 1918-1950

1927	Chester- field	Violet Markham	Lib	Married
1927	Liverpool	Margaret Beavan	Con	Spinster
1947	Manchester	Mary Kingsmill Jones	Con	Spinster

As soon as a woman was elected mayor, the question of who would perform the duties of mayoress arose. Traditionally the mayoress would undertake a recognised round of

charitable and philanthropic engagements as well as accompanying her husband on social occasions. In particular she was expected to address a number of women's meetings and open bazaars, sales of work and exhibitions mounted by women's organisations. It was felt, therefore, that it was not possible for a man to fulfil this role and women mayors had to turn to their female friends and relatives. Daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, cousins and female friends were all enlisted although occasionally, as in Batley and Pudsey, women mayors decided that they could manage without a mayoress.¹⁷⁵

There were uncertainties, too, as to how women mayors should be addressed. When Mrs Lightowler became mayor of Halifax in 1934 no definite rules had been laid down. With no concessions to feminist language it was agreed that she would be addressed as "Mr Mayor" in Council and "Your Worship" in private conversation.¹⁷⁶ By the time Mary Sykes became mayor of Huddersfield in 1945 the Society of Town Clerks had issued a bulletin entitled "Methods of Addressing Mayors when Females" which concluded that the "general consensus of opinion is that the happiest and most dignified forms of address are Mr. Mayor and His Worship the Mayor." As Mary Sykes pointed out women had been content to accept the title of alderman.¹⁷⁷

As the Sheffield Telegraph had suggested, the advent of women mayors necessitated changes in long established gender-specific customs. It was, for instance, the practice to invite the mayors of neighbouring towns to the annual Cutlers' Feast in Sheffield. In 1928 the problem arose of how to accommodate Miss Markham, Mayor of Chesterfield. She justifiably refused an invitation that consigned her to the Ladies' Gallery:

Since my fellow citizens have thought fit this year to make me their chief magistrate, I could not, with due regard to the prestige of my town, accept any lesser position at the Cutlers' Feast than that usually accorded to a Mayor of Chesterfield.

Miss Markham further pointed out that one day there could be a woman Lord Mayor of Sheffield. How would she be treated?¹⁷⁸ In the event an insult to the city's first citizen would have been unthinkable and Mrs Longden became the first woman to attend the Cutlers' Feast in 1937.

Dress also posed problems for women mayors, as it did for all women who were endeavouring to enter male spheres. Most erred on the side of caution, anxious to stand out no more than necessary from their male colleagues. Thus, for the Cutlers' Feast Mrs Longden had a black skirt and jacket made with which she wore a white blouse. For women like Mrs Longden who was short and dumpy there were also problems with the mayoral robes which totally enveloped her. At considerable cost to herself she determined to have a new set made to suit the shorter figure.¹⁷⁹ In Leeds the mayoral robes had to be shortened as Miss Kitson was also small. In addition to voluminous robes, there was ridiculous headgear to struggle with. Miss Kitson refused to wear the traditional mayoral headgear and when confronted with its Napoleonic structure and tossing ostrich feathers pronounced: "There has never been a Lord Mayor yet who didn't look foolish wearing that hat." She had a smart tricorne made that was devoid of feathers.¹⁸⁰ Mrs Caroline Harpur of Nottingham similarly turned to her milliner for inspiration when she was made Sheriff in 1931.¹⁸¹

Undoubtedly a woman mayor's successful year of office helped to broaden the boundaries of women's experience in public life. As mayors women were expected to carry out the whole range of duties demanded of a town's first citizen. The traditional separation of duties between a mayor and his mayoress were accomplished by a woman mayor being accorded the status of a man and another woman being found to carry out the womanly duties of mayoress. Within local government service, itself, however, it has been seen that women carved out a niche for themselves on the strength of the peculiar contribution they had to offer to carefully identified spheres of activity of which they could already claim prior experience or which they felt impinged directly on the lives of women, children and "deserving" members of the local community. They were not, of course, only involved with the issues and campaigns that have been explored in this chapter but they themselves regularly identified the areas of public health, housing, and education as their particular province and this is reflected in the types of committee work that they undertook when elected. Moreover, whenever they moved out from those committees intimately involved with the health, welfare and education of the electorate, they frequently endeavoured to introduce a feminine dimension as did women councillors, for instance, on local watch committees when they espoused the cause of women police.

By claiming a limited sphere of interest, however, there was a danger that it would be assumed, as it evidently was in some of the smaller towns, that only a small number of women councillors were needed to perform specific tasks and that the major part of the work of councils was still the preserve of men. As Margaret Law suggested in Bradford in 1922

the lives of all women in the city were vitally affected by the work of the City Council and [voters] should not be satisfied until every ward had at least one [woman] representative on it.¹⁸²

However, it can be argued that this failure to claim an equal brief for men and women councillors constrained women's chances of nomination. Wider considerations which militated against women's greater success in the sphere of local government are explored in chapter seven.

Footnotes

- 1 Sheffield Co-operator, Nov 1936, p 2.
- 2 Wakefield Express, Oct 3 1931, p 11.
- 3 Brenda Powell: A Study of the Change in Social Origin, Political Affiliation and Length of Service of Members of the Leeds City Council, 1888-1953, pp 227-8.
- 4 Minute Book of the Leeds Labour Women's Advisory Council Jan 13 1932 - Jan 24 1940, Minutes of meeting, Nov 8 1933. The election of a Labour woman alderman could have been justified to balance the Conservatives' decision to elect Beryl Gott as Leeds first woman alderman in 1930.
- 5 Judith Watts and Donald Nannestad: The First 50 Years: Half-Century of Labour Rule in Barnsley, p 17.
- 6 A Ripon Record 1887-1986, pp 100 + 105.
- 7 City of Bradford Official Records of Council Meetings 1945-46, Lord Mayor's Address at the Annual Meeting of the Bradford City Council on Nov 9 1945, p 8.
- 8 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 29 1925, p 8.
- 9 Halifax Courier, Oct 25 1919, p 8.
- 10 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Oct 13 1932, p 2.
- 11 ibid, Dec 8 1933, p 4.
- 12 See Barbara McFarlane: "Homes fit for heroines: housing in the twenties", pp 29 + 32-4. Their demands included "a separate workroom for cooking and food preparation; a separate bathroom; a front parlour; labour saving devices (such as hot and cold running water, a kitchen range which did not involve stooping, with easy clean finishes); and play spaces for both older and younger children."
- 13 Leeds Mercury, 3 Feb 1938, p 7. See also Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 446-7.
- 14 Details compiled from Sheffield Year Books, 1920-39.
- 15 Details compiled from Leeds City Council Year Books, 1921-39.
- 16 The front cover of Eleanor Barton's leaflet for the municipal election in the Sheffield Attercliffe ward

- in 1920 is reproduced as Appendix F of this thesis.
For Mrs Tansley, see Leeds Mercury, Oct 3 1930, p 6.
- 17 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 29 1925, p 8.
 - 18 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, p 448.
 - 19 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Nov 1 1930, p 12.
 - 20 Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian, Nov 9 1934, p 7.
 - 21 See article on Cllr Grace Corner in Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, May 5 1937, p 4.
 - 22 For Mrs Green and Mrs Moorhouse, see ibid.
 - 23 See Anna Davin: "Imperialism and Motherhood", pp 11-12.
 - 24 Anna Davin: ibid, p 10.
 - 25 See Appendix G for comparative infantile mortality rates for Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford and England & Wales between 1900 and 1938.
 - 26 Notes on Public Health in Wakefield During the 19th Century and From 1901-1935, p 43.
 - 27 Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904, Minutes of Evidence, p 309.
 - 28 ibid, p 313.
 - 29 ibid, p 315.
 - 30 Sheffield Maternity and Child Welfare Services, typescript in Sheffield City Library.
 - 31 "Sheffield Motherhood League" in The Smoke Abatement Exhibition Handbook for March 1st to 20th 1909, pp 25-9.
 - 32 Leeds Babies Welcome Annual Report for Year Ending 30 Sept 1910, pp 5 + 7.
 - 33 Leeds Babies Welcome Annual Report for Year Ending 30 Sept 1911, p 5.
 - 34 Leeds Babies Welcome Association Annual Report for Year Ending 31st March 1926, p 12. By 1932 there were twenty-two.
 - 35 Details taken from Notes on Public Health in Wakefield, pp 43-51.

- 36 The phrase was coined by Mrs Kitson Clark, the chairman of the Yorkshire Federation for Maternity and Child Welfare - see ibid, p 46.
- 37 Wakefield adopted a district system of welfare. Each health visitor had her own district in which she carried out all the duties connected with maternity and child welfare, the school medical service, and tubercular and mentally deficient patients. Hence the juxtaposition of mental and child welfare issues on the one committee - see ibid, p 44.
- 38 For Effie Crowe (Lab), see Wakefield Express, Oct 12 1935, p 5; Sept 15 1945, p 3 and March 30 1979, p 7 (obituary) and Fanny Stott (Con), Wakefield Express, May 27 1961, p 1 (obituary).
- 39 Wakefield Express, Oct 3 1931, p 11.
- 40 Jane Lewis: The Politics of Motherhood, in particular p 16.
- 41 ibid, p 10.
- 42 Sheffield Telegraph, 4 Aug 1930, p 4.
- 43 Sheffield Co-operator, March 1936, p 6.
- 44 Conversation with Miss Ann Wright, 24 Jan 1990.
- 45 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 3 1933, p 5.
- 46 Yorkshire Post, Nov 2 1928, p 5. The Yorkshire Home for Mothers and Babies was opened at Withernsea in 1932. An additional home was opened in Harrogate in 1935 - see Notes on Public Health in Wakefield, p 40.
- 47 See John Stevenson: British Society 1914-1945, pp 217-8.
- 48 Wakefield Express, Oct 12 1935, p 5. The average death rate of mothers was four to five per 1000; that from fatal accidents in the mining industry was 1.1 per 1000 working miners. Figures quoted in Dora Russell: The tamarisk tree: my quest for liberty and love, p 171.
- 49 Audrey Leathard: The Fight for Family Planning, pp 1-2.
- 50 It was 28.2 per thousand population in England & Wales in 1901-5, 20 in 1916-20, 16.7 in 1926-30 and 14.7 in 1936-40 - John Stevenson: op cit, p 148. See Appendix B for local figures.

- 51 Jane Lewis: The Politics of Motherhood, p 196.
- 52 Audrey Leathard: op.cit, p 8.
- 53 See Anna Davin: "Imperialism and Motherhood", p 45. The letters were published in 1915 as Maternity: Letters from Working Women (reprinted London, Virago, 1978).
- 54 For Stopes's arguments, see Jane Lewis: The Politics of Motherhood, pp 204-5.
- 55 Jane Lewis: ibid, p 192. Labour Women discussed birth control at their Conferences in 1924, 1925, and 1927. (The Conference planned to take place in Huddersfield in 1926 was postponed for a year because of the industrial situation.)
- 56 Beatrix Campbell: The Iron Ladies, p 64; Armley and Wortley News, Nov 4 1927, p 9.
- 57 Jane Lewis: op.cit, p 212.
- 58 Jane Lewis: ibid.
- 59 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1938-39, p 4.
- 60 Audrey Leathard: op.cit, p 62.
- 61 For Mabel Baker, see Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Sept 25 1931, p 5.
- 62 Details taken from the Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Reports for 1936-37, 1937-38, and 1938-39.
- 63 See Mary Stocks: My Commonplace Book, pp 160-3.
- 64 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1936-37, p 4.
- 65 See Janet Cockcroft: Not a Proper Doctor: the life and times of an off-cumden in Halifax (published by the author, Halifax, 1987), p 38.
- 66 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1936-37, p 6. Mary Stocks found the majority of patients in Manchester were "mothers with over-large families or sad stories of miscarriages, and deplorable health records." See My Commonplace Book p 162.

- 67 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1936-37, p3.
- 68 ibid, p 5.
- 69 ibid, p 7.
- 70 Sheffield Co-operator, March 1936, p 6.
- 71 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1938-39, p 4.
- 72 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1937-38, p 3.
- 73 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1938-39, pp 6-8.
- 74 Mary Stocks: op.cit, p 162.
- 75 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1936-37, p 4. The titles included Marriage by Dr Helena Wright, Marriage and Parenthood published by the Society of Friends, Sex Education for Children by Dr C P Blacker and To Those Thinking of Marriage published by Socialists in Cambridge. They cost from 1d to 3d.
- 76 Sheffield Women's Welfare Clinic Annual Report for 1937-38, p 4.
- 77 Armley and Wortley News, Oct 28 1927, p 12.
- 78 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Aug 4 1922, p 6 and Oct 6 1922, p 6.
- 79 Sheffield Forward, June 1922, p 1.
- 80 Education in Bradford Since 1870, pp 149-56.
- 81 City of Bradford Official Records of Council Meetings 1945-46, Lord Mayor's Address at the Annual Meeting of the Bradford City Council on Nov 9 1945, p 9.
- 82 Education in Bradford since 1870, p 154.
- 83 Bradford Pioneer, June 17 1932, p 5.
- 84 ibid, p 4.
- 85 The following account is taken from the Bradford Pioneer, June 24 1932, p 5. The conservative

Bradford Telegraph & Argus carried only a short account of the debate - 22 June 1932, p 10.

- 86 "The Maud Maxwell School for Deaf Children" in The Caledonian Society of Sheffield News Letter, No 57 (March 1968), pp 2-3. Maud Maxwell also worked on behalf of the mentally handicapped and a tribute to her work can be found in the Sheffield Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare Annual Report for 1939-40, p 4.
- 87 "Official Opening of Bents Green Open-Air School", Local Pamphlet Collection, Vol 128, No 2.
- 88 Daily Independent, 8 June 1938, p 9; Sheffield Co-operator, Nov 1936, p 2.
- 89 Cllr Mrs Shutt, Leeds Weekly Citizen, Sept 14 1951, p 8.
- 90 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, May 9 1934, p 3.
- 91 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Sept 14 1951, p 8.
- 92 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 2 1951, p 3.
- 93 H J Hammerton who described the Rev Charles Jenkinson's unfortunately timed arrival in Holbeck, Leeds in a hired car on a Monday in July 1927, commented that "any vicar in South Leeds who is fortunate enough to possess a car to help him in his visiting knows that he might as well leave it at home on Monday because most of the streets are impassible owing to numberless lines of clothing strung across every street." See This Turbulent Priest, (Lutterworth Press, London, 1952), p 69.
- 94 Leeds Weekly Citizen, March 2 1928, p 5.
- 95 ibid.
- 96 ibid, Oct 13 1933, p 2.
- 97 ibid.
- 98 ibid, Jan 13 1933, p 12.
- 99 For Lilian Hammond, see ibid, July 29 1938, p 8 and Oct 12 1951, p 3.
- 100 ibid, Nov 12 1937, p 8.
- 101 ibid, June 3 1932, p 3.

- 102 ibid, Oct 13 1933, p 2.
- 103 Hannah Mitchell, The Hard Way Up, p 207.
- 104 See John Carrier: "The Control of Women by Women: The Women Police", p 17; Arthur Marwick: Women at War, p 40.
- 105 Ewart W Clay (ed): The Leeds Police 1836-1974, pp 70-1.
- 106 Quoted in ibid, p 71.
- 107 Yorkshire Post, 21 Dec 1918 and Yorkshire Observer, 9 Jan 1919 in Matthewman Press Cuttings - Leeds Municipal, 1915-1925.
- 108 Ewart W Clay (ed): op.cit, pp 74-5 + 78.
Mrs Parrish's appointment was widely reported. See, for instance, Yorkshire Post, 21 Dec 1918 and Yorkshire Observer, 9 Jan 1919.
- 109 National Council of Women Sheffield Branch: One Hundred and Five Years of Active Work, pp 1-2.
- 110 Sheffield City Council Minutes: Meeting of the Watch Committee, 29 Nov 1917.
- 111 John Carrier: op.cit, p 18.
- 112 Ewart W Clay (ed): op.cit, p 78.
- 113 Yorkshire Post, 1 May 1922, p 5.
- 114 June Hannam's biography, Isabella Ford, was published in 1989.
- 115 Yorkshire Post, 26 April 1922, p 4.
- 116 Yorkshire Post, 4 May 1922, p 7.
- 117 Proceedings of the Leeds City Council 1921-1922, Meeting of the Watch Committee, 5 May 1922.
- 118 ibid.
- 119 Yorkshire Post, Oct 21 1922, p 14.
- 120 ibid, Oct 31 1922, p 4.
- 121 Ewart W Clay (ed): op.cit, p 78.
- 122 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 11 1932, p 5.

- 123 ibid, April 28 1933, p 4 and Aug 25 1933, p 5.
- 124 For Emily Slack, see Rotherham Annual 1922, Portrait Gallery, no page nos, and Rotherham Advertiser, Jan 18 1930, p 6. She was chairman of the Rotherham Board of Guardians in 1921.
- 125 Rotherham Advertiser, Feb 24 1923, p 13.
- 126 John Carrier: op.cit, p 17.
- 127 Quoted in ibid, p 18.
- 128 See Mary S Allen: The Pioneer Policewoman, pp 184-212.
- 129 Rotherham Advertiser, Feb 24 1923, p 13. See Appendix H for the full list of duties Commandant Allen suggested policewomen could perform.
- 130 Woman's Leader, May 11 1923, p 118.
- 131 When she advocated the appointment of women police in her 1924 municipal election campaign, Mary Maclagan drew on similar arguments to Commandant Allen. Citing examples of favourable reports on women police employed in other towns, she claimed that the "increasing number of offences against children would be diminished" and that "women were needed for patrol work and for the taking of evidence from women and children." See Rotherham Advertiser, Nov 1 1924, p 16.
- 132 Woman's Leader, Feb 11 1927, p 1.
- 133 Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian, Nov 4 1924, p 2.
- 134 Barnsley Town Council Minutes, Meeting of the Watch Committee, 3 Dec 1935.
- 135 In her mayoral speech Kathleen Chambers recalled that when she was first elected to Bradford Council in 1921, although she had indicated that her desire was to serve on Education and Health, she was appointed to Mental Deficiency and to the Watch Committee "to look after the Police . . . or it may have been for the Police to look after her . . ." See City of Bradford Official Records of Council Meetings 1945-46, p 8.
- 136 The Vote, May 23 1930, p 161.

- 137 National Council of Women Women Police Patrols Sectional Committee Minutes, Meeting on March 15 1932.
- 138 Woman's Leader, April 17 1931, p 82.
- 139 Sheffield City Council Minutes, Meeting of Council, 14 Dec 1921.
- 140 ibid, Meetings of Council, 11 Feb 1925 and 8 July 1925; Meeting of the Watch Committee, 5 Feb 1925 and 19 Feb 1925; Meeting of the Police Force Sub-Committee, 8 June 1925, 3 Sept 1925 and 17 Sept 1925.
- 141 Sheffield Co-operator, March 1931, p 2.
- 142 Accounts of the debate were also given in The Vote, Feb 12 1932, p 51 and Commandant Allen's glossy The Policewoman's Review, Vol V, No 11 (March 1932), p 124.
- 143 Manchester and Salford Woman Citizen, Nov 20 1928, p 4.
- 144 National Council of Women Women Police Patrols Sectional Committee Minutes, Meeting on Nov 17 1925.
- 145 Manchester & Salford Woman Citizen, April 20 1933, p 16.
- 146 Leeds Weekly Citizen, April 28 1933, p 4.
- 147 Yorkshire Post, 6 June 1929, p 12.
- 148 Manchester and Salford Woman Citizen, July 15 1927, p 14.
- 149 Violet Markham: Transformation of a Town: Chesterfield in Retrospect, p 7.
- 150 The Over Thirty Association was founded in 1936 to combat the injustice of women being thrown out of their posts when they grew older. Miss Florence White founded the National Spinsters' Pensions Association in Bradford in 1935 to campaign for pensions to be paid to single working women at fifty-five. See chapter seven of this thesis, pp
- 151 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Jul 6 1928, p 8.
- 152 ibid, May 6 1932 p 8.
- 153 Sheffield Co-operator, May 1932, p 2.

- 154 Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, June 9 1937, p 4.
- 155 Sheffield Education Committee Minutes, Meetings of School Management Sub-Committee, 22 Sept 1920 and 8 Nov 1920.
- 156 ibid, Meetings of School Management Sub-Committee, 26 June 1923 and 4 July 1923.
- 157 Geoffrey Partington: Women Teachers in the Twentieth Century, p 29.
- 158 ibid.
- 159 Federation of University Women, Sheffield Association: Minutes of General and Committee Meetings, May 1931 - 1954, Meeting of the Committee, Dec 13 1934.
- 160 Barnsley Town Council Minutes, Meeting of General Purposes Committee, 8 March 1939.
- 161 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 4 1938, p 4.
- 162 Leeds Mercury, 3 Feb 1938, p 4.
- 163 Eleanor Barton: Married Women and Paid Positions: A Plea for Solidarity Amongst the Workers, pp 3-4.
- 164 ibid, p 8.
- 165 ibid, p 11.
- 166 ibid, p 3.
- 167 ibid, p 10.
- 168 Labour Woman, March 1935, p 39; Pat Thane: "The Women of the British Labour Party and Feminism, 1906-1945", p 128.
- 169 Women's Local Government Society Annual Report 1910 - 1911, p 11.
- 170 Patricia Hollis: Ladies Elect, pp 404-5.
- 171 Sheffield Telegraph, Nov 8 1937, p 4.
- 172 Helen Mathers: Sheffield Municipal Politics 1893 - 1926, p 24.
- 173 Brenda Powell: A Study of the Change in Social Origins, Political Affiliation & Length of Service of Members of the Leeds City Council, 1888 - 1953, p 66.

- 174 Batley News, Nov 12 1932.
- 175 Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian, Nov 9 1934, p 7; Sheffield Telegraph, Nov 8 1937, p 4; Michael Meadowcroft: Transition in Leeds City Government 1903-1926, p 201-2 and Margaret L Suttentall: Miss Beatrice Kitson: Leeds! First Woman Lord Mayor 1942-43, p 2; Huddersfield Examiner, 10 Nov 1945; Batley News, 16 Feb 1957, p 12; Armley and Wortley News, Dec 2 1927.
- 176 Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian, Nov 9 1934, p 7.
- 177 Huddersfield Examiner, 10 Nov 1945.
- 178 The Vote, Oct 21 1932, p 340 and Sheffield Telegraph, 4 Sept 1937.
- 179 Conversation with Mr J D W Longden, 5 Jan 1988.
- 180 Margaret L Suttentall: op.cit, p 2.
- 181 Nottingham Evening News and Post, 1 Feb 1937.
- 182 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 24 1922, p 4.

CHAPTER FIVE

"An arduous and delicate task":¹ . . . Women as magistrates

Women magistrates, unlike women councillors, were not in a position to exercise a conscious decision to seek appointment. Their recommendation depended on the assessment of their abilities and aptitudes formed by their colleagues and fellow-workers in local societies and organisations who were responsible initially for putting their names forward and on the arbitrariness of a tiny, narrowly-defined group of senior local citizens whose identity was publicly unknown, as were the predispositions and criteria they adopted when judging whom they considered suitable for appointment to the Bench. Some women were so removed from actively seeking to become justices that they received the Lord Chancellor's letter of appointment as a bolt from the blue and in some cases never ascertained who had been responsible for recommending them.² The factors that determined the progress of women entering the previously all-male sphere of the magistracy were very different, therefore, from those which appertained for women who, in the final analysis, were seeking a mandate from the local electorate.

In an address to the Bradford Rotary Club in January 1943, Sir Charles Davies, a prominent Leeds solicitor, provoked considerable reaction when he suggested that few women made satisfactory magistrates. He based his verdict on the argument that the idea that women were "the best judges in matrimonial or affiliation cases was fallacious" and further condemned them for either displaying violent prejudice against their own sex or alternatively for acting as if they were on the bench solely to make orders in the interests of women and girls.³

That such hostility towards women magistrates should still be in evidence twenty-three years after they had first been appointed is perhaps surprising but it can be considered indicative of a lingering resentment against the entry of women into a sphere of activity that many had considered unsuited to their aptitudes and qualifications and where, furthermore, as the "purer" sex, they were in danger of being sullied by exposure to detailed descriptions of "unpleasant" incidents.

Needless to say, local women magistrates were quick to spring to the defence of their colleagues. Miss Neville, a Shipley justice, dismissed Sir Charles's remarks as too sweeping, whilst Bradford councillor and magistrate of eleven years' standing, Kathleen Chambers, suggested that the presence of a woman on the bench, even if she remained silent, would give a measure of reassurance to women appearing in the courtroom. She argued that with domestic cases in particular, "a woman has knowledge of prices and the cost of living which the average man has not got." Martha Leach, the wife of an ILP woollen manufacturer who represented Bradford Central for a number of years in the inter-war period, responded in particular to the sectarian charge levied against women magistrates by pointing out that "men's interests" had always been looked after and it seemed unjust that women should attract the label of "bad magistrates" solely because they felt it their responsibility to defend women's interests.⁴

Kathleen Chambers and Martha Leach were among a group of fourteen Bradford women appointed in the inter-war period to the magistracy from which women had long been excluded probably more by tradition than by any specific legal pronouncement.⁵ There is some evidence that between 1361

when the term "Justice of the Peace" first appeared in a Statute "which ordained that three or four of the most worthy in each county should be assigned to keep the peace and arrest and punish offenders"⁶ and 1919 when women were first specifically empowered by law to become magistrates, a few women may have been appointed to the Bench by virtue of their property holding qualification: until 1906 county justices had been required to hold land to the value of £100 (£20 before 1737).⁷ Stella MacLeod, for instance, quotes from Whiteside who refers to the case of Lady Berkeley, justice for Gloucestershire and Suffolk, who was appointed during Queen Mary's reign.⁸

Nevertheless, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the separation of male and female functions had become more rigidly defined and middle-class women in particular had retreated to a purely domestic and philanthropic sphere, so much so that by 1910 the Royal Commission established by the Liberal Government to advise on the appointment of Justices of the Peace reveals that doubts existed as to whether women were in fact eligible. The Royal Commission had been the outcome of pressure from members of the Labour movement who found that although the Liberal Government had removed the property qualification for magistrates in 1906, working-class men were still not being appointed in any significant numbers. In view of women's recent gains in higher education, their entry into a number of professions and their considerable commitment to philanthropy, it might have been expected that consideration of their suitability as magistrates, whose work was unpaid, should equally have been part of the Commission's remit. This was not the case. In fact, the Chairman, Lord James of Hereford, endeavoured entirely to exclude the question of women as justices from the proceedings.⁹

However, towards the end of the third day of the inquiry, the Labour member of Parliament and staunch supporter of the Women's Cause, Arthur Henderson, slipped in a question to Lord Dartmouth, the Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Stafford, enquiring what he would do should a woman's name be included in the list of recommendations. Lord Dartmouth evaded the issue by intimating that he would seek the advice of his committee, although in his experience such a case had never occurred. When pressed further, Lord Dartmouth admitted that he himself did not think a lady would be a suitable person to appoint. When asked if he would like to give his reasons why not, the reply was: "Not if the lady was anywhere about."¹⁰

The following day Henderson raised the question again with Lord Halsbury, countering the Chairman's objection that such questions were not within the remit of the Commission with the argument that the Commission had been "instructed to consider what steps could be taken to secure the appointment of suitable persons as Magistrates."¹¹ Lord Halsbury was of the opinion that it might be fitting for women to sit but only on certain cases, and the Commission had already expressed its hostility to the idea of justices being appointed on a specific basis.¹² The final Report of the Commission virtually excluded women by the masculine nature of the language it adopted:

In view of the important judicial and administrative duties which Justices of the Peace are called upon to discharge, it is necessary that persons appointed to the office should be men of moral and good personal character, general ability, business habits, independent judgement, and common sense.¹³

Nevertheless, within ten years the right of women to be appointed as magistrates had been conceded and one of the

effects of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 which theoretically facilitated women's entry into professional spheres from which they had previously been disqualified was to open up all branches of the legal profession to them.¹⁴ The recognition of the need for women magistrates had formed just one plank of a long-running campaign for women to be included in the judicial process and had proceeded hand in hand with demands for women policewomen, women police court visitors, women police surgeons and women jurors. These demands originated with the activities of the National Vigilance Association and other social purity organisations in the 1890s and were subsequently taken up by suffrage societies and the National Union of Women Workers when those concerned with women and child victims of sexual offences became increasingly convinced of the need to introduce a feminine presence into the courts and police work.¹⁵ As the appointment of women police officers and surgeons was essential to guarantee that women and children victims of sexual abuse were spared the additional suffering, embarrassment and indignity of being physically examined and then cross-examined by men so, it was argued, the appointment of women magistrates was essential to provide reassuring and understanding support for women and children obliged to give evidence under distressing circumstances. This was particularly so at a time when it was frequently the practice for courts to be cleared of all women, except the victim, in cases involving sexual abuse and, consequently, children and young girls, marooned in a world at once alien and masculine, were regularly too terrified to testify:

It is appalling to think that a frightened child must stand up in a court full of men to give her evidence, when she ought to be in a woman's lap, with only those officials present who are absolutely necessary.¹⁶

There were complaints, too, that women defendants, particularly prostitutes, were frequently subjected to harsh and degrading treatment at the hands of male officials whilst in the course of the militant campaign for the vote many women who had previously never had any experience of prison life and conditions came to learn for themselves how barbaric the treatment and sentencing of women could be. The Sheffield Independent, for instance, suggested, in language which was to find echoes in Martha Leach's arguments in 1943, that with a legal system made by men in the interests of men and administered by men, for men to sit in judgement on women was no less than "a crime in itself." It was pointed out that there were

over 2000 women and girls arrested every day and not one woman magistrate, or woman juror, or woman lawyer in the courts to balance or influence the masculine attitude of mind that will review the offence and pronounce the punishment.

Arguing that men and women should have an equal opportunity of justice and rehabilitation, the paper questioned how this could be guaranteed when "the whole procedure of a police court is in masculine control and the masculine outlook upon life the only one accepted".¹⁷

There is some evidence that women in the West Riding did endeavour to provide a feminine presence in the courts before 1919. They were women like Mrs Grosvenor Talbot of Leeds and Mrs Duff of Bradford, Nonconformists who were deeply involved in temperance or welfare work. Mrs Talbot, for instance, was a Poor Law guardian.¹⁸

Unfortunately no account of such work has been found and it is unlikely that they attained the degree of organised involvement reported by the Vigilance Sub-Committee of the Cambridge Branch of the NUWW in 1913 when a group of eighteen women undertook to attend regularly at the town

and county courts, not only to offer sympathy and moral support by their mere presence but equally to ascertain whether they could be of assistance in the handling of individual cases and to monitor the administration and requirements of the law as it affected women and children. Considerable encouragement was extended to them by the Mayor and the majority of the members of the Bench who quickly availed themselves of the women's presence as Evaline Hutchinson, one of the eighteen, recorded in an article in The Englishwoman in October that year:

From time to time the magistrates from the Bench, or the Chief Constable, as we pass in or out, will turn to us and ask us if we can undertake to have a woman visited after her imprisonment, or will see that she is looked after by some Temperance Society, or if we will talk with some woman and try and help her in her domestic difficulties.

The ladies ensured that they arrived a few minutes before the Court commenced its proceedings in an attempt to speak to any women in the waiting-rooms and to ascertain whether they were appearing as witnesses or in order to make application for a summons. Such applications were made in private at the end of the morning session but

if a Visitor finds a lonely girl waiting to make an application, and becomes acquainted with the facts of the case, the Bench will probably, if permission is asked at the proper time and in the proper way, allow her to remain whilst the girl makes her application.¹⁹

The beneficial effects of these women's presence in the courts and their informed comments on the dispensing of justice added weight to the arguments of those who urged the inclusion of women on the Bench on humanitarian grounds. Many magistrates were elderly men who were inclined to adopt a harsh and punitive attitude to sentencing despite Home Office appeals for a more

enlightened approach. In 1912, for instance, a Home Office circular complained that

many minor offenders are still committed to prison for offences for which imprisonment appears to be an inappropriate and sometimes a harmful form of punishment. . . .²⁰

Many believed that women would be prepared to swing the emphasis towards reform and not punishment, that they might treat those committed to their care with more understanding and consideration.²¹ The stipendiary magistrate in Bradford, for instance, felt that their

help and advice might enable the Bench to be in a better position to discern when offences were due more to frailty, rather than sheer wilfulness,²²

whilst the Sheffield Independent no doubt enraged some of its less enlightened readers by suggesting that the introduction of women magistrates might help to rescue the Bench from "pompous middle class gentlemen not always too well endowed with brains." This article also adversely compared women's position in England with that in areas of the Dominions like South Australia and some of the Canadian provinces and noted anomalous instances of women chairmen of boards of guardians who had to be especially created justices of the peace in order to enable them to carry out one of their essential duties as chairman, that of signing orders for paupers to be removed to asylums.²³ One example of such an anomaly can be found in Huddersfield where Miss Emily Siddon was elected chairman of the guardians in April 1913 but because of the political disabilities women faced the title of justice of the peace which she was entitled to use was purely ornamental.²⁴ Women mayors elected before December 1919 were similarly handicapped;²⁵ until 1968 all mayors and ex-mayors were ex officio justices.

The article in the Sheffield Independent concluded that women had a considerable contribution to make to the work of the magistracy. There appeared to be no special qualifications for service as a justice that women did not possess and the majority of women would not experience any difficulty in finding the time to sit on the Bench. Moreover, it was hoped that if women were appointed it would signal a break with the longstanding, unsatisfactory practice of magistrates being chosen either as a reward for long service in the public interest or as a reward for prolonged support of a political party rather than because they displayed any particular aptitude for the task. The injection of new blood into the magistracy could only be a good thing. "Public life wants gingering up in Sheffield, and it is for the women's organisations to do it."²⁶

However, the principle having been conceded in the 1919 Act, there was little immediate progress. During the debate on the bill the Lord Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead, intimated that the Bench was full and that he had no intention of nominating magistrates in districts where there were no vacancies simply to secure the immediate appointment of a number of women.²⁷ The campaign, therefore, had to continue into 1920 with the Women's Freedom League pressing for the inclusion of at least one woman on every bench. They were also quick to seize on the fact that all fourteen new magistrates appointed in South Shields in February 1920 were men.²⁸ The Bench was evidently not as full as the Lord Chancellor had thought.

Part of the problem lay in the fact that advisory committees responsible for the recommendation to the Lord Chancellor of suitable local persons were uncertain what criteria to adopt when choosing women magistrates. So few women were visible in the usual male spheres that

provided a reservoir of possible candidates that other sources for suggestions had to be tapped. The Lord Chancellor finally took refuge in the appointment of a Women's Central Advisory Committee which was instructed to determine the way in which women should be chosen and to recommend the initial appointments.

The Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of the Marchioness of Crewe, included Mrs Beatrice Webb, Mrs Lloyd George and that arch anti-suffragist Mrs Humphrey Ward and opened proceedings by recommending its own members for appointment.²⁹ After Mrs Ward's death in March 1920 her place was filled by Violet Markham who in her conscientious way set out to acquaint herself fully with what had already been accomplished and although she was away in Germany for some weeks kept herself fully informed of what was going on through a regular correspondence with Janet Dalgarno, a member of the Lord Chancellor's staff appointed as secretary to the Committee and to liaise between the Committee and the Lord Chancellor's office.

Recommendations were sought from prominent individuals in the community, local political associations and women's organisations. By far the majority were women recommended by the NCW whose national Public Service committee with its brief "to take advantage of any new opportunity of public service thrown open to women" had swiftly identified the magistracy as a sphere which its members were well-equipped to enter.³⁰ Dossiers were compiled on each woman recommended and the views of local contacts sought as to their suitability. Whilst Gertrude Tuckwell, secretary of the NFWW, was responsible for following up the majority of the Labour recommendations, her findings sometimes clashed with those of Elizabeth Haldane who appears to have undertaken enquiries about

women nominated in the West Riding.³¹ Alternatively Janet Dalgarno initiated enquiries herself. For instance she wrote to Violet Markham in May 1920 that they were still having problems over the recommendations for Bradford, Wakefield and Halifax but she was intending to seek the advice of Lady Byles, President of the Women's Liberal Federation and member of a prominent Bradford family.³² Many of the delays were due to difficulties in establishing individual women's political affiliation.

A "tolerably long list" of 234 women magistrates was published in July 1920³³ and included twenty-one women appointed in the West Riding. In its report on the appointment of these women, the Sheffield Independent drew attention to the Central Advisory Committee's comment that it had endeavoured

to secure the representation of various public activities and of different types of experience throughout the country, including the names of some women who have achieved general distinction in medicine, education and letters.³⁴

It failed to mention, however, that meticulous attention had also been paid to maintaining a strict balance in party representation which had resulted in the exclusion of some eminently suitable women because their politics were "wrong". The Halifax Courier was, however, critical and suggested that the list for the West Riding was both incomplete and inadequate: "We may approve of the women given distinction but we could certainly name others as worthy of the honour. The principle of selection is strained."³⁵

Careful attention had similarly been paid to geographical distribution whilst, in response to a letter to the Committee from the Home Office urging that women should be appointed to the list of the visiting justices to major prisons which housed women prisoners, a larger

number of women had been appointed where these were located.³⁶ Hence Leeds and Bradford had correspondingly more women appointed than other cities of a similar size. Appointments had only been made in major centres of population. Smaller towns like Rotherham or Barnsley, for which there had been three nominations, remained without women magistrates until 1922 and 1925 respectively. In some towns, like Brighouse, it was only after the implementation of the Children's Act of 1933 that any women were appointed.³⁷ This Act reformed the system for dealing with young offenders and included a requirement that in juvenile courts in London one of the justices had to be a woman. Outside London this was still not legally required but the recommendation that in provincial juvenile courts one justice should, whenever possible, be a woman seems to have convinced advisory committees in smaller towns of the advisability of appointing one or two women.

The appointment of the first women magistrates aroused considerable interest in the local press. The short speeches made at the swearing-in ceremony on 1 September 1920 in Bradford suggest that, as Patricia Hollis found for women who became town councillors in the period up to 1914, the first women appointed initially adopted the "language of separate spheres".³⁸ They saw their role as one that was particularly concerned with women and children. Annie Arnold, a Conservative councillor on Bradford City Council of two years' standing, believed that no one "could understand a woman like a woman, or a little child like a mother." She was particularly hopeful of being able to reconcile estranged couples in cases of desertion. Lily Carling, a member of the Bradford Women's Co-operative Guild, felt that women magistrates who were mothers would have a particularly helpful role to play in cases which involved the welfare

of children.³⁹ In Leeds, Jeannie Arnott agreed that there was much scope for women magistrates in dealing with women and children and even went as far as to argue the need for women's courts along the lines of the juvenile courts established in 1908. Another Leeds magistrate, Mrs Grosvenor Talbot, who had considerable experience of police court visiting, saw much room for improvement in the provision of courtroom facilities, one consideration being "the question of separate waiting-room accommodation for women and children, in order to keep them apart from men who may be awaiting trial."⁴⁰

Despite these first women magistrates' concern with the interests and welfare of women and children, however, there was from the start no separation of duties on the Bench on the basis of gender except in cases of crimes of a sexual nature when a few courts attempted to persuade women magistrates to absent themselves from such hearings. Otherwise, women acted in exactly the same capacity as men although, given their particular experience and knowledge, there were certain types of cases, especially those involving children, for which they considered themselves particularly well-equipped. Drawing on their wide experience of philanthropic work, they could claim some understanding of the effects of narrow poverty and poor health; pointing up their familiarity with the demands of household management and of family crises, they could proffer sound advice in the determination of domestic cases; and as mothers or teachers who had watched and helped children grow to maturity they could offer constructive suggestions when dealing with the lives of young offenders and of children at risk from neglect or abuse. Not surprisingly, therefore, the majority of women magistrates chose to be on the juvenile court panel.

In the inter-war period the demands on magistrates were not great. Venise Mitchell, the wife of the director of a Bradford firm of spinners, recalled when she retired from the bench in 1963 after thirty-one years' service that in the 1930s she had only been required to attend once a week whereas, in the post-war period, the work had increased to the point where she was at the courts "almost every day."⁴¹ In Sheffield, in 1931, there were twelve courts a week, around 6000 offences (including 250 juvenile and 1600 motoring offences) and some 600 domestic applications.⁴²

Women's representation on the Bench increased only slowly in the inter-war period and the ratio of men and women appointed remained extremely unbalanced. The three women appointed to the West Riding sessions in 1920 were far outweighed by forty male appointments.⁴³ In 1931, Maud Maxfield, was the only woman amongst eighteen new appointments in Sheffield whilst, in 1935, there were two women but eleven men.⁴⁴ Eleanor Rathbone claims that in 1930 there were still only some two thousand women magistrates in England and Wales, nine per cent of the total.⁴⁵ It was almost as if, once a few token women had been identified, advisory committees, either consciously or subconsciously, continued to apply traditional criteria. When the Women's Central Advisory Committee had completed its task in 1920 some of its members argued that it should continue in existence and continue to have sole responsibility for the recommendation of women magistrates. Such a move would, however, have seriously encroached on the prerogatives of the local advisory committees and consequently it was decided that, with satisfactory criteria for selection having theoretically been established, the procedure for the appointment of women magistrates should subsequently be identical to that employed for male justices despite at least one Lord

Lieutenant having definitely stated his disapproval of the introduction of women to the Bench and announced that "neither he nor his Cttee. (sic) would send any names to the Lord Chancellor." Miss Dalgarno personally felt that the continuance of the Central Committee would have been preferable but "opposition was strong and I suppose these local Committees are all right in their way, although many leave much to be desired."⁴⁶

That Janet Dalgarno's reading of the situation had some foundation is substantiated by Eleanor Rathbone's later assertion that it was the nature of the selection procedure which militated against the appointment of women in significant numbers. She argued that local advisory committees which could neither advertise their proceedings nor publish the names of their constituent members in order to deter lobbying, would normally only recommend people well-known in the community for their public service. Thus, those who were selected were "respectable", but equally they would tend to be "elderly and already overoccupied people, closely associated with party politics of one kind or another." The advisory committees failed, in her opinion, to make any determined effort to identify women in the community who were really suitable and could be criticised for only "recommending one or two safe and fairly colourless women."⁴⁷ In this case, it could be argued that a golden opportunity to improve the quality of the system and broaden the representation of local communities on the Bench was squandered. Indeed, the evidence indicates that although throughout the period political, church and women's organisations regularly recommended women they considered suitable, very few of them were appointed. Labour women in Leeds, for instance, regretted the failure of the local advisory council to recommend more Labour women but their resolution to establish their own panel of suitable

women chosen from all the Labour women's organisations in the city had little impact.⁴⁸ Everywhere, however, the kind of woman appointed tended to reflect the profile of male magistrates, that is they were overwhelmingly chosen from among the older, middle-class members of the community, as shown below. Very few women magistrates were employed in the formal economy before the Second World War and, consequently, although there are problems with categorising women according to the occupational standing of their male relatives, where a woman had no identifiable occupation, she has been classified according to the nature of her husband's employment as did the 1947 Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace.

TABLE 9

Occupational classification or husband's occupational classification for women magistrates appointed in
Sheffield and Bradford, 1920 to 1939⁴⁹

Occupational Group*	Percentage of Total	
	Bradford	Sheffield
No gainful occupation	0.0	13.6
Professional	28.6	31.8
Employer of more than ten people	28.6	27.3
Employer of less than ten people	7.1	0.0
Salaried	0.0	13.6
Waged	7.1	4.5 ⁺
Not known	28.6	9.1

* Categories based on those established by the 1947 Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace.

⁺ Although originally a railway shunter, Mrs Pointer's husband had subsequently been Member of Parliament for Sheffield Attercliffe.

The majority of women magistrates were the wives and daughters of leading members of local political associations and of prominent figures in public life. There was a high proportion of former mayoresses whilst several women combined service as justices with membership of their local council. Others were co-opted members of local government committees. Many had a background in education. Others were church workers. They were all experienced voluntary workers, several in the fields of temperance and moral welfare. However, although the Women's Central Advisory Committee claimed that it had endeavoured to include professional women in the first list published in 1920, very few women in the West Riding fell within this category and the position changed little in the following twenty years. Helen Wilson, in Sheffield, had been the city's first woman general practitioner, but when she was appointed a magistrate in 1920 she had long ceased to practise.⁵⁰ Other professional women appointed to the Bench were predominantly retired teachers such as Miss Amy England, headmistress of a Barnsley infant school for over thirty years, or women like Ida Hinchcliffe and Margaret Watts of Dewsbury who had retired from the teaching profession when they married.⁵¹ Of all the women magistrates appointed in the West Riding during the inter-war period for whom information is available only two appear to have been working women - Mary Briggs who was in charge of the waste department at Taylors' Blakeridge Mills in Batley and Leonora Cohen who was an official of the General Workers' Union and president of the Leeds Trades and Labour Council in 1924. Both were in their fifties and approaching retirement.⁵²

That working men may have found difficulty in reconciling the demands of being a magistrate with the claims of their business or employed status is understandable:

younger married women, however, were not so similarly constrained and many may have had ample leisure to devote time to the administration of justice. Nevertheless, it is evident that the majority of women magistrates were well into middle age when they were appointed. The average age on appointment in Sheffield for those women whose date of birth it has been possible to trace was fifty-five. Maud Maxfield, a long serving co-opted member of the Education Committee with great compassion for the interests of underprivileged and disadvantaged children, was sixty-five and Mrs Marsh, the longtime chairman of the Sheffield NCW and an ex-Lady mayoress sixty-three.⁵³ In Bradford, Annie Arnold, a widowed Conservative councillor, and Lady Godwin, a former mayoress who was well-known for her philanthropic work amongst the city's children, were sixty-eight and sixty-nine respectively.⁵⁴ Although a few younger women were appointed, they were very much the exception.⁵⁵

Thus, although to label all women magistrates in the West Riding in the inter-war period as "colourless" would be unwarranted, it can be justifiably claimed that they were overwhelmingly well into middle age, middle-class and, by definition, respectable. Nevertheless, the value of the wisdom, experience and influence that women contributed to the work of the magistracy in the inter-war period is undeniable. In the first place, women brought the need for some form of training for magistrates more firmly onto the agenda. Anxious to prove that they were able to fulfil their new duties as magistrates effectively and competently and thereby justify their presence on the bench, women rapidly evidenced a keen determination to educate themselves in their duties as magistrates. A few, like Charis Frankenburg over in Manchester, may have been fortunate enough to find a sympathetic stipendiary magistrate who would allow them to sit in his court and

thus accumulate practical knowledge.⁵⁶ Some like Helen Wilson whose father, himself a member of the Sheffield bench, had encouraged discussion of cases among all his children and thereby taught them "the rules of evidence, how to sort out fact from fancy, and how to temper justice with mercy",⁵⁷ or Mary Duff of Bradford who was a visitor in the pre-war period to women and girls in Armley Gaol were well-acquainted with the work of the courts.⁵⁸ Other women, at a time when there was no theoretical training for the magistracy, were conscious of their lack of knowledge and comprehension of the intricacies of the judicial process. In the early 1920s, therefore, a number of conferences for women magistrates and people interested in the work were organised by women's organisations at which women could broaden their knowledge of the law and the administration of justice and discuss the treatment of offenders and the best methods of preventing crime. The first conference was held in London in December 1920 under the auspices of the NUSEC but women from the North had an opportunity to explore similar issues when in 1923 the WLGS organised a conference in Manchester for women magistrates, councillors and guardians which included a session on penal reform.⁵⁹ Although women were aware that they had to move cautiously as they entered this new sphere of service and were anxious not to alienate male colleagues by suggesting rapid change,⁶⁰ the women's identification of the importance of training paralleled and added impetus to the Magistrates Association's (founded in 1920) recognition of the need for and development of training in the inter-war period. The Association itself introduced an annual conference for its women members but it was not until the publication of the recommendations of the 1947 Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace that official recommendations for systematic training were forthcoming.⁶¹

Secondly, as in the work of local government, women were able to bring a new perspective to the work of the magistracy. Although inexperienced, they were in a position to introduce a fresh and often gender-oriented view to the problems of the administration of justice. Whether it was in the little things that affected the everyday lives of their fellow citizens or difficult decisions that might have serious implications for the future of just one individual and his or her family, they provided a complementary perspective to that of men which guaranteed a more informed framework for the dispensation of justice. Mrs Wright in Barnsley, for instance, when dealing with a persistent female offender against public decency was able to alert her male colleagues to the lack of free ladies' conveniences in the town,⁶² whilst Catherine Bailey, in Sheffield, the wife of a trade union organiser, who had five children of her own and worked for a number of charities concerned with the welfare of the city's children was especially interested in the work of the juvenile court. Aware of and understanding the particular problems of young people, she was able on one occasion to argue for the non-punitive treatment of a young girl on the grounds that her offence was purely the result of a lack of any useful or absorbing activity to fill her non-working hours and not of any malicious or criminal streak. The girl was, therefore, persuaded to enrol for night school, to find suitable interests and even encouraged to visit Mrs Bailey regularly in her own home.⁶³

Thirdly, it could be argued that the introduction of women to the bench did widen the debate for a more humanitarian approach to the treatment and sentencing of offenders. Some women were, for instance, concerned at the non-reformatory and even hardening effects of prison sentences whilst Beatrice Kitson of Leeds in an address

to the Manchester conference in 1923 suggested that prison life itself was "degrading and humiliating" and urged "that the treatment should be more constructive instead of negative or even harmful, . . ." ⁶⁴ Women were particularly concerned at the harmful effects of institutional sentences for young children. A majority of the women magistrates at a conference in 1922 supported the suggestion that it was desirable that no-one under the age of twenty-one should be sent to prison whilst Bradford women magistrates were concerned that children were being sent to privately run reformatory schools and yet they, as magistrates, had little idea of the conditions and treatment they would face there. An account of the consensus view of all women magistrates in Bradford given by Lily Carling, a labourer's wife, was reported in Labour Woman in June 1924:

Bradford has 6 women magistrates, 2 of whom are Labour women. All those 6 women attend most regularly to the children's court, which is the most important of the lot. We have arrived at a position when we [have] developed a conscientious objection to signing away the best portion of a child's life into a place we are never allowed to see. ⁶⁵

Moreover, once women began to appear on the bench they were able to pursue their earlier campaigns for a greater feminine presence in the courts with more authority. Therefore, in the inter-war period women magistrates allied themselves in particular to demands for the appointment of women police. As has been seen in chapter four, for instance, Lady Fisher Smith, a Halifax magistrate, headed a women's deputation to the Watch Committee in 1924 and assured its members that the town's women magistrates were strongly in favour of women police and would welcome their assistance, ⁶⁶ whilst Charis Frankenburg refused to proceed with any case in which a

woman was involved unless she was accompanied by a policewoman or a policematron.⁶⁷

Eleanor Rathbone believed that women were eminently suited to the work of the magistracy, particularly because of their "attention to detail, sympathy and kindness, [and] experience of social conditions",⁶⁸ a view that was confirmed by the 1947 Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace:

All the witnesses have agreed that women have proved themselves to be a most valuable addition to the bench, and there are many cases in which the presence of a woman on the bench is particularly desirable.⁶⁹

In the West Riding of Yorkshire in the inter-war period their numbers remained few, as they did throughout the country, for reasons that were largely beyond their personal control. However, in keeping with campaigning arguments that premised women's claims to be appointed magistrates on the need for a feminine presence in the courts, it does seem that their admission to the bench did mitigate the administration of justice for women and children. Kathleen Chambers's contention when refuting the adverse comments of Sir Charles Davies in 1943 that women magistrates encouraged women, particularly those appearing in the matrimonial court, to give their evidence more freely than they might be inclined to do if confronted only with male magistrates and Martha Leach's claim that she had "heard it expressed over and over again how thankful women were that there was a woman on the bench" were born out by the findings of the Royal Commission which acknowledged that it was "noticeable that children and women when giving evidence, often appear to speak more freely to a woman on the bench than to any man."⁷⁰ It would be erroneous to claim that all women magistrates saw themselves as Hannah Mitchell had

imagined she would be before her appointment as "'counsel for woman's defence' so to speak".⁷¹ Nevertheless, claiming a peculiar sphere of knowledge which derived from their experience of philanthropy, of the home and of raising and educating young people, those women who were appointed did bring a new perspective to the work of the magistracy. With their keen insight into domestic difficulties and home conditions and an intimate knowledge of the minds and management of children, they were in a position to ensure that a case was considered in all its ramifications.

Footnotes

- 1 Bradford Daily Argus, 1 Sept 1920.
- 2 Miss Ann Wright who still has the letter her mother received from the Lord Chancellor appointing her as the first Labour woman magistrate in Barnsley in 1925 said it arrived completely unexpectedly and her mother's initial reaction had been not to accept - conversation with Miss Ann Wright, 24 Jan 1990. In Rotherham, Mrs Mysie Clark, the aunt of A W Clark, head of the glass firm, Beatson Clark & Co, was one of the first women magistrates appointed in 1922. A W Clark was himself a magistrate although he "had never given the matter any thought until a chance conversation in a train . . . , as in common with most people at the time [he] had little idea of the election system," - Alec W Clark: Through A Glass Clearly (London, Golden Eagle, 1980), p 99. My thanks to Dr J C G Binfield for this reference.
- 3 Yorkshire Observer, 9 Jan 1943, p 3. See also Stella MacLeod: The Changing Face of the Bradford Borough Bench, 1848-1980, p 67.
- 4 Yorkshire Observer, 9 Jan 1943, p 3.
- 5 Stella MacLeod: op cit, p 63.
- 6 Sir Thomas Skyrme: The Changing Image of the Magistracy, p 2.
- 7 Sir Thomas Skyrme: ibid, p 44.
- 8 See Stella MacLeod: op.cit, p 63.
- 9 J Theodore Dodd: "Women as Justices of the Peace", p 320.
- 10 Royal Commission on the Selection of Justices of the Peace, Evidence, 1910, (Cd. 5358), p 49.
- 11 Quoted in J Theodore Dodd: op.cit, p 322 - Dodd's emphasis.
- 12 Stella MacLeod: op.cit, p 64.
- 13 Royal Commission on the Selection of Justices of the Peace, Report, 1910, (Cd. 5358), p 10 - my emphasis.
- 14 For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the passing of this Act, see Ray Strachey: "The Cause", pp 375-6.

- 15 See Sheila Jeffreys: The Spinster and her Enemies, pp 60-3.
- 16 Report of the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene on a survey of the treatment of sex offences in ten towns in 1916 quoted in Sheila Jeffreys: op cit, p 61.
- 17 Sheffield Independent, 16 Oct 1919, p 7.
- 18 Details from Violet Markham Papers, Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee File, Final List of Women recommended, p 27.
- 19 Evaline Hutchinson: "Women in the Police Courts". Hannah Mitchell recalls that, as a member of the Women's Co-operative Guild, she used to visit the local courts on production of a card issued by the NCW, who had obtained the concession from the authorities - see The Hard Way Up, p 226.
- 20 J Theodore Dodd: op cit, p 326.
- 21 J Theodore Dodd: op cit, p 327.
- 22 Quoted in Stella MacLeod: op cit, p 65.
- 23 Sheffield Independent, 16 Oct 99, p 7.
- 24 Mary A Jagger: The History of Honley (published by the author, Honley, 1914), p 327.
- 25 As Mayor of Stalybridge Mrs Ada Summers took her place on the Bench as the first woman magistrate eight days after the enactment of the 1919 Act - Barbara Broadbent: "A History of Women on the Bench", pp 122-3.
- 26 Sheffield Independent, 16 Oct 1919, p 7.
- 27 The Vote, Jan 2 1920, p 452.
- 28 ibid, March 5 1920, p 253.
- 29 Sir Thomas Skyrme: op cit, p 50.
- 30 H Pearl Adam (ed): Women in Council, pp 64-5.
- 31 Violet Markham Papers, Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee File, Letter to Mrs Carruthers (Miss Markham's married name) from Janet Dalgarno, 12 April 1920.

- 32 As above, Letter to Mrs Carruthers from Janet Dalgarno, 12 May 1920.
- 33 The Vote, July 23 1920, p 132.
- 34 Sheffield Independent, 20 July 1920, p 5.
- 35 Halifax Courier, July 24 1920, p 4.
- 36 Violet Markham Papers, Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee File, Letter to Mrs Carruthers from Janet Dalgarno, 18 May 1920.
- 37 R Mitchell: Brighouse: birth and death of a borough, p 121.
- 38 Patricia Hollis: "Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space", p 208.
- 39 Both are quoted in Stella MacLeod: op.cit, p 66.
- 40 Yorkshire Post, 21 July 1920.
- 41 Bradford Telegraph and Argus, 25 May 1963.
- 42 Sheffield Commission of the Peace 1848-1974, p 25.
I am grateful to John Richman, Clerk to the Sheffield Justices, for providing me with a copy of this booklet.
- 43 The Vote, Aug 20 1920, p 167.
- 44 Sheffield Commission of the Peace 1848-1974, pp 24 + 26.
- 45 Eleanor Rathbone: "Changes in Public Life" in Ray Strachey (ed): Our Freedom and Its Results, p 37
- 46 Violet Markham Papers, Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee File, Letters to Mrs Carruthers from Janet Dalgarno, 27 Sept 1920 and 18 May 1920.
- 47 Eleanor Rathbone: op.cit, p 38.
- 48 Minute Book of the Leeds Labour Women's Advisory Council Jan 13 1932 - Jan 24 1940, Minutes of meetings, Sept 12 1934, Nov 14 1934, Dec 12 1934.
- 49 Details compiled from newspaper articles, obituaries and local directories. Unfortunately a similar exercise could not be undertaken for Leeds women magistrates as there was insufficient information about husbands' occupations. The Women's Advisory Committee, unlike local advisory committees, appears

to have considered the women nominated as individuals and not in relation to who their husbands were or what they did. Two of the Leeds women magistrates - Beatrice Kitson and Elinor Lupton - are known to have been leisured single women from prominent Leeds families. Seven of the women magistrates appointed in Leeds in the inter-war period were also city councillors.

- 50 C L Dickens: In Memoriam. Helen Wilson 1864-1951.
- 51 Amy England - Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, June 16 1937, p 4; Ida Hinchcliffe - Dewsbury Reporter, June 10 1939, p 16; Margaret Watts - Leeds Mercury, Sept 1 1930, p 6.
- 52 Mary Briggs - Dewsbury Reporter, July 12 1924, p 10; Leonora Cohen - there is a wealth of material available on Mrs Cohen, the bulk of it concerned with her militant suffrage activities, much of which is in the Abbey House Museum, Kirkstall, Leeds. I am grateful to Ann Morley for drawing my attention to it and for letting me see her own collection. Mrs Cohen was over a hundred when she died and became quite a celebrity in her last years. Several people beat a path to the door of her retirement home in Rhos-on-Sea including Brian Harrison whose tape-recorded interviews with her made on 26 and 27 Oct 1974 are in the Fawcett Library. There were substantial articles on her in the Yorkshire Evening Post, 1 March 1966, p 4 and 13 March 1973, p 6.
- 53 Maud Maxfield - Sheffield Independent, 29 April 1931, p 4 and Telegraph and Independent, Feb 15 1940, p 6 (obituary); Anne Marsh - Sheffield Independent, 1 Nov 1930, p 10 and Women in Council, May 1935, p 70 (obituary).
- 54 Annie Arnold - Yorkshire Weekly Post, May 30 1925, p 19 (obituary); Lady Godwin - Bradford Telegraph and Argus, Jan 20 1931 and Yorkshire Observer, Jan 20 1931 (obituary).
- 55 There was no lower age limit for women magistrates. Barbara Wootton found it ironical that when she was appointed a magistrate in 1926 at the age of twenty-eight she "was not considered old enough or wise enough to cast a Parliamentary vote, [but] was nevertheless deemed fit to sit in judgment on [her] fellows" - In a World I Never Made, p 67.
- 56 Charis Frankenburg: Not Old Madam, Vintage, pp 144-5.

- 57 W S Fowler: A Study in Radicalism & Dissent. The life and times of Henry Joseph Wilson 1833-1914, p 114.
- 58 Violet Markham Papers: Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee, Final List of of women recommended, p 28.
- 59 Woman's Leader, Dec 10 1920, p 967 and May 11 1923, p 116.
- 60 A conference of women magistrates in 1922 agreed not to insist that their recommendation that solicitors who cross-examined children should only put their questions through a magistrate be pursued as they thought it inadvisable to ask the Magistrates' Association to enforce the rule because "the men magistrates must not be lectured." - reported in Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 26 1922, p 4.
- 61 See Sir Thomas Skyrme: op cit, p 18.
- 62 Conversation with Miss Ann Wright, 24 Jan 1990.
- 63 Sheffield Independent, 27 Sept 1930, p 11.
- 64 Woman's Leader, May 11 1923, p 116.
- 65 Labour Woman, June 1 1924, pp 92-4.
- 66 Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian, Nov 4 1924, p 2; page 202 of this thesis.
- 67 Charis Frankenburg: op cit, p 145.
- 68 Eleanor Rathbone: op cit, p 36.
- 69 Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace, Report, 1947-48, (Cd 4763), p 11.
- 70 Yorkshire Observer, 9 Jan 1943, p 3; Royal Commission on Justices of the Peace, Report, 1947-48, (Cd 4763), p 11.
- 71 Hannah Mitchell: The Hard Way Up, p 235.

CHAPTER SIX

"The Call to a spiritual vocation comes in the same way to a woman as it does to a man"¹: Free Church Women
Ministers

The fate of women municipal candidates lay ultimately in the hands of the electorate. Women magistrates, on the other hand, owed their appointment to a small and select group of local citizens. A third group of women who were taking their first steps in a traditionally male sphere in the post-war period were women ministers in the Free Churches. In this case, their status as professional rather than voluntary workers notwithstanding - although in some instances the stipend could hardly have afforded a decent standard of living - the progress of female, as of male, ministers, was dependent on the response of a closely-defined, self-chosen lay group within the local community, namely the members of individual churches.

In March 1918 the Sheffield Independent accorded an optimistic welcome to the decision of the Crookes Congregational Church, a predominantly artisan and lower middle-class congregation in the western, inner suburbs of Sheffield, to appoint a husband and wife, William and Wilna Constable, as joint ministers and applauded the Church's willingness to

try a unique experiment in church life,
This is the first appointment of its kind.
Crookes hold that they are brushing aside
convention and tradition in order to keep pace
with modern ideas and do the best thing
possible for the common good of the people.
The Church can be congratulated on its
enterprise which will raise considerable
discussion throughout the country.²

Wilna Constable was the second woman minister to be ordained in the Congregational churches. Brought up in the Established Church of Scotland, she may seem an

unlikely candidate for the English Nonconformist ministry but, although she had not come to the ministry through an institutional theological training, her apprenticeship had been a sound one. After an arts course at Edinburgh University, she was able to share her husband's theological studies at the Yorkshire Independent College at Bradford on an unofficial basis and, as a member of the city's Greenfield Congregational Church, whose pastor was sympathetic to the ministerial aspirations of women, carried out a great deal of voluntary church work.³ When William Constable moved to Providence Congregational Church at Ovenden, near Halifax, Wilna Constable was able to increase the scope of her experience by regular preaching both in her husband's church and as a visitor to West Riding churches temporarily without a pastor.⁴ During this period her reputation grew as an inspiring and relevant preacher and she attracted sizeable congregations.⁵ Indeed, within a denomination whose congregations set great store by the eloquence and power of its preachers, the favourable impression that Wilna Constable created on her first visit to Crookes owed much to her preaching ability.⁶

The progressive approach displayed by the members of Crookes Congregational Church in their willingness to accept a woman minister, albeit in a joint pastorate, may seem hard to account for, particularly in a city which has frequently attracted the epithets of isolationist and being behind the times. Nevertheless, it is indicative of a certain independence of mind amongst working people in the West Riding and of the importance of the close personal links which existed between local Nonconformist churches.

Moreover, given the liberal-inspired arguments of John Stuart Mill from which equal rights feminism was

developed and the strong links between Liberalism and Nonconformity, it is not difficult to accept that demands for equality of educational and professional opportunity should rapidly have come to include calls for a more positive role for women within the Free Churches and that such demands should to some extent have emanated from the West Riding of Yorkshire with its strong Nonconformist tradition. Thus, in 1912, Ethel Snowden,⁷ a socialist and suffragist schoolteacher from a middle-class background who had married Philip Snowden, ILP MP, whose life and philosophy were rooted in the sturdy Liberal Nonconformity of the West Riding textile villages, argued in a projected address on "The Place of Women in our Public Life" to the National Free Church Council that there should be no legal, ecclesiastical or social restrictions placed upon women's public activities. Invoking John Stuart Mill's argument that society could ill afford to eschew the talents and abilities of any competent citizen, she included the Church as one of those areas in which women should be given greater opportunity for service on the grounds that they had a vital role to play as ordained ministers, not only because they would have a valid message for women church members who were by far in the majority but because the admission of women as ministers would contribute to a new equality of status between men and women within the churches which currently accorded women a predominantly passive, and therefore, subordinate role:

[Women's] entrance into the ministry would remove one more barrier to perfect comradeship in the churches, and prevent that good-natured contempt which is always the portion of those who toil in the lowly places and are excluded from the lofty.⁸

Ethel Snowden's pleas were never heard by the members of the National Free Church Council as they, together with

her suffrage demands, were adjudged too politically controversial and after she had refused a request that she should "modify many of the expressions and . . . introduce a greater amount of general matter", the paper was withdrawn; it appeared a few weeks later in the religiously progressive Christian Commonwealth. These arguments for equality of opportunity and equality of recognition in the churches were, however, being increasingly voiced by men and women around the country in the pre-war period. They are reflected in the words of Sarah Lees, a Liberal alderman on Oldham Council, renowned for civic and philanthropic munificence, who, in a session devoted to the issue at the Congregational Union meeting in 1913, urged that men should not stand in women's way should they wish to offer themselves for service as deacons or even ministers,⁹ in the words of Lady Spicer who, in an interview with The British Congregationalist, condemned the "attitude of superiority on the part of men" evident in most churches¹⁰ and in the writings of Hatty Baker, an unordained Congregational preacher.¹¹ Her Women in the Ministry, given originally as a lecture at King's Weigh House in 1911, made an impassioned plea for women's right to ordination whilst demolishing theological and sociological arguments raised by opponents, citing examples of women's ministry both in the Old Testament and in the early Christian church and pointing out the great loss the churches sustained in their failure to make use of the services of gifted and dedicated women.¹² Moreover, this call for an expanded role for women was further strengthened with the formation of church suffrage leagues; the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage attracted both men and women sympathetic to the women's cause, whilst the Anglican Church League for Women's Suffrage, founded in 1909, intensified claims for equal rights for women on Anglican church councils and by 1916 advocacy of the priesthood

for women had become a central plank of Anglican feminist demands.¹³

Congregational women like Hatty Baker and Sarah Lees could point to the example of other denominations, to the Quakers and the Salvation Army who accorded equal status to women with men and to the Unitarians whose first woman minister was Gertrud von Petzold, a Prussian, who had taken the full theological course at Manchester College, the path to which had been smoothed by the admission of Frances Power Cobbe and Anna Swanwick to James Martineau's classes in Oxford in the 1870s and by the acceptance of two American Unitarian women ministers who, as "occasional" students, had attended lectures at the College in 1892. In 1904 Gertrud Von Petzold was appointed minister of Narborough Road Free Christian Church in Leicester.¹⁴

Moreover, such protagonists could also instance efforts on the part of some individual churches, both in the West Riding and elsewhere, to involve women more closely with church organisation. The church at Crookes to which Wilna Constable came in 1918 had had a woman member of the diaconate since 1912 whilst the Rev Edwin Dukes in his book, Our Sister Phoebe: Deacon of the Church, which was published in 1915, could point to at least one Baptist church in Yorkshire which, although they were restricted to two places out of a total of six and did not serve at the communion table, had determined that women deacons should "fulfil all other duties equally with the men."¹⁵ The text of Our Sister Phoebe had first appeared in the Congregational Magazine in 1912 and was subsequently published at the request of some of Dukes's women friends in the church. The book sought to counter Pauline arguments against women's active participation in church affairs and offered many examples of God working

through women in both and the Old and New Testaments and its catalogue of women's gradual inclusion in church diaconates which could be traced from the 1890s afforded a useful testimony to the way women could conscientiously and effectively perform their duties if they were given the opportunity. More churches elected women deacons during the First World War.¹⁶

Moreover, although convention militated against women speaking in public in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries on the grounds that it was both unnatural and unfeminine, female preaching could occasionally be legitimated as the response to an exceptional "call" that could not be gainsaid. This was particularly so during the period of the second evangelical awakening in the 1860s when there appeared a number of women from various levels of the middle classes who preached to respectable audiences in town halls, theatres or assembly rooms and, unlike the earlier female ranters, either "endeavoured to appeal to their hearers' intellect and judgement" or were happy to exploit "the sentimentality which was at the centre of revivalism in this period, and indeed of middle-class religious attitudes in general."¹⁷ Such revivalist preaching by women had died away after the 1860s but a number of Nonconformist women reformers like Laura Ormiston Chant¹⁸ had emerged as powerful speakers whose passionate espousal of temperance and social purity issues was deeply religious and whose speeches came close to the art of the preacher.

The incidence of women preachers grew slowly in the pre-war period and gathered momentum during the war itself when the absence of many male ministers created a vacuum into which women could step. Women preachers appear to have been particularly welcome in the Bradford area where

not only Wilna Constable but Dorothy Pomeroy, the wife of the minister of Greenfield Congregational Church, regularly spoke in church.¹⁹ They helped to break down traditional attitudes which left the majority of people feeling uncomfortable when faced with the appearance of women in the pulpit. Thus, when Dorothy Pomeroy preached in Greenfield Church in November 1917, although many in the packed congregation may have come out of curiosity at the novelty of a woman preacher, her impassioned plea for a revitalised and reforming church rapidly reduced any question of gender to insignificance. As Margaret Sutcliffe wrote in The Christian Commonwealth:

What does it matter whether a man or a woman is in the pulpit? There is one thing greater than freedom, and that is willingly to put on the bonds of fellowship to work together for the fulfilment of [the] dream [of a new Church].²⁰

Women preachers like Wilna Constable and Dorothy Pomeroy were happy to take their message outside their local area. Moreover, although there is no record that women in the West Riding, frustrated at their failure to obtain official ministerial status, opened new churches either where men and women could minister on equal terms as at Louisa Martindale's chapel at Horsted Keynes in Sussex²¹ or where women themselves conducted the services as at the Church of the New Ideal in Wallasey,²² there is evidence that in one community where the congregation may have been too small to support a male minister, a woman was appointed in an unordained capacity. She was Jane Brown who for a number of years from 1899 was minister at the Congregational Chapel in Brotherton, a mining village near Leeds²³ whilst, in Bradford, the Revd Herbert Bolitho's wife deputised for him so successfully during his wartime service that she received a call to Lister-hills Congregational Church although she appears never to

have been officially recognised by the Congregational Union.²⁴

Wilna Constable's appointment as minister at Crookes Congregational Church should, therefore, be seen in the light of women's growing involvement in the Free Churches of the West Riding but must also be considered in the context of a nationwide acceptance that old arguments against the ordination of women had lost credibility. By the time of her ordination, a number of theological colleges had opened their doors to women students or would shortly do so;²⁵ Constance Todd had already been accredited by the Congregational Union²⁶ and in the same year Maria Living-Taylor, a graduate of London University, was to be granted permission by the Baptist Union - "not without agitation on the part of some of the members, who declared it was 'the thin end of the wedge'" - to sit as the first Baptist woman candidate for the ministerial examinations.²⁷

In the new post-war climate, therefore, which recognised the claims of women to political emancipation and greater professional opportunity, traditional hostility to the admission of women to the Unitarian, Congregational and Baptist ministries was sufficiently eroded to allow a number of women to become pastors in the inter-war period. They were only a few. It has been established that between 1904 when Gertrud von Petzold became minister of the Narborough Road Church in Leicester and 1939 eighteen women became Unitarian ministers.²⁸

Equally, by 1939, there were still only four Baptist women ministers.²⁹ The Congregational Year Book of 1931 lists ten women out of a total number of 2,228 active ministers in England, Scotland and Wales and, in 1930 forty-three men but only one woman had been ordained.³⁰ By 1941 the number of Congregational women ministers had reached sixteen.

The path to successful completion of ministerial training was not easy but even when the hurdles of the examinations were cleared and the quest for a pastorate over, there were still many difficulties to be overcome. It was an uphill and, sometimes lonely, furrow that women ministers had to plough. Nevertheless, Wilna Constable was the first of a number of women from the Congregational, Baptist and Unitarian denominations who served as ministers in the West Riding during the inter-war period.³¹ Unfortunately there is insufficient biographical information relating to Wilna Constable's career for a detailed account of her life and ministry³² but she does provide an example of the sometimes unexpected backgrounds from which women ministers came and the circumstances of her co-ministry at Crookes are indicative of some of the concerns and challenges with which her four women colleagues in the West Riding who are profiled below had to contend.

Margaret Fullerton (née Hardy) (1891-1980)

Margaret Hardy was born in Basingstoke on 20 June 1891. She was the only daughter of puritanical parents, a lonely, delicate child who had what she herself called a "careful upbringing" and "lived a life of her own in daydreams, in which she longed to be of service to humanity."³³ It is not clear whether her parents were themselves Plymouth Brethren but as a young child she attended the local Plymouth Brethren Sunday School until growing intellectual maturity and self-confidence led her to question some of the more excessive of its teachings.³⁴

As an only child she was able to remain at school until she was seventeen and subsequently sought to broaden her

education by attendance at evening classes and at the London Polytechnic and by correspondence courses. Stifled by domestic life and with little hope of formal occupation except spasmodic private teaching, she persuaded her parents to allow her to train in London for secretarial work. In London she became involved with the women's suffrage movement and found work in the offices of the NUWSS where, from behind her typewriter, she silently worshipped the upper middle-class ladies who were leaders of the movement and who included the charismatic Maude Royden, an early leader in the Church League for Women's Suffrage and editor of the suffragist paper, The Common Cause, from 1913 to 1914.³⁵ Many years later she recalled the deep impression these non-militant suffragists had had on her: "I met such fine women who were such good speakers and I realised what power women could have."³⁶

The spiritual growth of an individual is difficult to chronicle and Margaret Hardy herself claimed to have faced no sudden moment of conversion. Rather did she experience what she called "a steady growth into light."³⁷ She always maintained, however, that it was her involvement in the women's suffrage movement that revealed to her the sufferings and oppression in society and convinced her that women were needed to help in the fight against evil:

It was in a political meeting that I first saw God's need of me as a helper. "Personal religion" now means finding God in everything everywhere, and always more of Him.³⁸

Anxious to broaden her sphere of religious service, Margaret Hardy enrolled as a student at Westhill Training College in Birmingham and qualified for Primary Department Leadership in Sunday School work. During the war she returned to London and found work as a journalist

with the Christian Commonwealth. Like many women suffragists, Margaret Hardy was actively opposed to the war and became a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation founded by a number of Quakers and Non-conformists in December 1914. Maude Royden and Constance Todd, who became the first woman to be ordained to the Congregational ministry in the United Kingdom in September 1917, were also members.³⁹ In 1917 Maude Royden was invited by Joseph Fort Newton, the American minister of the Congregational City Temple, to become his assistant.⁴⁰ It was at the City Temple that Maude Royden first revealed her powers as a great preacher and Margaret Hardy went regularly to hear her. Following an early visit in March 1917, Margaret Hardy felt compelled to voice her appreciation of Maude Royden's message. She also assured her of the loyalty and admiration of many young women who drew great inspiration from her example:

You know, do you not, that there is an ever-increasing number of young women, enthusiastic and full of hope, 'ready for anything', who are willing to follow Maude Royden wherever she may lead . . . ?⁴¹

As did so many women, Margaret Hardy found in 1919 that she had to come to terms with the ephemeral nature of the opportunities offered to women during the War. No longer employed by the Christian Commonwealth, she had to return home to Basingstoke where she found it difficult to reconcile herself to the limited possibilities offered by the occasional piece of journalistic writing and private teaching. She was more than happy, therefore, to agree to her local minister's suggestion that she should relieve him of some of his parochial duties as an honorary assistant. The Revd Rocliffe Mackintosh was one of a number of Nonconformist ministers who recognised that women had a valuable contribution to make to the work of the churches and tried to give them every

opportunity to enlarge their sphere of service. He later married Euphemia Sutherland who, in 1929, became the first ordained woman minister in South Africa.⁴²

As a church worker, Margaret Hardy was invited in 1920 to attend a church conference at Swanwick in Derbyshire. Much to her surprise she was approached by the Revd C Dekin, the minister at Hanley Tabernacle in the Potteries who asked if she would be willing to take charge of a village chapel near Hanley. The chapel was in a mining village where all outsiders were regarded with suspicion and there were high hopes that a woman might have more success than a male minister, perhaps through her ability to attract the women of the village to chapel activities and hence prevail upon them to encourage their menfolk to attend. Such hopes were ill-founded and Margaret Hardy quickly discovered that she was making little head way, partly, she felt, because she lacked the authority imparted by official ordination.⁴³ After two years the "experiment" was abandoned but the time had not been wasted as Margaret Hardy was able to prepare successfully for the examination which placed her on "List B" of the Congregational Union. In 1922 she accepted the Revd C Dekin's invitation to become his assistant minister at Hanley.

At her Ordination Service in 1927 Margaret Hardy was eager to point out that she did not see herself as a pioneer who was battering at the doors of a male profession. "There has been no planned life-long preparation and no forcing open of closed doors on my part, with the intention of exploring what was behind them." Rather had she been careful to take only one step at a time and found that gradually one thing had led to another. "[Doors] have opened without effort and other doors, nearer to me, have closed. I have entered the

open door. Again and again this has happened."⁴⁴ Another door cracked open in 1923 when Dr A J Grieve, the Principal of the Lancashire Independent College in Manchester preached at an anniversary service in Hanley. Margaret Hardy was one of a group of people travelling with him after the service when there was considerable discussion about the ministry and the training offered by the College. Margaret Hardy plucked up courage and asked Dr Grieve whether it would be possible for her to become a student. He questioned her about her own qualifications and then advised that when she had learnt a little more Greek she should apply formally to the College.

Dr Grieve was a larger than life figure, a prodigious hard worker and a man with a formidable knowledge of the Bible who was a particularly "good judge of people and in assessing student potentialities."⁴⁵ In both his mother, a charity worker and Poor Law guardian, and his wife, an artist of some ability, he had ample evidence of the capabilities of strong, intelligent women. With his wife he "enjoyed a close partnership" and she helped as a research assistant in his religious editorial work.⁴⁶ Moreover, as Professor of New Testament and Church History at Yorkshire United Independent College in Bradford from 1909 to 1917, Grieve came into contact with a number of intelligent men of liberal outlook who recognised women's claim to greater self-fulfilment. The second wife of Dr Duff, a tutor at the College, "an extraordinary and rather splendid man, of advanced views",⁴⁷ was a prison visitor and in 1919 stood as a Liberal candidate in the Bradford municipal elections. In 1920 she became one of Bradford's first women magistrates.⁴⁸ Grieve would also have met the Revd Vivian Pomeroy of Greenfield Congregational Church in Bradford who during the war had encouraged his wife to

take Sunday services and to preach in neighbouring churches. Dorothy Pomeroy also stood as a candidate for election to Bradford city council and harboured ambitions to become a parliamentary candidate.⁴⁹

Evidence of Grieve's own support for women's emancipation is provided by a sermon he gave entitled "Women and the New Age" to the congregation at Belmont Church, Aberdeen to which he paid several extended visits in 1918 as Principal of the Theological Hall of the Congregational Churches of Scotland. The Church records express great satisfaction at the knowledge of Grieve's

firm faith in the widening future of womanhood, and that he does not shake his head pessimistically over the mistakes women are to make now that they have got some power into their hands.⁵⁰

He was prepared to give them the opportunity to prove themselves and, in later years, Margaret Hardy was well aware of the debt she owed to Grieve's supportive stance.

On May 1 1924 Margaret Hardy wrote to Dr Grieve reminding him of their conversation and tentatively requesting details of the college entry requirements. She also raised the question of a possible bursary as her personal financial resources were severely limited.⁵¹ Dr Grieve responded promptly and a few weeks later Margaret Hardy travelled to Manchester to visit the college. She was given a cordial reception. Her two days' visit left "a memory that is very mixed, kindness, warmth, hope and broadmindedness predominate, I think."⁵² During the visit she was interviewed by the General Committee whose Minutes record the historic occasion: "For the first time in its history the College Committee considered an application sent in by a woman candidate."⁵³ Margaret Hardy's broad educational background, her wide occupational experience and her ministerial experience

were impressive. She herself later suggested that a woman who had lived a conventional life would be unlikely to think of entering the ministry because of the difficulties she would have to overcome. Rather did it require the sort of woman who had

been brought up in a circle where there is a wide outlook, who has had opportunities of education and some travel, and who realises that life is full of all kinds of interesting things.⁵⁴

Perhaps the Committee of the Lancashire Independent College recognised such a woman in Margaret Hardy herself for "at the close of a long and very interesting interview it was unanimously agreed to receive Miss Hardy as a student of the College."⁵⁵

However, despite the warmth of her reception, confrontation with the stark reality of her possible entry into such an overwhelmingly male society had also raised doubts in Margaret Hardy's mind. For several days she reflected over her impressions of the college and her reception before confiding her apprehensions to Dr Grieve. She was much touched by his kindness and support but, nevertheless, found herself "more afraid of the ministry and the way to it than I was." Her visit had made her very aware of her femininity, of her distinctiveness:

I am really a little scared now about coming alone into that crowd of men and boys. I don't want to spoil their happy college life, and I am not sure that they will welcome the innovation at all. And for my own part I don't want to become an abnormal sort of person. I wish there could be some more women.⁵⁶

There appears, however, to have been a degree of caution on the part of women who were anxious to enter the ministry and they were careful not to unnerve sympathetic

colleges by making too many applications. It seems that Margaret Hardy may have decided originally to apply to Mansfield College but did not want to jeopardise the chances of Dorothy Wilson who also intended to apply for ministerial training in Oxford. Thus, she wrote to Dr Grieve that it "was partly for Dorothy Wilson's sake that I definitely applied to Lancashire, because I felt it would be better for both of us."⁵⁷ Despite her qualms, Margaret Hardy resolved to persevere and a summer's devotion to study to enable her to make good her deficiencies in certain subjects guaranteed her success in the entrance examinations and the award of a much needed scholarship.⁵⁸

The imminent arrival of a woman student presented the college committee with a number of practical problems, not least the question of residence which was hotly debated. It was eventually decided that it would be most desirable for Margaret Hardy, and any future women students, not to sleep on the college premises and a special sub-committee appointed to consider the details of her residence negotiated with the authorities of Manchester University for her admission to one of their women's hostels.⁵⁹ Margaret Hardy did, however, succeed in her plea for the allocation of a room where she could work in college and the study she was given was quickly christened "Lady Margaret Hall" by her fellow students.⁶⁰

Dr Grieve's belief in Margaret Hardy's abilities was well-founded. She proved to be an excellent scholar, particularly in the study of psychology, a relatively new course that the students were expected to take as part of their Arts programme at Manchester University. The College Annual Report for 1924-5 commented on the radical step taken by the College authorities in the admission of a woman student and suggested that Margaret Hardy's

behaviour and progress had "so far quite justified the venture."⁶¹ Her major problem in her first year, as she had foreseen, was a certain degree of isolation and loneliness but this was relieved by the admission of Constance Clark and Kathleen Hall as students in 1925. In her final year she was placed fourth on the academic list.⁶²

Some eighteen months before the completion of Margaret Hardy's training the pastorate at Marshall Street Congregational Church in Holbeck, a depressed area of decaying industrial premises and mean working-class housing in downtown Leeds, became vacant.⁶³ The diaconate, a group composed predominantly of respectable self-employed tradesmen, approached Dr Grieve for his recommendations.⁶⁴ Aware of Margaret Hardy's maturity and her already considerable experience of ministerial service in demanding circumstances Dr Grieve suggested that her special qualities fitted her for service in a pastorate such as Marshall Street. After hearing her preach, the church members invited her to become their minister,

writing that in calling her to that sacred office they were not unconscious of the difficulties connected with it, but felt that these would appeal to her rather than repel her.

There appears to have been no other serious candidate as the Church Secretary recorded that the deacons "were in the happy position of not having to choose between a woman and a man, so no man was disappointed."⁶⁵ Margaret Hardy accepted the Holbeck pastorate in preference to another that was offered to her in Warwick.

Marshall Street was a far cry from college life where the students had been rather detached from the issues and struggles of everyday life. Standing slightly back from

"a narrow strip of cobblestone dividing rows of tiny two-room houses - many of them looking sadly the worse for wear and tear, and begrimed with soot and smoke - ", the church itself was a square, ugly, cavernous edifice that had seen more prosperous times. Inside, the building was perpetually gloomy hemmed in as it was by a featureless warehouse and, within a yard or so of the windows, a row of houses that succeeded in blocking out the brightest sunlight.⁶⁶ Although inured to some extent to industrial ugliness and overcrowding by her two years' service in the Potteries, Margaret Hardy must have drawn unfavourable comparisons between the claustrophobic surroundings of Marshall Street and the pleasant gentility of rural Basingstoke and the invigorating air and wide horizons of prosperous Bournemouth to which her parents had recently moved.

She was ordained on the evening of Wednesday 14 September 1927 at a service attended by some one hundred people who rattled around like dried peas in a pod in a building designed to hold several times that number. The Revd S W Dean, secretary to the Leeds Congregational Council, presided, supported by Dr Grieve and Professor R Mackintosh. Constance Clark, Margaret Hardy's close friend from college, read a passage from Isaiah 40 and the Revd C Dekin who had travelled up from Hanley to encourage his erstwhile assistant, gave the charge to the newly-ordained minister. The Moderator of the North East Province and the chairman of the Yorkshire Congregational Union were also present. Local ministers from other denominations were equally invited - the minister of the local Baptist Church attended as did the Revd Charles Jenkinson newly arrived from the east end of London to be Vicar of St John's and St Barnabas, whose frenetic implementation of Leeds City Council's slum clearance programme in the 1930s was to bring about the demolition

of his new colleague's church just before the outbreak of the Second World War.⁶⁷

Margaret Hardy faced a daunting task at Marshall Street. Church membership was declining, finances were low. She was well aware of the ugliness of the church and its surroundings and the debilitating effect such conditions could have on man's physical and spiritual life: "We can't go on for ever looking at mere buildings and monotonous things without a certain ugliness and monotony creeping into our souls."⁶⁸ Part of her answer lay in an attempt to persuade the men of the Brotherhood, founded by her colleague, the Revd Constance Clark, to create a tiny oasis of greenery and colour in the church garden. Many members of the congregation would have been living in back-to-back houses which opened directly onto the street. The opportunity to get some exercise and work in a garden was enticing and within a few years their displays were winning certificates in municipal gardening competitions.⁶⁹

Margaret Hardy recognised, too, that the church would be incapable of attracting and retaining members if it failed to consider their material and physical needs. Young children in the locality were frequently sickly and undernourished. Their fathers were often unemployed but their mothers were more likely to be able to find work if only they could solve the problem of child care. A nursery was the obvious solution and within a year twelve children, all under three, were being cared for on church premises. The local council was soon persuaded of the value of the work and, by 1935, when the nursery had expanded to accept twenty-five children, was providing fifty per cent of the running expenses and medical supervision for the children.⁷⁰

Margaret Hardy was naturally much in demand as a speaker and travelled widely in the North of England to speak of her experiences as a woman minister. She was frequently invited to address other professional women who belonged to Soroptimist Clubs and was herself first president of the Leeds group. She often found that she was asked to detail the particular problems that it was assumed women faced as ministers and spoke, for instance, to the Bradford Soroptimists in 1931 on the difficulties women experienced in training, in getting themselves accepted seriously by congregations and, sometimes, in understanding the point of view of men in their congregations.⁷¹ The problem of the single minister's lack of assistance was resolved for her in 1930.

(Ada) Constance Clark (1902-1969)

To Margaret Hardy's great joy, in 1930 her close friend from Lancashire Independent College, Constance Clark, completed her training and, despite offers of sole ministerial charge of churches elsewhere, came to share the work at Marshall Street. Her ministry was only made possible by the offer of financial aid from the Yorkshire Congregational Union which was fully aware that to meet all the demands of a pastorate such as Marshall Street was "quite beyond one minister's power."⁷²

The two women were very different in character and upbringing. Constance Clark was born in October 1902 in the north-west of England, in Fleetwood in Lancashire, where she spent a happy childhood in the companionship of her sister and two brothers. The girls were given a fair degree of freedom and regularly went swimming and cycling. The family were Congregationalists and much of Constance Clark's life outside school revolved around the local Sunday School and its activities. Surrounded by an

atmosphere of caring Christian worship she, too, experienced no moment of crisis in her personal religion, just a gentle "growing revelation of the Grace of God and of the call to the Service of the Kingdom."⁷³

After completing the Senior Oxford and school-leaving certificates, Constance Clark came into considerable conflict with her parents over her desire to become a missionary. Anxious to see their daughter securely settled in professional life, her parents wished her to go to Liverpool University or to train as a teacher and persuaded her to stay on at school for an extra year to allow her time for reflection. She reluctantly agreed to become a student teacher but after a year returned home. Determined to find some role for herself within the Church, Constance Clark became a member of Birkdale Church in 1921 and, like so many other women, found an outlet for her spiritual vocation as a Sunday School teacher. She quickly became involved in many church activities. She ran the Young People's Guild and the hockey club, assisted at the Hampton Road Mission, became a collector for the London Missionary Society, the foreign missionary society most closely associated with Congregationalists, and trained scholars for the Congregational Young People's examination.

Until 1919 there had been no professional sphere of service for women with a spiritual vocation within the Congregational churches. There was no separate order for women such as the Wesleyan Deaconesses or the Anglican sisterhoods. At the suggestion of the Women's Committee of the Congregational Union of England & Wales a scheme was adopted in the post-war period whereby it was intended that women who wished to train for Christian service, especially as deaconesses, should be attached to a Congregational Central Mission or similar institution

and attend classes at New College, London.⁷⁴ Little enthusiasm was shown for this scheme and for women like Constance Clark there continued to be little choice between continuing in a fragmented, self-effacing, voluntary capacity or finding an alternative, more structured and distinctive form of service elsewhere. She, therefore, applied and was accepted for training at the Wesleyan Deaconess College at Ilkley.

At Ilkley Constance Clark was enabled to broaden her experience widely. The training was a very practical one. She continued teaching in Sunday Schools, held a girls' class in an impoverished district of Bradford and visited the sick. She was also given the opportunity to preach on a number of occasions. She was still, however, unhappy about her future. She expressed herself reluctant to join the Order of Deaconesses as "my love for my own Church is so strong that I feel constrained to find in Congregationalism my life work." One senses, too, that she was reluctant to join an Order that sectionalised women and restricted them to a humble life of total dedication to God.⁷⁵

With the support of her parents, therefore, who expressed themselves willing to give some assistance with her fees, she applied for admission to the Lancashire Independent College on May 11 1925. The Warden of the Ilkley Institute, Dr Maltby, was sorry to see her leave. Dr Maltby had been convener of a committee appointed by the 1922 Wesleyan Methodist conference to examine the whole issue of women's claim for admission to the Methodist ministry and had proved himself a "veritable champion" of the women's cause.⁷⁶ His endorsement of Constance Clark's application to Lancashire College was enthusiastic. In a letter to A J Grieve in June 1925 he spoke of her as an excellent student "with a fairly quick

mind and the right kind of interest in the things of religion", and expressed his conviction that she had

a real call to the Service of Christ and the Church, either through the regular Ministry or in some equivalent way. I believe that neither in gifts, nor in character, nor in religious experience will she disappoint our expectations.

Constance Clark was the perfect foil to Margaret Hardy at Marshall Street. Margaret Hardy, ten years older than her colleague, was quiet, intellectual, a good administrator. Constance Clark was ebullient, outgoing, tomboyish. Her preaching was practical, down to earth. It revealed flashes of her great sense of humour. Margaret Hardy's was more intellectual, more thoughtful. Although she never appeared to raise her voice, she was able to hold the attention of all, from the oldest to the very youngest. Margaret Hardy carried out the day to day organisational work of the church and chaired the meetings of the diaconate. Constance Clark threw herself enthusiastically into all the church activities. Both were excellent pastoral visitors, never too busy to overlook the needs of individuals.

In the mean and shabby backstreets of Leeds they created a thriving community centre which, combined with compassionate pastoral visitation and a relevant and attractive spiritual ministry, drew many people to the church. Membership of the Brotherhood, for instance, increased and by 1935 had reached some two hundred. Constance Clark's arrival allowed all aspects of the work of the pastorate to expand but she found particular satisfaction in working with young people and every year took groups of them to camp in Wales or the Lake District. As she later recalled, she was soon appointed secretary of the Young People's Committee of the Leeds and York District and developed

an absorbing interest in young people. In the churches to which I have ministered I have tried to meet their needs and lead them into a Christian experience and a Christian interpretation of life.⁷⁸

The great strength of both women lay in their readiness to make full use of the abilities and skills of members of the congregation, to draw out hidden talents and to instil a sense of confidence and self-worth in those who were naturally diffident. Both the Revd Sheila Sanderson and the Revd Alice Platts feel they owe much to the encouragement and support given to them by Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark. Their success in harnessing the enthusiasm of members of the congregation helped considerably to lighten the workload on the two women ministers. Nevertheless, as Margaret Hardy recognised, "unless a woman minister is prepared to sacrifice most of her time to the ministry, she cannot hope to succeed."⁷⁹ Such a commitment may equally have been expected of a male minister but, if married, he could usually rely on the support and help of his wife and there are some who argue that women ministers are particularly conscientious in their pastoral work. The Revd Alice Platts, for instance, believes that "Pastoral work and home-visiting come naturally to a woman",⁸⁰ whilst Constance Clark found that she and Margaret Hardy received a particularly warm welcome from local people: "Our duties are much the same as those of any other minister, except, perhaps, that we get more into the homes of the people."⁸¹

However, as the city slum clearance programme went forward in the 1930s, members of the church began to move away. Some moved out to Middleton on the southern outskirts of Leeds where there was no Congregational church and few communal amenities. Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark showed their usual resourcefulness. They hired a room in an empty farmhouse, embellished it with a

shabby carpet and some simple furniture and held services there. Later they moved the meetings into a Nissen hut: this was later sold to the Methodist Church and the proceeds used to fund the building of a new church at Belle Isle.⁸² In 1934 they agreed to combine the ministry of Burmantofts Congregational Church, a church which like Marshall Street, was facing severe difficulties because of its position in the midst of a rundown district, with their already heavy duties in Holbeck.⁸³

The working relationship between the two women was, however, fundamentally changed when, in 1935, Margaret Hardy married Andrew Fullerton, an incorporated accountant, who was president of the Leeds Congregational Church Council. Despite initial protestations that she would carry on with her religious and social work,⁸⁴ their joint ministry came to an end with the closure of Marshall Street church in 1937 although Margaret Hardy continued to take an active part in church work and acted as the Nonconformist chaplain at the Leeds St James Infirmary during the 1940s. Constance Clark remained in sole charge of Burmantofts until 1948 and succeeded in

lifting the church out of its depression, making it again self-supporting, greatly enlarging its influence in an area which is scheduled for demolition and doing a particularly fine piece of work amongst young people.⁸⁵

From 1948 to 1963 Constance Clark was minister at Stainbeck Church in the north-eastern suburbs of Leeds. She became chairman of the National Women's Committee of the Congregational Church in England and Wales in 1964.⁸⁶

Margaret Barr (1899-1973)

At the beginning of September 1927, a few days before Margaret Hardy formally entered upon her ministry

in Leeds, Margaret Barr took the charge of the Unitarian Church of Our Father in Rotherham as lay minister.⁸⁷ The Church of our Father was the longest established of the Nonconformist churches in Rotherham but by the inter-war period it had only a small membership and considerable financial problems. Since 1909 it had had a succession of ministers, none of whom remained in Rotherham for more than three years. In October 1926, seven months after the formal resignation of their last minister, eleven members of the church committee - four women and seven men - turned down the suggestion of the Unitarian Ministerial Settlements Board that they consider a woman minister. Only one vote was cast in favour of the proposition.⁸⁸ Eight months and eight possible male candidates later, one of whom refused the pastorate because the salary offered was unacceptably low,⁸⁹ the Committee accepted that they should at least allow a woman candidate a hearing and Margaret Barr, then a student at Manchester College, Oxford, was invited to preach on 26 June 1927. A week later, after a lengthy discussion, it was decided that she should be asked whether she would be prepared to assume responsibility for the Church as a lay worker whilst she completed her ministerial training,⁹⁰ a proposal to which the Hollis Trustees, who made a substantial contribution to the finances of the Church and who had the final say in the appointment of ministers, could find no objection. They agreed to continue paying their traditional contribution towards Margaret Barr's salary in the belief that there was

no immediate prospect of a ministerial appointment [and] the Trustees would not reject a proposal that is intended to secure unity, and continuity of service and effort⁹¹

Margaret Barr had been brought up in a Wesleyan Methodist family. She was the fourth of six children whose home

was in Menston, set in the beautiful and remote countryside of Wharfedale. Her father was an "iron-master" and the family were regarded locally as very unconventional. The children were given a great deal of freedom to wander, a freedom which undoubtedly enhanced the "self-reliance and fearlessness which were a strong feature of [Margaret Barr's] character."⁹² Her parents also believed in giving their sons and daughters equal educational opportunities and after five years at the local village school, she was able to enter Leeds Girls' High School when the family moved to the city in 1909. She remained there for ten years and developed into a fine sportswoman and a natural leader. A fellow pupil recalled that even at the age of sixteen Margaret Barr's forceful personality made such an impact on her father who shared the train journey into the city centre with her that "he thought if that's the kind of girl L.G.H.S. produces then I'd like my daughter to go there."⁹³ Margaret Barr was equally a keen scholar who loved reading and found particular pleasure in the study of classics, religion and philosophy.

During her schooldays Margaret Barr continued to worship as a Methodist but a certain restlessness and her developing intellectual curiosity led her to question teachings which she found narrow and contradictory.⁹⁴ Moreover she found she had grown to hate "the sanctimonious atmosphere of evangelical revival meetings."⁹⁵ As a student at Girton College, Margaret Barr joined the Student Christian Movement and in a search for wider spiritual knowledge accompanied friends from other denominations to services at their churches. Her pilgrimage took her to the Unitarian church of Dr J Cyril Flower, "a scholarly, saintly person",⁹⁶ whose address took the form of an appreciation of Hinduism which revealed a breadth of liberalism and profundity of

thought inconceivable to a girl raised in the belief that other religions should be viewed with, at worst,

nothing but condemnation and even at best with a patronising tolerance which always gave place in the end to a reaffirmation of the complete superiority and uniqueness of Christianity⁹⁷

and consigned all non-Christians to outer darkness. She was attracted too by the quietness and reverence of Unitarian services.

From Girton Margaret Barr went to Homerton, the teacher training college on the other side of Cambridge which had close Nonconformist links. She then moved to London as a supply teacher in schools for infants and the mentally handicapped run by the London County Council. Determined, however, to enter the ministry she was the last of a group of eight women who trained at Manchester College, Oxford in the first quarter of the twentieth century. By 1925, when Margaret Barr went to Oxford, she was twenty-six, a highly educated, resourceful and forthright woman. There is some evidence that the conservative college authorities, already nervous over the impact of women students on college life, found her difficult to manage and that Margaret Barr found the restrictions and regulations of college life hard to accept. Dr McLachlan suggested that the college authorities probably "breathed a sigh of relief when, after one year, with her natural impatience to get to grips with real life," she resolved to complete her training in the pastorate at Rotherham.⁹⁸ However, it appears that she had already decided to resign before she first visited Rotherham. Her letter of resignation considered by the General Committee of the college at its meeting on June 23 and 24 1927 in which she requested permission to terminate her studies at the College at the end of the Session, "owing to ill-health", was presented before her engagement to preach at Rother-

ham on 26 June and it was only after this preaching engagement had been fulfilled that the members of the Church of Our Father resolved to ask Margaret Barr if she would be prepared to take the charge of the Church as lay worker while she completed her theological training.⁹⁹ Whether it had been intimated to her that there was a possibility she would be offered the pastorate at Rotherham when she was first invited to preach is not known.

Margaret Barr stayed at the Church of our Father in Rotherham for six years. There seems to have been an understanding that should her year as a lay minister prove successful she would become the full-time minister on completion of her training and during that year no further approaches were made to other possible candidates; as soon as her final examinations had been successfully completed, plans immediately went ahead for her induction service in September 1928.¹⁰⁰

Although Free Church women ministers were nominally accepted in their own denominations, it was impossible for them to escape the wider controversy over the role of women in the established Church. Margaret Barr's arrival in Rotherham provoked considerable comment and although she received a warm welcome from other Nonconformist ministers in the town, the Anglican ministers were unable to accept her presence in the joint ministers' fraternal. As her Nonconformist colleagues insisted on standing by her, the combined fraternal "thereupon dissolved".¹⁰¹

Although a pacifist, Margaret Barr always relished an intellectual clash: "I always enjoyed giving battle, or watching others do it for me."¹⁰² As a Quaker working as an educationalist in India, Marjorie Sykes knew Margaret Barr well and recalled in a tribute written after her death that her

sincere and lifelong commitment to non-violence was all the more effective because she was

'ever a fighter' and rejoiced in the chance to do battle for a good cause!¹⁰³

A keen advocate of equal rights for women she quickly became involved in the activities of the Rotherham Women Citizens' Association and in October bore witness to her support for the ordination of women in the Church of England when she chaired a meeting addressed by Mrs Pollard of the League of the Church Militant which was committed to securing "unrestricted opportunities for women in the life of Church and State".¹⁰⁴

Like her fellow colleagues in Leeds, Margaret Barr was well aware of the problems faced both by a small congregation and by the wider community of Rotherham in the late twenties and early thirties when economic depression and widespread unemployment produced much bitterness and disillusionment. A practical woman, inspired by the ideals of the National Union for Social Service, she endeavoured to persuade the members of the Church to look outwards from their own preoccupations and to make a much greater contribution both to the life of the community and to the wider work of the General Assembly. Setting an example herself by offering to give £50 from her own stipend to a building fund destined for the extension of the Sunday School building in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the present church,¹⁰⁵ she equally urged church members to consider raising funds to support wider causes. Church members were encouraged to accept that the Church should "do more than merely pay its way", that

the Church should strive to do more than exist. She desired to see the church take an active part in assisting as much as possible in the life of the General Assembly and the work of associations connected with our body as a whole.¹⁰⁶

Concerned at the widespread distress in the local community, the Church responded to a plea from the General Assembly for concrete proposals to help combat the debilitating effects of economic depression by the appointment of a sub-committee which recommended that the old Sunday School building should be used "for the benefit of a certain number of unemployed men." Very careful steps were taken to guarantee close supervision and the respectable behaviour of the participants through the enlistment of the assistance of the manager of the local labour exchange in selecting suitable men and through consultations with representatives of local trades to discuss how best these men could be helped.¹⁰⁷ This highly cautious scheme intended initially for the benefit of only twenty men was ill received by the Hollis Trustees who controlled the church finances and had a veto over the use of church buildings for non-ecclesiastical purposes. There were repeated requests from the Church Committee to the Hollis Trustees citing the contribution that other churches in the district were making to help the unemployed and pleading with them to reconsider their verdict.¹⁰⁸ After a further refusal by the Hollis Trustees in December 1932, the Committee wrote, for instance, that they had

received the Hollis Trustees' decision . . . with deep regret and are of opinion that the Church is missing an opportunity of service, which churches of our denomination and others are rendering.¹⁰⁹

It is likely that the narrow-minded, obstructionist attitude of the Hollis Trustees contributed to a growing sense of frustration and non-fulfilment for Margaret Barr. That the demands of a small, rather insular church were not sufficient to provide all the stimulus she required she later admitted when she confessed that she had undertaken teaching with the WEA in Rotherham not

primarily for economic reasons but because, without it, her "life would have been incalculably poorer", since the work provided "valuable contacts and wide sympathies".¹¹⁰ Moreover, although Margaret Barr was quite happy to take a party of young people to the Unitarian summer camp at Great Hucklow in the Peak District every summer and to take an interest in the young people's social club, the church was not particularly successful in attracting young members. By 1932 numbers in the afternoon class had dropped considerably. Adult attendance at the morning services was also poor and the Church's income had declined as a consequence.¹¹¹ Thus, unlike Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark in Leeds, Margaret Barr did not have such marked success in revitalising church membership and instilling a sense of congregational responsibility for all aspects of church life. This may be attributable to her preoccupation with wider concerns and a failure to devote herself so single-mindedly to the interests of her church but she was, perhaps, a little disillusioned by the lack of enthusiasm displayed by the majority of church members. Her regrets, for instance, that there were no meetings of the members of the congregation to discuss matters relating to the church other than those connected with finance, meetings at which "Congregation and Minister could exchange views and discuss the needs of the Church", elicited little response.¹¹²

In November 1932 the Church Secretary received a letter from Margaret Barr in which she confessed to feeling "stale, and consequently restless" and that she believed both she and the Church "would be better for a change."¹¹³ It was at a meeting of the General Assembly at the end of the 1920s that Margaret Barr had first heard of the existence of a tiny Unitarian movement in the Khasi Hills of Assam in Northern India. Her sister,

Mary, who was already working in India, had recently resigned her position as a teacher with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and joined Gandhi as one of his full-time village workers.¹¹⁴ Margaret Barr had, consequently, been taking a considerable interest in the Indian National Movement and when the Revd Marcus Ratter returned from an exploratory mission and urged that someone should be sent out to assist the Khasi Unitarians, she offered herself as a candidate suggesting that "her double qualification as a trained teacher and a minister made her eminently suitable."¹¹⁵ Only in 1936 did Margaret Barr finally achieve her wish to be sent as an official worker among the Khasi Unitarians as the supervising committee had initially refused to "take the responsibility of sending a woman alone to such a lonely post."¹¹⁶ It was only by taking a post in a girls' school in Calcutta and spending her vacations in the Khasi hills which enabled her to become acquainted with the people and learn the language that she eventually convinced the committee that she could cope with the job. Moreover, when she returned to England in 1937 to report on her work, she was successful in persuading the Unitarian women's organisations to agree to raise the money to pay her salary for the next three years and this further strengthened her position. This commitment on the part of the women's organisations subsequently continued until her official retirement in 1964.¹¹⁷

When Margaret Barr left Rotherham for Calcutta at the end of 1933 a church social was held in her honour and she took advantage of the occasion to express publicly her debt to the church in the radical step it had taken "in venturing to appoint a woman minister. This was a venture of faith which she hoped had been justified . . ."¹¹⁸ She, herself, felt it was well justified, not least because it had broadened her own

horizons and deepened her sense of compassion. Writing in 1934 to her mother who was at a loss to understand her daughter's motives in leaving the home ministry, Margaret Barr argued that she was not acting rashly or irresponsibly. She believed that, by now thirty-five years old, she had reached

the time of life at which - if at all - a woman will achieve something - the time when experience of life has checked and corrected 'the first fine careless rapture' of her enthusiasm, but when she has not begun to be conscious of the frost of age chilling the blood in her veins. Remember too that six years as minister . . . of a church in an industrial depression has given me some knowledge of life that I should never have gained in 60 years of comfortable, middle-class security and seclusion.¹¹⁹

Margaret Barr was to experience very little comfortable, middle-class security for the rest of her life. She died in India in 1973.¹²⁰

Violet Hedger (1900-. . .)

Even in 1977 at the age of seventy-seven Violet Hedger, in her sermon to the Women's Meeting of Littleover Baptist Church, Derby where she had exercised her first ministry between 1926 and 1929, reveals her considerable gifts as a passionate, expressive and compelling preacher.¹²¹ It was this overwhelming belief in herself as a bearer of God's message which led Violet Hedger to determine from an early age that she must find some sphere of Christian service. As she admitted to the members of Littleover Church at her induction service in February 1926:

As to my presence in the ministry, I could do nothing else, . . . I know one thing. I must preach. Otherwise I should have no peace of conscience.¹²²

Violet Hedger had been educated at the Hornsey High School where she regularly won prizes for biblical knowledge.¹²³ Her great gift for preaching was early recognised by her own minister, Dr Charles Brown of Ferme Park Baptist Church, and after she had worked for a year in the Intelligence Department of the War Office, he enthusiastically supported her application for missionary training, first to Spurgeon's College where she was turned down as women were not admitted and then to Regent's Park.¹²⁴ Miss Hedger's ebullient personality and passionate but thoughtful commitment made a strong impression on the College committee and at a time when the claims of women to greater self-expression and a more prominent part in church life and decision making were allied to a serious shortfall in the number of candidates training for religious service, the Committee agreed to admit Miss Hedger as a day student. Her arrival was optimistically greeted by the Principal, Dr Pearce Gould, as the dawn of a new era.¹²⁵

Like Margaret Hardy, Violet Hedger was very apprehensive as to how she would be received as the only woman in a community of men. Her qualms were so great that on the first day of her course she almost turned tail and fled back on her bicycle to her parents' house.¹²⁶ However, she too persevered although it was far from easy: "Every day I had to face 'traditions', all masculine,"¹²⁷ while a few of her lecturers were unsympathetic. Her teacher of Hebrew, for instance, took great delight in singling her out to do the most awkward pieces of translation.¹²⁸ After the first year of her four-year course she had to bear the added indignity of the complete hostility of the new Principal, the Revd Henry Wheeler Robinson, who did not share his predecessor's enthusiasm for the theological training of women. Although Violet Hedger was by all accounts an exceptional student, she has

suggested that this hostility on the part of Wheeler Robinson was so great that he never once spoke to her and in 1923 refused to allow the College to pay her entrance fee for the University of London examinations "on the grounds that she wouldn't pass and it would be a waste of money."¹²⁹ His hostility certainly ensured that, unlike Margaret Hardy, there would be no further women to join Violet Hedger at the College.¹³⁰ The new era had evidently not yet arrived.

Miss Hedger completed her studies in 1923 and, unable to find a pastorate, spent the next two years travelling and preaching predominantly in the north of England. She found that the

area supers (superintendants) were very kind . . . and they sent my name to dozens of churches; but usually it never got past the deacons. You couldn't blame them . . . the whole idea of a woman minister was foreign to them.¹³¹

Her experience confirmed the view that was reported at the Baptist Union Council meeting in early 1926 that "the Churches made hardly any demand for women pastors."¹³² However, in May and June 1925 she had preached at Littleover, a small congregation in the southern outskirts of Derby which was preparing to separate from its mother church and was seeking a minister. The salary offered was a mere £200 and even this was only made possible by the promise of grants from the Baptist Union Sustentation Fund and the Derbyshire Baptist Union.¹³³ Six weeks after Violet Hedger's second visit it is recorded in the Church Minutes that

since Miss Hedger had preached with great acceptance, the diaconate agreed unanimously to recommend her to the church as a suitable pastor.¹³⁴

Her initial engagement was to be for three years but it was accepted that it could be terminated at any time within that period if both parties were agreeable.¹³⁵

Miss Hedger's induction to the ministry of Littleover Church took place on February 4th 1926. She must have had an overwhelming sense that the eyes of not only the whole Baptist Church but of other denominations were focussed upon her. At a welcome gathering in the afternoon the Revd F C Player, formerly minister of St Mary's Gate, Littleover's mother church, drew attention to the novelty of Miss Hedger's appointment and suggested that the

induction of a lady minister in the church was an intensely interesting experience, and her brother ministers would watch Miss Hedger's career with sympathy, . . .¹³⁶

His sentiments were echoed by the Revd A Collie who was secretary of the Derbyshire Baptist Union. He spoke of Miss Hedger's arrival at Littleover as "a great adventure" that was "regarded with very great interest, not only by the people of the village, but by the Baptists of Derby and the county, and, indeed, of the country." The Anglican Vicar of Littleover also praised the pioneering spirit evidenced by Miss Hedger's ministry but was careful to distance himself from any suggestion that in welcoming her he in any way favoured the ordination of women.

Although the tone of such remarks must have suggested to Violet Hedger that, as at College, she was one set apart, a more positive note was struck by the Revd A S Johnston, the pastor of Junction-street Church in Derby, who saw Miss Hedger's ministry as a great opportunity for the Church to draw strength from the special qualities a woman would have to offer. It was believed that "Miss

Hedger would be a strong spiritual force, and she would bring a new point of view - that of women." This view was further expanded by the Revd F L Stubbington, a fellow college student and close friend of Miss Hedger, who not only praised her great intellectual ability but also argued that for centuries "man had been preaching from man's point of view, and it was a good thing they were to have a new view - the splendid view of woman."

Stubbington returned to this theme during his address at the induction service in the evening when he told a packed church that the first duty of a minister was to minister to spiritual needs and consequently

the ministry of women was of high significance, for in many ways a woman could minister to spiritual needs perhaps more than a man. For 2,000 years men had preached the gospel of Christ from the pulpits of the world, and it was time the woman's view of God was given; perhaps a view denied the logic of man. In the last few weeks Miss Hedger's name had been ringing throughout England, and people had heard of the ministry of women as perhaps never before. If they were to make history at Littleover - and he thought they would - they must use their minister in the highest possible way.

Violet Hedger faced no easy task. At a special Covenant Service in January 1926 just twenty-nine people signed the roll and became the first members of the new church.¹³⁷ Besides the regular duties of conducting services, preaching, visitation and leadership, she was faced with the demands of building up church membership and welding the adherents of the new church into a vital community. The members of Littleover Church were mainly lower middle and skilled working-class employees of the LMS Railway and of Rolls Royce and from the outset she insisted that there should be no hint of social divisions within the membership.¹³⁸ To her they "were all one in

Christ" and consequently when she started a Women's Bright Hour in 1927 there was no question of the separate women's and ladies' meetings that Violet Cragg found at the Methodist Carver Street Chapel in Sheffield.¹³⁹ She insisted, too, that a visitation committee should be formed

to keep in touch with new friends who are attending services in increasing numbers, with the object of developing still further the family spirit in the church.¹⁴⁰

She was equally anxious to see the standard of Sunday School teaching improved and instituted a series of lectures for Sunday School teachers which included child psychology, elementary philosophy and education method. These lectures were later largely adopted by the YWCA in its correspondence course for the training of group leaders.¹⁴¹

When Violet Hedger became minister of Littleover in 1926, she herself was twenty-six, good-looking, full of energy and with a great sense of humour. She made a startling contrast with some of the local Free Church ministers who were much older and sometimes rather dull preachers.¹⁴² She was an instant success with the younger members of the church who called her "Auntie Vi" and immediately started a Young People's Fellowship which was very popular. A keen sportswoman, she regularly took members of the Fellowship hiking and swimming but provoked some condemnation when swimming took the form of mixed bathing at the local pool and when members of the Fellowship left it until the last train to return from their annual outing.¹⁴³

Violet Hedger was well aware that she had to proceed carefully. Her deacons were not necessarily over cautious but they were well aware that theirs was a new

church and that the appointment of a woman minister was in the nature of an experiment and were doubtless concerned that there should be no loss of dignity or of respectability. As a young and dynamic woman, she found them "a very serious and anxious team"¹⁴⁴ and it may have been this reluctance to implement new ideas that persuaded her to decline the Church's invitation in December 1927 to continue her ministry for a further two years. She gave as her reason the fact that

she was not doing the work she wanted to do and did not see any prospect of doing it. She was disappointed with results and suggested there had not been encouraging results from the adults but that the outlook with respect to young people was full of promise.¹⁴⁵

Violet Hedger returned to the wilderness. She calculated that in just one year she travelled 26,000 miles up and down the country by car to meet preaching engagements in "every corner of England, Wales and Scotland."¹⁴⁶ It was the end of 1933 before she found a new pastorate at North Parade, Halifax. Like so many of the churches which appointed women ministers, North Parade has since closed and there is very little record of her ministry there. Her personal crusade to make the Baptist church aware of the need for relevance and modernity in its thinking was reflected in her first sermon when she argued that ideas which were obsolescent or no longer fashionable should be abandoned and the church should no longer live in the past. As changes occurred in other branches of life, so should the churches change and their interpretation of doctrine be different from that of their forefathers as the "ideals of one generation were different from the ideals of the generation before."¹⁴⁷

Certainly for one who was passionately committed to social equality she found it difficult to bridge the substantial gulf between mill owner and mill worker in

this stern northern town.¹⁴⁸ Her ministry at Halifax was, however, notable for breaking further new ground. She became the first woman president of the Halifax Free Church Council and was the first woman minister to conduct a broadcast service in the British Isles. Her broadcast in March 1937 was particularly well-received and as a result she was inundated with over 600 letters from listeners in England, Canada, India and South Africa.¹⁴⁹ Despite these successes she gave the impression in conversation that it was with a sense of some relief that she was able to return in 1937 to the more familiar territory of southern England when she accepted the pastorate of Zion Baptist Church in Chatham.¹⁵⁰

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It appeared, therefore, that by 1930, the opportunity for ministerial training was available to women at a number of Unitarian, Baptist and Congregational theological colleges. Kenneth Brown has suggested that the admission of women to the ministry of some denominations should be seen in the light of declining male recruitment from 1900, a trend which was exacerbated by the First World War. Such an interpretation seems valid for the years immediately following the war. The Congregational colleges had only 245 in training in 1921 compared with 347 in 1914:

Annual intake was down to less than 50 at a time when between 70 and 75 men were needed each year just to replace those retiring - and this ignored the heavy demand for British-trained ministers in the dominions.¹⁵¹

Nor were the Baptists any better placed. A total of only twenty trained ministers left their colleges in 1923 compared with fifty a year in the 1890s.¹⁵² When the secretary of the Unitarian Ministerial Settlements Board

visited Rotherham in 1926 his suggestion that the members of the Church of Our Father should consider a woman minister was put forward in the knowledge that there was a serious shortage of young men in the ministry and that only a recently trained minister would be prepared to accept the modest salary offered by the church.¹⁵³

Thus the admission of the first women students may be seen as just one of the responses to a serious lack of candidates for the ministry. It might be accepted that the decision to accept women for ordination was as much the product of acute manpower shortage as changing social and cultural attitudes. By the late 1920s, however, male applications for admission to some theological colleges had risen steeply. In the Annual Report of Lancashire College for 1926-27 it was recorded that eleven new students had been admitted that year. There had been 38 on the roll during the session and "we cannot, if we would, keep on admitting 10 or 11 candidates a year."¹⁵⁴ Thus, by the time of Margaret Hardy's ordination in 1927, Dr Grieve was able to record that:

It is part of the general feminine movement to enter what were previously men's professions. Women are not entering the ministry because we are short of men. As a matter of fact we are just recovering from the shortage we experienced after the war. Women can certainly do useful work in the ministry, although I do not expect there will be a rapid movement on their part to accept pastorates just yet.¹⁵⁵

It has been argued that it was the autonomy of individual congregations in the non-Methodist Free Churches which militated in favour of the acceptance of women's ministry. Since no minister could be appointed unless "called" by a specific congregation it was recognised that it would be up to individual churches to decide whether or not a woman pastor would be acceptable. The experience of these pioneering ministers in the West

Riding suggests that the misgivings of the Lancashire College authorities were justified and that the few calls that did come usually emanated from what could be termed "problem" or "minority" churches. They were either situated in impoverished districts of a city or had small or waning church membership and hence were in financial difficulties. Only Violet Hedger's church which had been newly established in a Derby suburb is still in existence. The others have fallen prey to changing patterns of church attendance or to movements of population away from inner city areas. Margaret Hardy believed that her call in 1927 to Holbeck was conditioned by the nature of the surrounding area and that the work at Marshall Street church, which was neither prosperous nor desirable, was severely handicapped by lack of money. As she later recalled: "Only the slum churches the men didn't want were open to women ministers."¹⁵⁶

That calls only came from "problem" churches is borne out by the fortunes of other women ministers in the West Yorkshire area during the inter-war years. Eileen Fitzgerald was the sixth and last woman to train at Lancashire Independent College in the inter-war period. She was a graduate of Manchester University who had gained the London University Diploma in Education and taken a short course of special training which enabled her to teach mentally handicapped children. Her spare time was largely devoted to church work and she became Education Secretary in the Manchester Auxiliary of the London Missionary Society which involved public speaking and participation in church services. An increasing sense of call to the ministry was confirmed at a young people's conference for the Lancashire churches when she was leading the evening prayers on the final day. When Eileen Fitzgerald completed her training at Lancashire College she found it difficult to find a pastorate and it

was several months before she was appointed for a short term as assistant minister at Salford Central Mission.¹⁵⁷

In 1937 Miss Fitzgerald's fiancé, Ronald Orchard, who had been a fellow student at Lancashire College, was appointed north-east district secretary of the London Missionary Society. Miss Fitzgerald was, however, still anxious to put her ministerial training to effective use and in an attempt to solve the difficulty of finding a church willing to accept a woman minister, endeavoured to seek a pastorate in a church unable to pay a full stipend. This she found at Ryan Street Congregational Church in the West Bowling district of Bradford. By the late 1930s the church had only a small working-class congregation, many of whom lived in the surrounding back-to-back houses, and was on the verge of closing as the older members had become weary of the effort involved in its maintenance. However, a nucleus of the younger members expressed themselves ready to accept responsibility as deacons and consequently Eileen Orchard was assisted in her work by a diaconate, the majority of whom were "well under thirty years old - very unusual in those days."¹⁵⁸

The experience of women who succeeded in finding pastorates in the West Riding is far from exceptional. Mary Collins, the first woman to accept sole official charge in a Congregational Church, went to the impoverished North Bow church in the East End of London.¹⁵⁹ Muriel Paulden obtained permission to reopen a disused down-town Congregational Church in Liverpool.¹⁶⁰ Ethel Kay, a student at Manchester College, Oxford like Margaret Barr, found her first pastorate at Whitby where the Unitarian chapel had been without a minister for a considerable period.¹⁶¹

Even churches to which women were called as co-pastors with their husbands were not always free from problems. The Constables' call to Crookes Congregational Church in Sheffield, for instance, came at the instigation of one of the deacons who was acquainted with a member of Providence, Halifax.¹⁶² Crookes church had been facing a difficult period and divisions within the Church over the continued acceptability of the previous minister had precipitated the resignation of a majority of the diaconate. It was an under-strength, relatively inexperienced group of deacons who saw in the radical experiment of a joint pastorate an opportunity to impose their own stamp on the church and to heal the rifts within the congregation by creating an entirely new ethos and thus achieve a complete break from the past ministry and the animosities it had aroused. The Church Secretary when putting the Deacons' recommendations to a special Church meeting in March 1918 emphasised that the proposed joint pastorate "was a bold forward step, justified by the future greater activities of women" and urged that they should recognise that the future satisfactory progress of their church could only be guaranteed if they were prepared to adopt "a broad, unbiassed, liberal outlook."¹⁶³ Although the Constables were assured of considerable support from the congregation, not all members could welcome the idea of Wilna Constable as co-pastor and the experimental nature of the arrangement was recognised with the agreement that the question of the joint pastorate should be reconsidered at the end of the first twelve months.¹⁶⁴ The members of the church could congratulate themselves on getting good value for their money as the Constables' combined salary was £230 (£150 to Mr Constable and £80 to Mrs Constable) when the recommended minimum for a Congregational minister serving in an urban area in the 1920s was £250.¹⁶⁵

After her success in the Baptist ministerial examinations in 1918 Maria Living-Taylor had shared a ministry with her husband at the Baptist Tabernacle in Barking, Essex.¹⁶⁶ In 1924 they moved to Bradford. Although Sion Jubilee was "the most significant [Baptist] Church in the Bradford district",¹⁶⁷ there had been no settled pastorate for the two years before the Living-Taylors' arrival and their call to the church was agreed on the understanding that Maria Living-Taylor would serve as associate pastor but, although she" played a full part in the leadership of the church, she only rarely conducted Sunday worship."¹⁶⁸ Such an interpretation illustrates the difficulties that women who shared pastorates with their husbands faced in trying to establish their claim to full ministerial acceptance. They constantly had to struggle against entrenched attitudes that tried to assign them, albeit on an official and salaried basis, to the traditional role expected of a minister's wife. On the other hand, while a few married women, as the example of Eileen Orchard shows, did have churches of their own, such arrangements could have drawbacks as Unitarian Ada Tonkin who had to share her time between the family home in Oldham where her husband was a minister and her own Unity Church in Dewsbury discovered. Such a situation may have been considered unsatisfactory and not tolerated by many congregations.¹⁶⁹

By the 1930s the reluctance of churches to offer a pastorate to a woman was widely acknowledged. In 1932 a Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the Congregational Union of England and Wales to investigate and report on many issues affecting the work and organisation of the Congregational churches; the original members of the Commission were all male but two women ministers, one of whom was Margaret Hardy, and one lay woman were later co-opted. Although the Commission had not been specifically

asked to examine the question of the ministry of women in the Congregational churches, it found it had been impossible to ignore the issue. Whilst recognising the equal status of men and women in the church and acknowledging the considerable part taken by women in church life and the contribution they made to pastoral and educational work, the Report regretted that there were so few ministers, a situation it attributed to the fact that the churches were "not often disposed to invite women to undertake the duties of the regular pastorate." It recommended that a special commission on the subject should examine the suggestion that it might be advisable to find other forms of ministerial service for women in a separate Women's Order, "prepared for perhaps by other kinds of training than that now given to men in our Colleges"170

It is not known whether Margaret Hardy personally subscribed to this conclusion, but such a suggestion certainly provoked violent opposition from existing women ministers who considered it a retrograde step. Such an Order would inevitably be interpreted to imply inferior status and to offer more limited scope as the Revd Helen Woods warned in The Coming Ministry:

It would probably allocate to women one particular function of the ministry and would tend to hinder them from exercising that full ministry, both prophetic and pastoral which we believe they are fitted to exercise equally with men.¹⁷¹

Women ministers had, however, themselves recognised the probability that the majority of them would be called to "problem" churches when, in 1928, a conference of the Union of Women Free Church Ministers took as its theme "The Work of Institutional Churches".¹⁷² One of the speakers was Wilna Constable during whose joint ministry with her husband at Crookes a social institute,

theoretically separate from the Church, but through whose management board the diaconate held a controlling interest, was opened.¹⁷³

The conference was attended by practically every woman minister in the United Kingdom and they gained considerable strength from sharing in "a fellowship of mutual sympathy and support." An annual conference was recognised, however, as being hardly practicable for a group whose membership was "small, scattered, penurious and overworked" From the conference, therefore, emerged the Fellowship of Women Ministers which produced a regular news-sheet, edited from 1931 by Margaret Hardy, which allowed "those women Ministers who lead a somewhat isolated life" an opportunity to gain personal and spiritual inspiration from contact with other women colleagues.¹⁷⁴ The Fellowship appears, however, not to have survived beyond the mid-thirties. Younger women ministers questioned the wisdom of women setting themselves apart in a single sex group. It appeared to negate all their arguments that premised female ordination on the need for complementarity within the ministry and Eileen Orchard when approached by Margaret Watt to join her new association of women ministers in the 1940s refused on the grounds that

such an association was self-defeating. If women ministers formed themselves into an association based on their sex, how could they expect their male colleagues to accept them simply as fellow ministers?¹⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the emotional demands of churches in very poor districts and the long hours of work required were issues that women ministers continued to have to face. There were other difficulties, too, that they, specifically as women, had to overcome. For Violet Hedger the greatest enemy was loneliness, particularly in

the long months with constant disappointments as the possibility of a pastorate arose and then receded again, a loneliness undoubtedly tinged with a feeling of rejection and waning self-confidence.¹⁷⁶ As pastors, single women lacked the traditional support afforded to their male colleagues by their wives who were expected to look after many facets of church life like the women's organisations. Violet Hedger felt that with no family to support her the burden for a woman minister was very great:

The minister knows everyone's woes, and shares them, but she will be alone in her problems. There are many acquaintances, but few friends in a deeper sense.¹⁷⁷

As has been seen, Margaret Hardy in Leeds solved the problem by persuading Constance Clark to share the burden with her but other women ministers were unable to find such a satisfactory solution to the problem.

It was perhaps inevitable that these women ministers would have to face comments about their sex, prove to sceptical congregations that they could be effective preachers and to often elderly and wary deacons that they could expedite business at church meetings in an efficient and no-nonsense manner, fend off unwelcome offers of marriage and even reassure people that they were properly married or their relatives properly buried if the service were performed by a woman.¹⁷⁸ Wilna Constable, in 1924, for instance, wrote to advise the Woman's Leader of a prayer, offered on her behalf by the somewhat apprehensive deacon of a northern chapel where she was to preach: "O Lord, we pray for special grace for Thy servant to-day: O Lord, Thou knowest she is only a woman, but Thou canst use anything."¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, once the novelty had worn off, most women seem to have encountered little hostility within their own churches. As an educated and obviously caring person Margaret Hardy quickly won the respect of the working-class men in her congregation at Holbeck. In fact she confessed herself surprised at finding so little hostility and it was the male members of the congregation who were particularly willing to rally round and help her make the church, run down after years of neglect, more attractive.¹⁸⁰

Violet Hedger found she was accorded the most warm welcome in the small mining towns of the North and congregations there came to hear her as a normal part of their worship and not just from curiosity.¹⁸¹ Frequently the atmosphere was more one of concealed amusement than hostility.¹⁸² Rather than confront any opposition head-on, it was safer to avoid going to any church where great opposition to a woman minister was known to exist or take steps to obviate any future embarrassment. Violet Cragg, for instance, the first woman Methodist local preacher on the Sheffield circuit, suggested to the apologetic stewards of one church where a woman in the congregation "clattered out" when Miss Cragg entered the pulpit that in future they should ensure that the woman had a programme so she could avoid services where the preacher was to be a member of her own sex.¹⁸³

It was the frequent claim of early women doctors that they were needed because many women preferred to consult a sympathetic member of their own sex. Women ministers, as did so many women who entered political life, stressed the need for complementarity within the ministry, that within a church which claimed to cater for the needs of both men and women, the woman's point of view should be represented. Thus, Violet Hedger attempted to steer people away from a purely masculine vision of God:

The very use of the masculine 'Him' limits our thought. God is not a man. All life, the masculine and the feminine, is a tiny expression of His boundless thought and love.¹⁸⁴

In the same way that God incorporated both masculine and feminine attributes, the teaching of His Word demanded both masculine and feminine interpretation:

All big truths . . . are many-sided, and women have their own contribution to make. I do not base the case for women preachers on the fact that in most Churches the women outnumber the men. That has really little to do with it. The important thing is that the woman's point of view should be expressed, and this can only be done by a woman.¹⁸⁵

Wilna Constable propounded a teleological theory of the complementarity of men and women's ministry when she suggested to the 1928 conference of women ministers that

God was demanding a new order of life, and it was woman's responsibility to take her share in creating that new order: a united humanity could only be brought about by men and women working together as comrades, with equal opportunities and equal responsibilities.¹⁸⁶

It could be argued that such a view implies the need for male and female ministers of equal status within one church but where a pastorate was shared, as at Crookes, Sheffield, or Sion Jubilee, Bradford it has been shown that the woman was placed in a junior position or even if she aspired to equality of service, her perceived subordinate role was given substance by the payment of a salary lower than her husband's. Moreover, the compatibility of the ministry with marriage, and more particularly with motherhood, was a contentious issue.¹⁸⁷ Maria Living-Taylor in Bradford felt that any ministry could only be enlivened and strengthened by the presence of children,¹⁸⁸ but members of Sion Jubilee were less

convinced. She became pregnant shortly after her arrival in Bradford and

spent several months in a local nursing home before and after the birth of her first daughter. This obviously affected her contribution to the pastorate . . . [and] the joint pastorate never really fulfilled the high hopes that the Church had for it.¹⁸⁹

Violet Hedger lamented the fact that whenever she was questioned about her ministry, it was usually in terms of the difficulties she had had to overcome but admitted the justification of such an approach when attempting to illustrate how long it takes before traditional attitudes change.¹⁹⁰ Given that deeply entrenched attitudes could not be quickly broken down, it is not surprising that some trained women decided to opt for organisational or administrative posts or continued to prefer to offer themselves for missionary or educational work which were more widely accepted as suitable spheres for women's service. To them, as to the Revd Dorothy Wilson, for whom at one stage there had been the possibility of a ministry at Dore and Totley Congregational Church in Sheffield, the church was self-defeating in its continued opposition. In an address to the Women's Guild of the Congregational Union at the Autumnal Assembly in 1934, she argued that women

possessed gifts of spiritual leadership, insight, interpretation and of pastoral skill which [were] urgently needed in the Church, and the latter [was] suffering positive loss and injury through not using those gifts to the full.¹⁹¹

To Violet Hedger the lack of encouragement was little less than a tragedy as she wrote in The Baptist Quarterly in 1941:

There are a few women who have a very strong sense of vocation and some have gifts of leadership and speech. I have received letters

from some, some have come to see me from far parts of the country, yet these are lost to our church and give their gifts to other - good, but second-best - causes, as we have little room for trained women. And the church suffers.¹⁹²

Footnotes

- 1 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", p 250.
- 2 Sheffield Independent, 21 March 1918.
- 3 D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 5.
- 4 Christian Commonwealth, July 18 1917, p 520; Coming Day, Aug 1917, p 4.
- 5 Christian Commonwealth, Sept 13 1916, p 628.
- 6 Crookes Congregational Church Minutes Sept 29 1915 to Feb 27 1919, Minutes of Special Church Meeting, March 6 1918.
- 7 See Keith Laybourn: Philip Snowden: A Biography, 1964-1937 (Temple Smith, Aldershot, 1988), pp 55-6.
- 8 Christian Commonwealth, Feb 18 1912, p 359.
- 9 Free Church Suffrage Times, Dec 1913, p 90.
- 10 Reported in Free Church Suffrage Times, June 1913, p 17.
- 11 Hatty Baker had conducted services at Horsted Keynes Congregational Chapel in Sussex which was built by Louisa Martindale of the Spicer family and had applied to the Congregational Union of England and Wales for official recognition in 1909. Although the verdict of the Council was that "other things being equal, there was no sex-distinction in spiritual matters", Hatty Baker was unable to meet the conditions that a woman could only be affiliated if she "were to comply with the requirements of college training imposed on male candidates for the ministry, and if she were to receive a call to a specific congregation belonging to the Congregational Union. See Elaine Kaye: "Constance Coltman - A Forgotten Pioneer", p 135. After the war Hatty Baker retired to Plymouth where she continued her preaching career - Woman's Leader, Jan 24 1930, p 403.
- 12 Hatty Baker: Women in the Ministry. She suggested that the most bitter opponents of women's ordination were male ministers - p 5.
- 13 Brian Heeney: The Women's Movement in the Church of England 1850-1930, pp 105-6, 112-3 + 126-8.

- 14 Elaine Kaye: op cit, p 135; Keith Gilley: Women and the Unitarian Ministry (typescript in the author's possession).
- 15 E J Dukes: Our Sister Phoebe, Deacon of the Church, p 60.
- 16 Although this happened in some churches, the practice was not widespread as many deacons were elderly and consequently were not directly involved in the war effort. Even when women were proposed for election, they were sometimes reluctant. Thus, in response to a questionnaire sent out in 1916 seeking information on the effects the war was having on churches, it was reported that at one church when it was proposed that women should be eligible for election as deacons, several were nominated but withdrew their names when it became obvious that sufficient men were available - Christian Commonwealth, Oct 11 1916, pp 15-16. Even in 1929 when the first two women were elected as deacons of Littleover Baptist Church in Derby, they only remained in office for one year despite having a woman minister. They both "resigned because they felt they lacked the necessary experience to serve. This was strongly denied by the rest of the diaconate but the ladies held to their decision." See G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, p 49. (I am most grateful to Mr Measures and to Mrs Marion Braithwaite of Littleover Church for their help and kindness.)
- 17 See Olive Anderson: "Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain: Some Reflexions on Feminism, Popular Religion and Social Change", in particular pp 469-74.
- 18 Sheila Jeffreys: The Spinster and Her Enemies, pp 15-16.
- 19 Coming Day, March-April 1917, p 21 and Aug 1917, p 64. For Dorothy Pomeroy, see also Clyde Binfield: "True to Stereotype? Vivian and Dorothy Pomeroy: Rebels in Lumb Lane" in Stuart Mews (ed): Modern Religious Rebels (Epworth, forthcoming).
- 20 Christian Commonwealth, Nov 28 1917, p 99.
- 21 Hilda Martindale: From One Generation to Another 1839-1944: A Book of Memoirs, p 52.
- 22 The inaugural services of the Church of the New Ideal were conducted by Hatty Baker on 22 March 1914. The church was organised and officered and the services entirely conducted by women with the aim of "providing an organisation in which women shall have

- the right of access to any position whatsoever of church activity, and in which the special needs and outlook of women will be dealt with." - Wallasey News, March 25 1914, p 3. The Church closed in June 1917 when it was felt that recognition of the claims of women to take their share in the ministry had been achieved - Wallasey News, 2 June 1917, p 5.
- 23 Christian World, April 15 1909, p 5.
 - 24 Christian Commonwealth, April 23 1919, p 351.
 - 25 Mansfield College, Oxford in 1913; the Bristol Baptist College and the Baptist Regent's Park College in 1919.
 - 26 Elaine Kaye: "Constance Coltman - A Forgotten Pioneer", p 134.
 - 27 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 16.
 - 28 The Revd Keith Gilley has kindly supplied the author with a list of all Unitarian women ministers ordained between 1905 and 1987. The total number to 1987 is forty.
 - 29 They were Edith Gates, Maria Living-Taylor, Violet Hedger and Gwenyth Hubble who after training at Bristol College became Assistant General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement and Principal of Carey Hall, Birmingham from 1945 to 1960. Miss Hubble subsequently worked for the World Council of Churches. Information about Miss Hubble was given to me by Mr G A Measures.
 - 30 The Congregational Year Book for 1931, pp 579-81 + p 583.
 - 31 See Appendix J for the full list.
 - 32 This is because the Constables, after moving to the Unitarian denomination, left England in 1929 and held a series of joint pastorates in Auckland, Vancouver and Cape Town before settling at the Unitarian church in Orlando, Florida in 1941. Wilna Constable died in Florida in 1966. I am indebted to Dale Johnson of Vanderbilt University for sending me the biographical details about Wilna Constable which appeared in The Journal of the Universalist Historical Society, Vol X (1975), pp 49-50.
 - 33 D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 10; Lancashire Independent College (LIC) Register of

Students No 4 H-J, Application for admission, June 5 1924.

- 34 Details of Miss Hardy's life and work have been compiled from her Application for admission to Lancashire Independent College, June 5 1924, in the Register of Students No. 4 H-J; D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 10; Evening Post, Sept 14 1977, p 9, Jan 6 1978, p 14, Dec 8 1979 - p 14 of the Weekend Post supplement, Dec 15 1979 - p 14 of the Weekend Post supplement, Feb 15 1980 (obituary); a collection of newspaper cuttings generously sent by the Revd Eric Allen; the Revd Alice Platts's notes written for Margaret Hardy's Jubilee celebration in September 1977 and Memorial Service in February 1980, a copy of which she has kindly given me; conversation on 7 March 1989 with the Revd Sheila Sanderson and Mr and Mrs A Adamson, whom I would like to thank for making me so welcome.
- 35 For Maude Royden, see Sheila Fletcher: Maude Royden: A Life.
- 36 Evening Post, Jan 6 1978, p 14.
- 37 LIC Register of Students No. 4 H-J, Application for admission, June 5 1924.
- 38 ibid.
- 39 Sheila Fletcher: Maude Royden: A Life, pp 113-14; Elaine Kaye: "Constance Coltman - A Forgotten Pioneer", pp 134-5.
- 40 For Maude Royden's ministry at the City Temple, see Sheila Fletcher: Maude Royden: A Life, Chapter 8, pp 156-84.
- 41 Maude Royden Papers, Letter to Maude Royden from Margaret Hardy, 21st March 1917. See also Sheila Fletcher, op cit, p 161.
- 42 D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 17.
- 43 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 16 1927, p 7.
- 44 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 16 1927, p 8.
- 45 Charles E Surman: Alexander James Grieve MA DD 1874-1952, pp 5 + 19.
- 46 ibid, pp 4 + 16.

- 47 I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr Clyde Binfield, for this reading of Dr Duff's character.
- 48 Bradford Weekly Telegraph, Oct 24 1919, p 1; Violet Markham Papers: Women Magistrates - Advisory Committee, Final List of women recommended, p 28.
- 49 Mary Hamilton: Remembering My Good Friends (Jonathon Cape, London, 1944), p 239.
- 50 Charles E Surman: op.cit, p 23.
- 51 LIC Register of Students No.4.H-J, Letter from Margaret Hardy to Dr A J Grieve, May 1 1924.
- 52 ibid, Letter from Margaret Hardy to Dr A J Grieve, June 26 1924.
- 53 LIC Book of Proceedings No.11, Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, June 19 1924.
- 54 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 16 1927, p 8.
- 55 LIC Book of Proceedings No.11, Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, June 19 1924.
- 56 LIC Register of Students No 4.H-J, Letter from Margaret Hardy to Dr A J Grieve, June 26 1924.
- 57 ibid.
- 58 LIC Report of the Committee for 1924-25, p 11.
- 59 LIC Book of Proceedings No.11, Minutes of Meeting of General Committee, June 19 1924 and Report of the Committee for 1924-25, pp 10-11.
- 60 Evening Post, Jan 6 1978, p 14.
- 61 LIC Report of the Committee for 1924-25, p 10.
- 62 LIC Report of the Committee for 1926-27, p 10.
- 63 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 16 1927, p 8.
- 64 ibid, p 8.
- 65 ibid, p 8.
- 66 ibid, p 7.
- 67 ibid, pp 7 + 8.
- 68 ibid, p 7.

- 69 The Express, (undated cutting from 1935 in the author's possession).
- 70 ibid; Evening Post, 8 Dec 1979 - p 14 of the Weekend Post supplement; Evening Post, Jan 6 1978, p 14. An article on the work of the nursery at Marshall Street by a former pupil who became superintendant can be found in the Leeds Girls' High School Magazine, No 102 (Spring Term 1932), pp 34-5.
- 71 Yorkshire Observer, Dec 2 1931.
- 72 Leeds Mercury, 18 Sept 1930, p 5; Armley and Wortley News, Sept 19 1930, p 3.
- 73 LIC Register of Students No. 2 C-D, Application for admission, May 11 1925; Yorkshire Congregational Union Year Book 1952-53, pp 12-13.
- 74 See Albert Peel: These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931, pp 376-7; Towards Co-operation: A Record of the Service of the Women's Committee to the Congregational Union of England and Wales, p 4.
- 75 LIC Register of Students No. 2 C-D, Application for admission, May 11 1925.
- 76 The Vote, Jan 31 1930, p 37.
- 77 LIC Register of Students No. 2 C-D, Letter from the Revd W Russell Maltby to Dr A J Grieve, June 4 1925.
- 78 See Miss Clark's presidential address to the Yorkshire Congregational Union in the Yorkshire Congregational Year Book 1952-53, p 13.
- 79 Untitled newspaper interview with Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark at the time of their acceptance of the pastorate at Burmantofts Church in December 1934 (in author's possession).
- 80 Daily Despatch, Nov 7 1949 in LIC Register of Students No. 4 H-J, among papers concerning the Revd Kathleen Hendry (nee Hall); conversation with the Revd Alice Platts, 5 June 1990.
- 81 Untitled newspaper interview with Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark at the time of their acceptance of the pastorate at Burmantofts Church in December 1934 (in author's possession).
- 82 Mrs Adamson remembers as a teenager struggling out to Middleton in the snow to take part in some of the

services - Conversation with the Revd Sheila Sanderson and Mr & Mrs A Adamson, 7 March 1989. Belle Isle Church was formed in 1949 and the Church building completed in 1952. The first minister was the Revd B H Jones.

- 83 An untitled newspaper account of the welcome service is in the author's possession.
- 84 Miss Hardy gave a number of interviews at the time of her engagement in which she intimated her intention to continue working - (copies in author's possession).
- 85 Yorkshire Congregational Union Year Book 1952-53, p 12.
- 86 Obituaries: Constance Clark - Congregational Year Book 1969-70, p 429 and Yorkshire Post, 26 March 1969; Margaret Fullerton - United Reformed Church Year Book 1981, p 249 and Evening Post, 16 Feb 1980, p 3.
- 87 There is an account of the welcome meeting in The Rotherham Advertiser, Sept 17 1927, p 13.
- 88 Church of Our Father (COF), Church Committee Minutes Book 3, Meeting on 10 Oct 1926.
- 89 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 3, Meeting on 9 Feb 1927.
- 90 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 3, Meeting on 3 July 1927.
- 91 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 3, Letter from the Hollis Trustees to the Church Secretary read to a congregational meeting on 17 July 1927.
- 92 Winifred Laurie: "Annie Margaret Barr: Life" in Y Surrendra Paul (ed): Margaret Barr: A Universal Soul, pp 5-7. See also The Rotherham Advertiser, 10 Sept 1927 and D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 2.
- 93 Sylvia Kimbell (nee Becker) in the Leeds Girls' High School Newsletter, Issue No 41 (May 1974). I am indebted to Miss Joan Dalton for this reference.
- 94 For Margaret Barr's account of her conversion to Unitarianism, see "How I Became a Unitarian" in Y Surrendra Paul (ed): op.cit, pp 15-17 and 32-5.
- 95 Margaret Barr: A dream come true, p 11.

- 96 Margaret Barr: "How I Became a Unitarian", p 15.
- 97 Margaret Barr: A dream come true, p 12.
- 98 John H McLachlan in Y Surrendra Paul (ed): op.cit, p 8.
- 99 Manchester College, Oxford (MCO) Minute Book R, Meeting of the General Committee, June 23 + 24 1927, p 249; COF, Church Committee Minute Book 3, Meeting on 3 July 1927.
- 100 An account of the induction service is given in The Rotherham Advertiser, Sept 29 1928, p 3.
- 101 The Inquirer, 1 Sept 1973, p 3.
- 102 ibid.
- 103 Marjorie Sykes: "Margaret Barr - A Tribute" in The Aryan Path, Vol XLV (1974), pp 14-15.
- 104 The Rotherham Advertiser, Oct 20 1928, p 7. For the League of the Church Militant, see Sheila Fletcher: Maude Royden: A Life, p 188.
- 105 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 4, Meeting on 3 July 1930.
- 106 ibid, Meeting on 13 July 1930.
- 107 ibid, Meeting on 3 Feb 1932.
- 108 ibid, Meetings on 4 April and 4 Nov 1932.
- 109 ibid, Meeting on 9 Dec 1932.
- 110 Margaret Barr: "My kind of Ministry" in Unitarian Ministry, Vol 1 No 3, no date but c 1971, pp 9-10.
- 111 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 4, Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 27 Feb 1933.
- 112 ibid, Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 27 Feb 1932.
- 113 ibid, Letter from Margaret Barr to Mr Foster, Nov 22 1932.
- 114 Margaret Barr: A dream come true, pp 12-13.
- 115 ibid, p 9.
- 116 ibid, p 10.

- 117 ibid, pp 35-6; The Unitarian, No 711 (Jan 1963), p 4.
- 118 The Rotherham Advertiser, 7 Oct 1933.
- 119 See "Margaret's Personality as reflected in her letters" in Y Surrendra Paul (ed): Margaret Barr: A Universal Soul, p 69.
- 120 Obituary - The Inquirer, 1 Sept 1973, p 3.
- 121 Tape-recording in the possession of the author.
- 122 The Derby Daily Telegraph, Feb 4 1926, p 4.
- 123 D M Northcroft: Free Church Women Ministers, p 12.
- 124 The Baptist Times, 11 Jan 1990, p 4.
- 125 Violet Hedger: On Building New Traditions, p 3.
- 126 Conversation with the Revd Violet Hedger, 17 April 1990.
- 127 Violet Hedger: On Building New Traditions, p 3.
- 128 Conversation with the Revd Violet Hedger, 17 April 1990.
- 129 Regent's Now, Summer 1990, p 3. I am indebted to Mrs Susan Mills, archivist of Regent's Park College, for this reference.
- 130 Mrs Mills believes that the next women student was not admitted until 1960. She was Miss Marie Isaacs. See, however, footnote 17 to chapter seven, p 362.
- 131 The Baptist Times, 25 Jan 1990, p 4.
- 132 The Baptist Times, Feb 11 1926, p 100.
- 133 G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, pp 35 + 37.
- 134 G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, p 37.
- 135 ibid, p 37.
- 136 This and the following extracts are taken from The Derby Daily Telegraph, Feb 4 1926, p 4.
- 137 G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, p 38.
- 138 The Baptist Times, 18 Jan 1990, p 6; Conversation with Mrs Marion Braithwaite, 6 June 1990.

- 139 Violet Cragg: Beyond All Shaken Things, p 71.
- 140 G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, p 48.
- 141 The Coming Ministry, No 11 (Sept 1933), p 6.
- 142 Conversation with Mrs Marion Braithwaite, 6 June 1990. Kenneth Brown found that by 1931 over a quarter of the men serving in the Baptist, United Methodist and Congregational churches were over sixty-one. See A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930, p 229.
- 143 The Baptist Times, 18 Jan 1990, p 6; G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, pp 45-6.
- 144 Violet Hedger: On Building New Traditions, p 3.
- 145 G A Measures: Littleover Baptist Church, p 41.
- 146 The Coming Ministry, No 11 (Sept 1933), p 6.
- 147 Halifax Courier and Guardian, 13 Jan 1934.
- 148 Conversation with the Revd Violet Hedger, 17 April 1990.
- 149 Halifax Daily Courier & Guardian, June 3 1937.,
- 150 Conversation with the Revd Violet Hedger, 17 April 1990.
- 151 Kenneth Brown: A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England & Wales, 1800-1930, p 225.
- 152 Kenneth Brown: ibid.
- 153 COF, Church Committee Minute Book 3, Minutes of meeting, 10 Oct 1926.
- 154 LIC, Report of the Committee for 1926-27, p 10.
- 155 Undated cutting from The Daily Mail in author's possession.
- 156 Yorkshire Evening Post, Jan 6 1978, p 14.
- 157 LIC Register of Students No 3 E-G, details of Eileen Fitzgerald's career; Letter from Revd Eileen Orchard, 22 Feb 1989.
- 158 Letter from Revd Eileen Orchard, 22 Feb 1989.

- 159 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 3; Congregational Year Book, 1946, pp 438-9.
- 160 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 19; Congregational Quarterly, pp 91-3.
- 161 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 13; Inquirer, Sept 5 1964, p 6.
- 162 Crookes Congregational Church Deacons Minutes May 21 1917 - Feb 21 1919, Minutes of special meeting, March 5 1918.
- 163 Crookes Congregational Church Minutes Sept 29 1915 - Feb 27 1919, Minutes of special meeting, March 6 1918.
- 164 ibid.
- 165 ibid; Kenneth Brown: op.cit, p 227.
- 166 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 16; Joseph Bentley: The Story of One Hundred Years of the Sion Baptist Church Bradford, pp 94 + 97.
- 167 Ian Sellers (ed): Our Heritage. The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire 1647-1987, p 87.
- 168 Joseph Bentley: op.cit, p 93; Ian Sellers (ed): op.cit, p 87.
- 169 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 22; The Inquirer, June 13 1981, p 4. There are accounts of Ada Tonkin's appointment and her first sermon in the Dewsbury Reporter, June 21 1924 pp 9 + 12 and of her induction service in ibid, July 19 1924, p 8.
- 170 See Constance M Coltman: "Report of the Congregational Commission of Inquiry and the Ministry of Women" in The Coming Ministry, No 14 (June 1934), p 3.
- 171 Helen E Woods: "Reflections on the Congregational Report on the Ministry of Women" in The Coming Ministry, No 22 (July 1936), pp 3-4.
- 172 The Vote, Oct 12 1928, p 328.
- 173 Crookes Congregational Church Deacons Minutes March 28 1919 - Sept 21 1923, Minutes of special meetings, April 15 and 16 1919. Wilna Constable insisted that it should cater for young women as well as young men.

- 174 The Coming Ministry, No 10 (June 1933), p 6.
- 175 Letter from Revd Eileen Orchard, 22 Feb 1989.
- 176 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", p 249.
- 177 Violet Hedger: On Building New Traditions, p 5.
- 178 See Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", pp 247-8.
- 179 Woman's Leader, Oct 24 1924, p 313.
- 180 Yorkshire Evening Post, 14 Sept 1977, p 9.
- 181 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 12.
- 182 Violet Cragg: Women's Lib.1930, p 1.
- 183 Violet Cragg: Beyond All Shaken Things, p 58.
- 184 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", p 252.
- 185 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 12.
- 186 Quoted in The Woman's Leader, Nov 16 1928, p 314.
- 187 The problems of combining ministerial work with family responsibilities were discussed at the 1928 conference at which there were four married women ministers, two of whom had young children - Inquirer, Nov 3 1928, p 564. See also Constance M Coltman: "The Woman Minister: Matron or Maid?" in The Coming Ministry, No 21 (March 1936), pp 3-4
- 188 D M Northcroft: op.cit, p 16.
- 189 Letter from Mr J Pitt, 22 April 1989.
- 190 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", pp 245-6.
- 191 Quoted in Claud Coltman: "The Ministry of Women and the Wider View" in The Coming Ministry, No 16 (Dec 1934), pp 4-5.
- 192 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", p 250.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"But the fight is far from over":¹
Why were there not more women?

In 1936, in her Introduction to a collection of five essays chronicling women's progress since 1918, Ray Strachey struck an ambivalent note:

None of the writers say that we can yet judge what it all amounts to: none of them feel that the freedom of women in society is either really achieved or really stable, or that there is any clear evidence as to what the results of it will be when that time comes.²

As Eleanor Rathbone pointed out in her essay on women's progress in public life, in 1930 "the unpaid magistracy numbered about 23,000, of whom about 21,000 were men and [only] 2,000 women."³ By the beginning of 1939 17 per cent of the magistrates on the Sheffield bench were women. The same figure obtained in Doncaster, whilst in Bradford only fourteen women magistrates were appointed throughout the inter-war period.

Moreover, despite anti-suffragist fears of "petticoat government", there

were only 323 women among the 10,312 candidates at general elections before 1945, and the number of women MPs before 1945 peaked at only fifteen for a few months in 1931.⁴

The number of women Parliamentary candidates in the West Riding during the inter-war period was miniscule. At the seven general elections in the inter-war period, at all of which women were entitled to stand, there were eight women candidates across the forty-four West Riding constituencies.⁵ Accepting that West Riding seats account for just under seven per cent of the total, it was only in 1935 that West Riding women candidates approached anything near seven per cent of all women

candidates. In 1935 they accounted for just under six per cent but in 1929 there had been none at all and in 1931 only one out of sixty-two women candidates (1.6%) across the country.⁶ It was not until 1945 that women first succeeded in becoming members of parliament for West Riding constituencies,⁷ although it should not be forgotten that in 1929 Eleanor Rathbone was elected as an Independent by the Northern Universities which included Leeds and Sheffield.

At the municipal level it has been seen that, locally, the number of women councillors failed to increase in any significant way.⁸ Nationally, between 1930 and 1935 the total number of women county, city, town, urban and rural district councillors had increased from 1,174 to 1,569 but they still represented only a small fraction of the total.⁹ Appendix C to Patricia Hollis's Ladies Elect shows that only in London did women achieve significant representation in the inter-war period - twenty-four per cent in 1930. Whilst Leeds with fourteen per cent and Sheffield with twelve per cent appear to have a relatively high proportion of women, (Liverpool had twelve per cent, Birmingham nine and Manchester eight), it has been shown that these figures are the outcome of unusual circumstances and that they subsequently fell during the 1930s.

Women's muted entry to public life was mirrored by a similar lack of success in other spheres. Women's progress in the professions, for instance, had been disappointing. From the early 1920s the number of women medical students had been declining due, in part, to concern about the oversupply of doctors in the post-war period and to a consequent contraction in the number of places available for women to train, particularly in the London schools:

TABLE 10

Total number of women medical students attending university institutions, 1923-1928¹⁰

	1923-4	1924-5	1925-6	1926-7	1927-8
England	1375	1197	1059	930	862
Wales	35	32	30	32	30
Scotland	610	431	313	274	254
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2020	1660	1402	1236	1146

At Sheffield University a similar decline can be traced although there was never an explicit ban on their admission. Fifteen women medical students graduated between 1928 and 1937 compared with thirty-two between 1919 and 1927.¹¹ Neither was the decline limited to the Medical Faculty. Chapman records that the total number of women students at Sheffield University began to decline from the mid-twenties so that by 1936-7 there were only half as many women students in the University as ten years earlier.¹² Although Chapman claims that the decrease in the number of women students was more dramatic at Sheffield than other universities,¹³ figures for Manchester show that the number of women students there peaked in the 1923-4 session.¹⁴ It was only in those professions which were considered woman's peculiar province - work as almoners in hospitals, property management, welfare work in factories - that there was some growth.¹⁵

Similarly the number of women ministers was slow to grow. The pattern appears to follow the S-curve model posited by Ann Oakley for women's progress in the professions, particularly that of medical women. After an initial "breakthrough to acceptance", a period of stagnation sets in.¹⁶ The number of women ordained between 1929 and 1939

was no greater than the number ordained in the previous ten years. In the 1940s and 50s the numbers fell even more until a renewed take-off in the 1960s.

It cannot be denied that by 1930 the opportunities for women to train for the ministry had actually declined. Women like Margaret Hardy, Constance Clark and Violet Hedger owed their admission to those theological colleges which did agree to take women students to the influence of foresighted and liberal-minded principals like Dr Grieve of Lancashire Independent College. The Revd Herbert McLachlan, principal of the Unitarian College in Manchester from 1921 to 1944 believed, for instance, that women, no less than men, could be called to God's service and women should not be denied the opportunity of training for the ministry.¹⁷ Principals like Grieve, McLachlan and Gould at Regent's Park College usually had to overcome considerable opposition from some members of college governing bodies, not least from prominent businessmen within local communities who were frequently influential members of executive committees. A change of principal could equally affect a College's attitude to women students. Violet Hedger was accepted for Regent's Park in the final year of Dr G Pearce Gould's reign and, with a great sense of optimism, she heard him "breaking the conservatism of centuries, speak in public, and with enthusiasm, of the new era, which he himself was helping to usher in."¹⁸ As has been seen, however, Dr Gould's successor, the Revd Henry Wheeler Robinson, viewed the idea of women students with abhorrence. It was not until 1960 that the College appears to have accepted another woman student.¹⁹

Where colleges did agree to admit women students they were perhaps understandably nervous of the outcome. Thus, the members of the committee of Lancashire College

where both Margaret Hardy and Constance Clark had been students, kept the possibility of reversing their decision open by only agreeing to accept women on an experimental basis,²⁰ as did Margaret Barr's college, Manchester College, Oxford, where the question of women students was under continual review.

In 1927 the Lancashire College authorities decided to introduce a minimum educational standard of matriculation or a recognised equivalent to improve the academic quality of the students.²¹ This requirement equally acted to keep down the number of applicants and would have had adverse implications for women who generally reached lower levels of educational achievement than men. However, after only two of their women students had actually completed their training, considerable debate took place at a General Committee meeting on June 19 1930 on the desirability of admitting further women students, primarily on the admission by the chairman, the Revd J J James, that much doubt was felt as to whether, after training, it would be possible to find ministerial work for them. The recommendation of a sub-committee appointed to advise on future policy that the admission of women students should cease after September 1931 "until such further time as may be determined in the light of particular and general experience" was subsequently adopted.²² How the College would be able to assess the prospects for women ministers if none were to be allowed to train is not quite clear. As it was, only six women were admitted to study at Lancashire College in the inter-war period.²³

As has been seen, Margaret Barr was the last of a group of women students who trained at Manchester College, Oxford in the 1920s. After admitting the occasional woman student in the pre-war period, the College accepted

ten women between 1920 and 1926 including one who did not complete her studies because of family commitments, one American who returned to California in 1924 and one "special" student. Of the five others who were ordained besides Margaret Barr, Ada Tonkin became minister of Unity Chapel, Dewsbury from 1924 to 1926 and Ethel Kay minister of Flowergate Old Chapel in Whitby from 1927 to 1929.²⁴ In 1923 the General Committee of the College resolved that the Board of Studies should

be requested to consider, and advise the Committee as to the desirability of placing some, and if any, what, limitation on the admission of women students.²⁵

This request appears to have been prompted by the large number of women students during the 1922/3 session (eight men, seven women). The Annual Report for the year ended 22 June 1923 admitted that no serious academic or social problems had arisen as a result of the presence of so many women:

The women have shown a capacity to grapple with the studies prescribed for them fully equal to that of the men, and their industry has been highly satisfactory.

A note of caution was, however, sounded:

At the same time it may be pointed out that the presence of so large a proportion of women students in a College which was not originally equipped for the account of women, and has no women on its staff, is a novel experiment.²⁶

Unfortunately a copy of the Board of Studies' report has not survived but the Minutes of a meeting of the Board in February 1923 give the two main recommendations of the report, viz that "only a certain number of women as opposed to men should be admitted each year" and that "women students before admission must further evidence of capabilities for a vocation alternative to that of the

ministry such as a (illegible) or a professional teacher's qualification."²⁷ At the time the General Committee accepted the Board of Studies' recommendation that no immediate action should be taken and that the report should be filed for future reference.²⁸

By 1927, however, the climate had changed. An application for admission by Lilian Preston was turned down by the General Committee in October 1927²⁹ and divisions appear to have arisen amongst members of the Board of Studies as to whether any further women candidates should be considered. In consequence of these uncertainties the General Committee took it upon itself to impose a ban and justified their decision on the grounds that it was "too difficult to have a small group of women in a community of men."³⁰

This reasoning seems difficult to accept given that the College had already spent considerable sums on the provision of toilet and common room facilities for its women students,³¹ that women students had been satisfactorily housed as paying guests in Oxford homes, that they had certainly comprised more than a small group and that the College itself had previously admitted that no serious difficulties had occurred with the women students. It is arguable that a more flexible approach on the part of the General Committee may have allowed alternative solutions to the problems as they saw them to be attempted.

The decision was not, however, accepted with equanimity by all the governing members of the College. In June 1929, at the annual meeting of the College Trustees, who included three women among their number, a resolution which requested the General Committee to submit a firm proposal to the Trustees that "the full-time studentship of the College shall be denied to women" so that the

issue could be officially debated was only withdrawn on the understanding that a special sub-committee would prepare a report for submission to a subsequent meeting of the Trustees.³²

The report was presented to the Trustees in June 1930. After reviewing the history of the admission of women to the College, attention was drawn to the marked impact the inclusion of women had had on "what was essentially a community of men" and it was to the adverse implications of this impact that the General Committee's decision not to admit further women was attributed. However, this:

did not imply any going back on the principle that the College is open to women equally with men, nor any question of the fitness of women for the ministry of religion; it was simply a matter of suitable arrangements

Although the report did not, therefore, totally preclude the admission of women, the members of the Committee made it extremely difficult for them to qualify by invoking the recent regulations introduced by the Oxford authorities to restrict the number of women students generally and argued that as women students of the College had to be members of Oxford University they would also have to be accepted by one of the Women's Colleges or by the Society of Oxford Home Students. Consequently their numbers would inevitably be restricted by the quota system. It was recommended, however, that women who were graduates of Cambridge or Dublin and hence eligible for "incorporation", thereby bypassing the numbers restriction which applied only to undergraduates, could be accepted. Nevertheless, although it seemed to offer a concession on the one hand, the Report also put further obstacles in the path of potential women candidates when it proposed that exceptions to the College regulations which could be made in special cases for men over the

ordinary student age and for foreign students should not be applicable to women.³³

The report was not accepted unanimously. The Revd Alfred Hall, in particular, who had encouraged women students to preach at the Upper Chapel in Sheffield and had welcomed a Manchester College trainee, Ethel Kay, as his assistant during her Easter vacation period in 1927 argued that the restrictions would mean that the majority of women university graduates, however brilliant, would be automatically barred.³⁴ Although the report did not explicitly put forward the proposal, it came to be interpreted as advocating the future acceptance of residential women students should "the prospect of enough women students presenting themselves" to make the building of a woman's hostel worthwhile.³⁵

Past women students were naturally concerned that the opportunities they had benefited from should not be denied to others. Only Margaret Barr, who had come to the decision that the lay ministerial training scheme was preferable to circumscribed college life, defended the decision of the College authorities and, drawing from her own experience, argued that the problem was essentially one of suitable accommodation for the women students and that it would not be solved

until such time as there are sufficient women presenting themselves to make feasible the scheme of a separate women's hostel, thus supplying for the women students the same opportunities of College life, companionship and co-operative work as the men enjoy, but which are at present so conspicuously lacking for women³⁶

Other past students were less circumspect. From her little chapel in Whitby Ethel Kay wrote to suggest that the college was moving in quite the wrong direction and that the door should not be closed to women students but

"thrown open wide". In her view it was the very failure of the College to give a firm and all-embracing lead that had led to this retrograde step. It was the implementation of "a half open door" policy that had made life so difficult for the women students whereas more complete acceptance would have provided "a means of freeing [them] from that sense of abnormality which, because of restrictions, has up to the present oppressed them."³⁷ Despite such protests, the rigid stipulations laid down in the report remained in force throughout the remainder of the inter-war period and it was not until the late 1930s that a woman candidate was able to meet the requisite conditions.³⁸

Therefore, by 1930, both Lancashire Independent College and Manchester College had reversed their initial decision to admit women students. Some other colleges refused even to consider them. The Congregational Paton College at Nottingham, for instance, declined applications from women on the grounds that it had no accommodation for them.³⁹ Nevertheless, a number of colleges did continue to accept them. When the Congregational Hackney and New Colleges amalgamated in 1924, the Parliamentary enabling legislation specifically provided for the admission of women theological students on exactly the same terms as men.⁴⁰ Having been the first of the Congregational colleges to take women students, Mansfield College, Oxford continued to accept them in the inter-war period, whilst Unitarian women, excluded from Manchester College, Oxford from 1927, had the option of applying to the Unitarian College in Manchester.

Whilst women, therefore, were not accorded a universal welcome by the theological colleges, opportunities for training did exist. However, evidence shows that it was

women themselves who were reluctant to offer themselves as candidates. Before the Committee of Lancashire College came to a final policy decision, Dr Grieve was asked to obtain details of the other Congregational Colleges' experience.⁴¹ Both Cheshunt and the Yorkshire College at Bradford had had no applications from women whilst Western College in Bristol had had one enquiry which had come to nothing. Of the Welsh colleges Bangor had had one women student whilst the only applicant to Brecon had not fulfilled the entrance requirements. The greatest number of enquiries had been received by the Oxford and London colleges but even at these applications had not reached double figures.⁴² Similarly, within the Baptist denomination, although Bristol College agreed to admit women for training in 1919, the first woman student did not register until 1937.⁴³

One of the reasons put forward for the declining number of women students in the universities was the high level of unemployment amongst women graduates who were unable to find work commensurate with their qualifications. Similarly a major consideration that had to be faced by women who were considering the ministry was whether they would be able to find a suitable sphere of service at the end of a long and expensive training. This problem was widely recognised at the time and was one of the factors taken into consideration by theological colleges when determining policy.

It appears that whereas the majority of individual women ministers were successful in breaking down prejudice and hostility in the churches they served⁴⁴, in the wider community deeply imbedded attitudes continued to exist which did little to encourage women's aspirations. Violet Hedger found that she was frequently being told that she was not on the accredited list or that her name

was not in the Baptist handbook. This is because there was a separate list for women ministers. They were designated "pastors" and their names were "tucked away and kept most carefully distinct from the ministers."⁴⁵ Pastoral work was seen as the traditional sphere for women's activity in the church and the designation of women as pastors tended to play down the liturgical and homilectical roles that equal status necessarily implied.

A greater problem, however, was the attitude of individual churches themselves. In 1924 the Revd A E Garvie, who was shortly to become principal of the amalgamated Hackney and New Congregational College, sounded a note of caution:

My own feeling in the matter is that a Divine call can never be withstood, whether in man or woman But, as matters stand at present, and in view of the sex-prejudice which still exists, a woman will need to be exceptional in every way to receive a call to a congregation, without which, in the Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian Churches, neither men nor women can be ordained. Though we are able to give a woman the necessary theological training to fit her for the Ministry, we cannot guarantee that she will find a definite sphere or work as pastor of a church.⁴⁶

As has been seen, Violet Hedger found all too poignantly that Garvie's fears were not groundless⁴⁷ although Margaret Hardy, Constance Clark and Margaret Barr perhaps less so. Nevertheless, it came to be perceived generally that, although

there may be no opposition from principle on the part of the official authorities, there is undoubtedly much prejudice among many of the rank and file.⁴⁸

The Report of the Congregational Commission of Inquiry in 1932, whilst regretting that there were so few women ministers, placed the blame fairly and squarely on the

individual churches: "It seems clear that our Churches are not often disposed to invite women to undertake the duties of the regular pastorate."⁴⁹ This view the Revd Eileen Orchard, who was called to Ryan Street Congregational Church in Bradford in 1937, confirms: "The general attitude in Congregational Churches was 'Yes, we approve of women in the ministry - but we don't want one for our church."⁵⁰ This was particularly the case in those churches dominated by those who clung to literalist interpretations of the Bible, whilst the compatibility of the ministry with marriage, and more particularly motherhood, was a major area for disagreement.⁵¹ Thus when the Committee of Lancashire College refused to accept any further women candidates after 1931 it was proposed that the moratorium on women students should remain in effect "until it saw how they [women] were really accepted by the churches".⁵²

A further consideration in the minds of the Committee of Lancashire College may have been the problem of reconciling the considerable expense of training a candidate - Kenneth Brown quotes a figure of £1,000 for the training of a Congregational minister in 1921⁵³ - with the possibility that a woman would marry and withdraw her services. Initially, there was no formal marriage bar within the ministry and, as has been seen, several women ministers shared pastorates with their husbands. This was not invariably the case, however, and when Constance Clark's contemporary, Eva Gibbons, married as soon as she had completed her course at Lancashire College, "the committee insisted on her taking a pastorate for . . . a minimum of three years." It is believed that on completion of the three years she had no further pastorates.⁵⁴ Similarly other women, like Margaret Hardy in Leeds, found that if they married men who were not ministers the difficulties of reconciling

the demands of the home and of the church were virtually insuperable.⁵⁵ Even where women shared ministries with their husband, their contribution could be reduced should they have children as the case of Maria Living-Taylor at Sion Baptist Church, Bradford illustrates.⁵⁶

The position of married women ministers within the Congregational Churches, however, was made more difficult with the publication of the recommendations of the Commission on the Ministry of Women in 1936. Whilst it was accepted that an able woman who felt she had a strong calling to the ministry should not be hindered from the exercise of that calling, it was equally suggested that the ministry was incompatible with marriage:

It does not seem desirable for a woman to continue in a pastorate after marriage as the claims of the pastorate would not seem to allow such discharge of the duties of the home as necessarily fall on a wife and mother. The new obligations need not, however, prevent a continuance of the ministry of preaching.⁵⁷

The length of training (between three and six years according to a candidate's previous educational achievement) also acted as a deterrent. As Constance Coltman recognised, even for men, limited

financial and educational equipment often prove an almost insuperable barrier to the obtaining of the prolonged theological training which is required for the modern Non-conformist minister.⁵⁸

How much more so for women. Parental encouragement was not always forthcoming. Eva Gibbons, for instance, had persisted with her application to Lancashire Independent College in the face of fierce opposition from her parents. As she wrote to the principal, Dr Grieve,:

My father has stated definitely that he will not give me one penny piece . . . My mother is even more bitter and says she would refuse

to allow me to come home during vacation
They argue that, having gone so far with my
music, it is not morally right of me to give it
up and begin work which is only suited to a
man.⁵⁹

This is not to argue that parental opposition was widespread. Some women ministers would never have been able to complete their training without the financial support provided by their families. As Constance Clark's parents had agreed to help her financially, so Kathleen Hall's father, who was a Wesleyan Methodist minister, offered to contribute towards the cost of her training at Lancashire Independent College.⁶⁰ It was difficult, however, for parents to accept with equanimity the uncertain outlook for daughters whom they would like to have seen established in a secure position. Thus, the considerable battle Violet Hedger had to wage with her parents before she could win their support for her application to theological college sprang from their very real fears about her future prospects. She herself felt she was putting herself into God's hands when confronted with the stark choice between accepting a lowly but steady government post when her work at the War Office came to an end or throwing caution to the winds and seeking to embark on a lengthy training for the Baptist ministry to which she felt such a great attraction but at the end of which there was no guarantee that she would find work.⁶¹

The circumstances that surrounded the training, employment and experience of women ministers have been examined in some detail not only as they affected women who were called to churches in the West Riding but more generally as they serve to illustrate the very discouraging questions a woman had to face should she have contemplated a career as a minister in the Free Churches. The half-hearted attitude of many college authorities,

the costs and length of training, the difficulty in finding work and continuing hostility on the part of many churches make it easy to understand why women failed to make much progress in an intensely male sphere where traditional attitudes were still widely and deeply entrenched.

Given, however, their long involvement in charity work which many saw as akin to certain aspects of local government service and constant testimonies to women's special aptitude for several areas of municipal provision, it is less evident why so few women councillors appeared in the inter-war period. It should be remembered that even amongst men the number of political activists in any community is very small. However, as late as 1964, the Maud Committee on Local Government Management found that only about 12 per cent of all councillors were women.⁶² Despite the encouraging noises of educative and pressure group organisations like the NUSEC and the NCW and the pleas of both Conservative and Labour women for others to join them, a pattern of low representation was established in the inter-war period which persisted well into the years after the Second World War.

For many women the option of standing for local government did not even exist. The vast majority of women in the inter-war period were too occupied with endless and exhausting home commitments ever to have been in a position to consider taking on a time-consuming extra-domestic role.⁶³ Even those with domestic servants may have found that regular council meetings, often running on well into the evening, may not have been compatible with their family commitments. As Brian Harrison has noted: "Only recently has women's work in the home come to be seen as resembling men's work, in the sense of carrying with it the claim to leisure time."⁶⁴

That most women were not in a position even to contemplate entering public life at least until their families were older is borne out by the experience of women in the West Riding in the inter-war period. Social conventions dictated that a woman's age was rarely mentioned at the time but where it has been possible to ascertain dates of birth from subsequent obituaries it would appear that raising children and domestic commitments precluded younger women from standing for election. Thus, the average age on first entering Leeds City Council for those women whose ages have been identified was forty-three. Of the four Huddersfield women councillors elected in the inter-war period, only one was under fifty and in Rotherham three out of four were in their middle forties when first elected. Twenty-four of the twenty-seven women on these three councils were either married or widowed.

The amount of time demanded by council affairs would have certainly presented an insuperable obstacle to most women working outside the home which during the period came increasingly to include single middle-class women. As Ray Strachey pointed out, by 1937 the unoccupied "daughter at home [had very nearly] vanished".⁶⁵ The majority of the unmarried women councillors in the West Riding during the inter-war period were the wealthy, leisured daughters of prominent local families who viewed their work in local government as an extension of their philanthropic and religious commitments.⁶⁶ Only three of these were still in office at the beginning of 1939 by which time 41 of the 46 women serving on the county and non-county boroughs of the region were married or widowed.

To combine employment with council service was a virtual impossibility for women in the fulltime workforce, the

majority of whom were young women in lowly or junior positions whose employers would not have considered requests for time off work with sympathy. Thus, it was only where a woman was self-employed that she could contemplate service as a local councillor and even then only when she felt securely enough established to be able to divert her time and energies away from the business. Few would have been able to emulate Mary Sykes in Huddersfield who, after qualifying as one of the first four women solicitors in the country, had by 1935 when she first contested a council seat built up a flourishing practice and could timetable her council commitments around her daily workload. A keen socialist, she was also in a position to rely on the support of like-minded partners in the practice whom she had carefully recruited.⁶⁷ There was much substance, therefore, in the Leeds Weekly Citizen's judgement in 1928 that the

unmarried working woman of to-day is too busy trying to earn a living to allow her name to go forward as a candidate for the Town Council or the Board of Guardians As a consequence married women have had to shoulder these burdens and sacrifice much time to filling public positions.⁶⁸

Moreover, Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn suggest that in the textile areas of West Yorkshire in the inter-war period it was difficult to secure selection as a Labour candidate at municipal level without trade union support. They found, for instance, that of the 44 strong Labour group on Bradford Council in 1929 "almost one-third of the number were trade union officials and possibly more than half were active in trade unions."⁶⁹ Similarly, in Sheffield Helen Mathers has shown how by November 1926 43.28 per cent of the entire Council were trade union officials or manual workers,⁷⁰ whilst by 1939 15 of the 53 Labour councillors were trade union organisers and a further 20 who were skilled manual workers, railwaymen or

post office clerks are also likely to have been active members of their unions.⁷¹ Moreover, women in Sheffield would have been further handicapped by the implementation of a purely local practice that went against Labour Party rules. A Regional Executive enquiry into the running of the local Party in 1946 found that any organisation, including divisional and ward parties, which nominated a candidate for the municipal panel was expected to pay two-thirds of the nominee's election expenses and to meet any loss of earnings incurred through the exercise of Council duties. Although it is not evident how long this practice had been in operation, it would have militated especially against the smaller trade unions and against women and was, indeed, one of the reasons behind the Labour Women's Advisory Council's decision to build up an election fund. It appeared, however, that by 1946 the fund was insufficient to support more than two women candidates.⁷²

Whereas immediately after the First World War a number of women who had been officials with the exclusively female NFWW had been selected as municipal candidates,⁷³ women's membership of trade unions was low in the inter-war period. By 1938 only 14.7 per cent of employed women belonged to a union and this percentage had fallen even lower to 12 per cent in the depression years of high unemployment.⁷⁴ Miss Moore, for instance, president of the Leeds branch of the Textile Workers' Union, told members of the East Leeds Labour Women's Association in September 1932 that following a bitter strike in 1929 the union had lost a large number of members. Many had not worked since the strike whilst others found they could no longer afford their union dues as their wages had been lowered by as much as ten shillings.⁷⁵ Thus, given women's low trade union membership in the inter-war period and the high proportion of trade union organisers

amongst Labour councillors, the absence of any unmarried working women apart from Bertha Quinn of the Tailors and Garment Workers' Union in Leeds whose union was prepared to finance her council activities as an extension of her labour organisation work and Mary Sykes in Huddersfield is understandable. It also explains why married Labour women needed an alternative power base.

For married women, in particular, financial considerations could present a serious stumbling block. Payment to councillors for loss of earnings was not introduced until 1948,⁷⁶ whilst Brenda Powell has estimated that in the normal course of carrying out their duties the majority of councillors would have been out of pocket.⁷⁷ Incidental expenses such as postage, telephone calls and transport costs could not be ignored and whilst County Councils could pay their members travelling expenses, but not subsistence allowances, city and town councils could only pay the cost of their members' attendance at conferences and meetings outside the area of the authority.

Whilst some councils would pay for the rental of telephones and others allowed councillors special travel rates on corporation tram and bus services, these concessions were not widely available. Payment by local authorities to their councillors to cover incidental expenses was first introduced in the 1948 Local Government Act together with payment for loss of earnings.⁷⁸ Potential married women candidates in the inter-war period would, therefore, have needed independent means or a husband who was agreeable to a proportion of the family income being spent on Council affairs. He would similarly have had sufficiently to share her enthusiasm to tolerate her occasional prolonged absences or make-shift domestic arrangements.⁷⁹

Melville Currell argues that the deterrent of prolonged physical separation from family did not constitute such a major consideration in the motivation of women in local government as it did for those contemplating a parliamentary career.⁸⁰ That may have indeed been the case. Jessie Smith was prepared, for instance, to spend up to three hours travelling by bus between her home and the administrative headquarters of the West Riding County Council at Wakefield but she refused to accept an invitation to become a parliamentary candidate as it would interfere unacceptably with her domestic commitments.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the prevailing belief that the home was the woman's normal sphere of activity and that, particularly among working-class wives, her primary responsibility was the provision of comfort and sustenance for her husband on his return from work, dictated that the majority of married women were expected to be at home to greet the breadwinner at the end of the day. The example of miners in a Yorkshire coal-mining village in the 1950s throwing "straight to t'back o' t'fire" meals which had been brought out or prepared by a neighbour to enable a wife to enjoy a day's shopping may be extreme⁸² and much less likely in an urban environment where married women were more economically and socially independent. Nevertheless it does epitomise working-class patriarchal attitudes that assigned women a purely domestic and nurturing role. For middle-class women, too, some social freedom while the menfolk were working was acceptable. A round of golf in the morning, meeting a woman friend for a genteel lunch at Cockayne's Restaurant in Sheffield or Brown Muffs in Bradford, afternoon attendance at a meeting of a women's organisation like the NCW or of a local charitable society were respectable ways of passing the time and did not impinge, except perhaps occasionally, on the evening hours when the needs of husband and family were paramount.

Moreover, having either never engaged in paid employment at all or having given up work on marriage and devoted a number of years to family commitments, most women would not have had the opportunity to acquire

the politically-useful and organisationally-relevant skills which their male contemporaries [would] have learned [often instinctively and unconsciously] during their working experience.⁸³

Consequently unless women had been actively involved in the organisational work of voluntary bodies or had previously pursued a career which involved what Melville Currell has styled a "communication factor", that is "interaction with people, the skills and techniques of speech and the written word, [and] the formulation and exchange of ideas", such as schoolteachers or members of the legal profession,⁸⁴ they may have lacked the necessary self-confidence and competitiveness that are useful attributes in political life.

Should a woman, perhaps as a result of her experience as a charity worker or through her membership of a political association, decide that local government service did appeal to her, she still had to overcome the selection process and find a ward association which was willing to adopt a woman candidate. In some of the small towns of the West Riding, in particular, this was exceptionally difficult as they appear to have been governed by small, self-perpetuating groups of wealthy local businessmen and many seats were rarely contested. Thus, in Halifax, in 1922, there were elections in only four out of fifteen seats; in Brighouse, in 1925, there were no contests at all and in Dewsbury, in 1929, in only three out of nine wards. This may equally reflect the electorate's widespread apathy towards local government affairs,

particularly in the 1930s, which women no doubt took on board.

The problem of discrimination in the selection process is a thorny one. Mr Sterland, a long-serving member of Sheffield Council and leader of the Labour group for a number of years, believed that, in Sheffield at least, many women who were willing to stand failed to make it onto the municipal panel purely because they were women.⁸⁵ This view is re-inforced by the comments of a Labour woman alderman in Leeds who told Brenda Powell that the feeling continued to exist in Labour Party circles well into the post-second World War period that men were more likely to be elected than women.⁸⁶ Consequently only outstanding and well-known Labour women were considered a sufficiently safe bet to be placed on the municipal panel.

In 1930 a prominent Huddersfield politician also intimated that in order to succeed in finding a seat a woman would need to be outstanding. In his opinion a "brilliant woman" stood approximately the same chance of selection as an "exceptionally poor man."⁸⁷ Similarly Alderman Fred Walter who had had many years' experience as a local Conservative party agent in Leeds admitted to Brenda Powell that "generally a good man was preferred to a good woman."⁸⁸

For some women, many raised in the Victorian ideals of passivity and self-effacement, the prospect of facing a potentially hostile electorate and having to speak in public would have been too daunting. As Mrs Longden in Sheffield discovered, it "requires courage to contest an election . . . and one comes out of it feeling a very humble member of society after hearing the unflattering remarks of the hecklers."⁸⁹ As she implied, municipal elections in the inter-war period could be rowdy affairs.

In 1930, at a Conservative election meeting in Hunslet Carr and Middleton in Leeds where one of the candidates was Mrs Clay, there was uproar for nearly two hours. The candidates faced constant interruptions, either by a barrage of direct questioning or by irrelevant remarks. Any comments they did succeed in making were greeted with hoots and shouts and from time to time the meeting split into small groups furiously debating amongst themselves and ignoring the platform speakers.⁹⁰ The following evening at a meeting in East Hunslet where Mrs Vowles was one of the three Conservative candidates the proceedings degenerated into a free fight which continued for some fifteen minutes before stewards were able to eject the troublemakers.⁹¹ Mrs Baker, the Conservative candidate in Sheffield Firth Park in 1931, had to face a similarly difficult meeting.⁹² As Hannah Mitchell found during her electioneering experiences she met several women who, she believed, would have made excellent councillors "but they assured me they could not face the ordeal of an election."⁹³

Some women who did put themselves forward were discouraged by the reception they received from the electorate. Mrs Richardson, a Conservative candidate in Huddersfield in 1929, refused to stand again because she had found it impossible to overcome the prejudice that still existed towards the idea of women appearing on municipal bodies. "What's a woman want on Council?" was a question she repeatedly had to face.⁹⁴ Gertrude Dennison in Leeds also found that she was frequently asked why she was presuming to forsake the domestic sphere where, it was implied, her real duty lay.⁹⁵ In fact, hostility on the part of the electorate was not universal. As has been seen, Maud Dightam encountered much less prejudice in Leeds in 1921 than she had expected. Despite her initial qualms she had still been

prepared to face the electorate;⁹⁶ other women, however, were not so sanguine at the prospect of the possible disapprobation of the electorate.

Several economic, social and cultural factors combined, therefore, to keep the numbers of women councillors low. Women councillors themselves were eager for others to join them. Margaret Law in Bradford, for instance, urged in 1922 that the women voters of Bradford should not be satisfied until women's representation on the Council was sufficient to guarantee that at least one woman served on every committee whose work affected the lives of women and children in the city.⁹⁷ In Sheffield, Ada Moore, a Conservative, appealed for more women as she felt that, as managers of the domestic finances, they would prove themselves good municipal housekeepers.⁹⁸ Given the constraints of financial dependency, of the possible conflicts between private and public commitments, of a relative lack of self-assertion and political skills and of anticipated sexual discrimination, it is not surprising that women appeared reluctant to put themselves forward as candidates, a conclusion substantiated by the remarks of Mrs Tansley, a general practitioner's wife, who for six years from 1924 to 1930 was a Huddersfield councillor and for four of those years the only woman on the council. An elderly lady, she found that service on several committees which had a direct bearing on the welfare of women and children was becoming too much for her. Her pleas for other women to come forward to help her share the workload fell on deaf ears. "I do wish that more Huddersfield women would interest themselves in public welfare work and seek to enter the council." For Mrs Tansley political affiliations were immaterial. What was needed was more women: "They can be equally valuable whatever their party."⁹⁹ All three parties and the NCW in Huddersfield claimed they had endeavoured to persuade

women to offer themselves as candidates but with no success. Miss Pye-Smith, the NCW treasurer in the town, stated, for instance, that the branch "had endeavoured to encourage the candidature of women but found it difficult to do so."¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere there is evidence that although women might be prepared to act as Poor Law guardians they were not willing to take on the wider responsibilities and commitment demanded of town councillors. Thus one guardian, Mrs Hoyland Smith, was approached to stand for Leeds city council in the mid-twenties but declined.¹⁰¹

Moreover, a powerful re-emphasis of the concept of separate spheres in the inter-war period also helped to discourage women from entering what was still perceived as male territory. Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield have traced the vicious press campaign and attempts by the Government through the manipulation of unemployment benefit to persuade women to move over and allow demobilised servicemen to return to employment after the First World War,¹⁰² whilst, at the same time, the notion that women's natural place was in the home was vigorously promulgated. Deirdre Beddoe has equally described the abrupt manner in which advertising images of women swung from woman as achiever in a man's world to woman as the stay-at-home housewife - from Amazon to loving wife - in the immediate post-war period¹⁰³ and, throughout the inter-war period, concern over high levels of unemployment and demographic erosion engendered by the loss of population during the First World War and a continuing decline in the birthrate produced a reaffirmation and intensification of domestic values.

Home topics predominated in the plethora of women's magazines published in the period¹⁰⁴ and the concept of women's separate spheres of interest was strengthened through the expansion of women's pages in both national

and local newspapers. Thus the Yorkshire Post ran a twice-weekly page entitled "For Women of Today" which offered a diet of fashion, recipes, shopping hints, and homemaking skills such as flower-arranging. The women's page in the edition of October 2 1922, for instance, features a design for a "delightful" dress which was suitable for afternoon wear or, adapted with a few simple touches, as a theatre or dinner gown, a review of the new dances which were expected to be popular during the coming season, how to ensure the longterm storage of potatoes, of which there was a glut that year, ideas for tasty sandwiches to serve at tea, a preview of the Leeds Musical Festival and a report of ladies tennis championships at Scarborough.¹⁰⁵ Here was information and amusement aplenty but nothing to suggest that women's horizons might extend beyond the home, the High Street and places of entertainment.

The Sheffield Daily Telegraph's women's page implied by its very title, the "World of Women", that women's interests were fiercely differentiated from those of men. Although not so relentless in its emphasis on home and family as the Yorkshire Post, its coverage of non-domestic issues still assumed that women were primarily concerned with matters affecting the welfare of women and children. Thus, as well as regular reports on the activities of women Conservatives in Sheffield, articles appeared in the first half of 1934 which dealt with the work of the welfare centre in Orchard Place, nursery schools, public washhouses, and the holiday home for delicate children at Fairthorn Green.¹⁰⁶

The fact that some women were active in public life was not totally ignored by local newspapers. The Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, for instance, ran a series in 1937 entitled "Women of Note in Local Life" which included

women councillors and magistrates as well as professional working women and those involved in local charitable societies. The Sheffield Daily Telegraph equally included a number of women in its Sheffield Who's Who which ran through 1930 and 1931. Such features were careful to emphasise, however, that for married women the concerns of their home and family should always take precedence over other spheres of interest. Thus, in 1927, the Armley and Wortley News carried a weekly column entitled "Women of To-day" with the intention of bringing the role played by women in public affairs "by their work in political, social, religious, and vocational spheres" to a wider audience.¹⁰⁷ Leeds Poor Law guardian Mrs Exley was prepared to denigrate married women who eschewed outside interests and devoted themselves exclusively to their families on the grounds that it was:

possible, quite possible, to look well after one's home and children and to work for others at the same time. It keeps one from being selfish and dissatisfied in middle-age.¹⁰⁸

Her attitude was, however, exceptional and the vast majority of married women who were featured insisted that "Home comes first",¹⁰⁹ that it was essential to put "children and homes before anything else in the world."¹¹⁰ Mrs Myers, mayoress of Pudsey from 1926 to 1927, had no hesitation in confessing her reluctance to enter public life. She believed a mother's place was with her children and it was only the readiness to subordinate her beliefs to the interests of her husband that enabled her to shoulder the role of mayoress. At heart she believed that if

we [women] so crowd our lives as to leave no time for our children, and rob them of the home life that is their right, what can we expect them to become? Our children look to us, and if we are too busy to set them a good example, and to show them how very happy home-life can

be, I feel that we are responsible if they drift away from home ties.¹¹¹

Moreover, women councillors themselves reinforced the accepted primacy of home and family as, for example, did Mrs Longden in Sheffield, who insisted that "the first duty of a married woman begins in her home, and comfort and cleanliness must be assured before other work is undertaken." Mrs Longden went on to suggest that women's principal role as citizens was the education and training of their children to become useful members of society. If a woman failed to inculcate in her own children the values of self-control, discipline, service to others, and the ability to make sacrifices then she could not "hope to make any impression for the good in the public life . . ."¹¹² Other women councillors were eager to stress that it was only because they did not have home ties that they had agreed to accept nomination for municipal service.¹¹³ To show their readers that women, particularly working-class, councillors were well aware of their home responsibilities interviews with them were often conducted in their homes and were well punctuated with references to interruptions to the conversation whilst the demands of domestic activities such as cooking and baking were attended to.¹¹⁴

The importance of belonging to a politically active family was a significant counterbalance to this relentless promotion of the home as women's principal sphere. As Elizabeth Vallance found in the case of women members of Parliament the "general belief that politics is 'not a woman's business' is counteracted by the family's political interest."¹¹⁵ Such women had already been introduced to the importance of political discussion, to the complexities of electoral procedure and campaigning and to the range of work that a woman could effectively undertake on municipal bodies. Membership of

a "politicised family" as a means of counteracting women's reluctance to become political activists would equally seem to apply at municipal level given the very large number of women councillors in the West Riding in the inter-war period who already had familial connections with local public life.¹¹⁶

For the majority of women, however, despite the educative role played by the women's political committees and women's organisations like the Co-operative Guilds and the NCW through debating societies, study circles and day, week-end and summer schools, it appears that the political sphere continued to be seen as male territory. Thus The Conservative Woman in 1924 lamented the fact that very few women attended ward annual meetings in Leeds. Even when they did, men sat on one side and women on the other, thereby perpetuating the idea of gender role differentiation.¹¹⁷ This continued acceptance by women of politics as a predominantly male sphere is further substantiated by the comments of Florence Mattison, the wife of the Leeds engineer and ILP pioneer, Alf Mattison. In 1932, after taking an active part in the municipal elections, she wrote to the Leeds Weekly Citizen to lament the lack of political interest on the part of working-class women who had failed to emulate their husbands' commitment to voting.¹¹⁸

Moreover, in the inter-war period, the expansion of conservative women's organisations such as the Mothers' Union and the advent of new ones such as the Townswomen's Guilds which offered recognition and relevance to skills associated with women's conventional domestic role provided women who had some time on their hands with a non-threatening, socially acceptable sphere outside the home. The growth of Townswomen's Guilds within the NUSEC in the late 1920s was regretted by some older women who

had taken an active part in the suffrage movement. Members of the Barnsley society, for instance, who attended the annual Council meetings in London in 1932 complained that it "was very disappointing from an equality point of view as the Guild members outvoted the other Societies every time"¹¹⁹. The popularity of the Guilds in the 1930s, however, was, as was shown in chapter two, indicative of the declining appeal of earlier implicitly "feminist" and educative organisations such as the Women Citizens and the Women's Freedom League and a consequent diminution of interest in the issues that had concerned them such as the greater representation of women in public life.

The renewed acceptance of separate spheres for men and women parallels the ascendancy of "new feminism" in the 1920s. Differences between those who wished to continue the campaign for equal opportunities for women and those who were more concerned to alleviate the particular problems that women experienced as wives and mothers for which the introduction of family endowment was just one solution had emerged as early as 1917.¹²⁰ The war over and the vote partially won, the possibilities for divergence of purpose multiplied and culminated in 1928 in a major rift within the NUSEC between the equal rights feminists who wanted the movement to concentrate on the removal of the remaining disabilities that affected women and others, led by the indomitable Eleanor Rathbone, who believed that it was impossible to ignore women's biological role. Accepting that the majority of women had a maternal role to fulfil and hence their requirements were fundamentally different from those of men, the emphasis should no longer be on equality of opportunity for women but on finding some means of guaranteeing them economic independence within marriage and legal protection in the workplace.¹²¹ It was the equal rights

feminists who resigned from the NUSEC in 1928 and tried to continue their fight within the Open Door Council whose declared aim was "to campaign exclusively for equal pay, equal status and equal opportunity for women workers."¹²² This organisation, however, had little impact and it was the traditionally-oriented organisations like the Townswomen's Guilds which emerged from the "new feminist" thinking within the NUSEC that had the greater appeal in the 1930s.

Indicative of the diverging priorities of women's groups and of the predominance in the 1930s of "new feminist" issues which saw the home as the focus of women's lives was the campaign for the reduction in the pensionable age from sixty-five to fifty-five years for single women which began in Bradford in 1935 and rapidly gained popularity, particularly in the northern industrial towns, in the years immediately before the Second World War.¹²³ Led by Florence White, a Bradford-born woman who had worked as a weigher of "tops" in the local mill before the First World War and thus was well aware of the long hours and arduous conditions which made life, particularly for the older women, so wretched, the National Spinsters' Pensions Association was launched after a preliminary meeting at the Mechanics' Institute in Bradford attracted an unexpectedly large audience and by 1939 claimed a membership of 125,000 in the North of England and the Midlands, with a further 17,300 in Scotland. A petition with over one million signatures was presented to Parliament in 1937.

The claim for a reduced pensionable age for single women was founded on the premise that, in an ideal world, woman's natural sphere was the home and that all women would prefer the financial security of marriage to the struggle for survival in the man's world of work. It was

only the inability of all women to find a mate, a situation which had been rendered more poignant by the enormous loss of young lives during the First World War, that excluded them from "the protected industry of marriage"¹²⁴ with its theoretical promise of financial security and condemned them instead to years of toil in the workplace. In addition, the system was seen to be heavily weighted in favour of married women; war widows received a pension and since the 1920s women who were widowed had been entitled to a pension, at once if they had children and at the age of fifty-five if they were childless. Moreover, a married woman was entitled to a pension in her own right on the strength of her husband's contributions when she reached the age of sixty-five but if an unmarried woman failed to reach pensionable age - and few of them did - none of her dependents received any benefits by reason of her payments even though she would have been contributing for many years. Such arguments recognised that higher status was accorded by society to married than to single women in the inter-war period:¹²⁵ wifehood and motherhood were the ideal goals, the home was still woman's "natural" sphere.

The growth of this softer, welfare version of feminism was accompanied by a tendency for younger women to regard those who had been active in the suffrage campaign as "dowdy and faintly ridiculous."¹²⁶ Even after 1918 the campaign for the voting age to be reduced to twenty-one had never taken off dramatically and older suffragists lamented the failure of younger women to take an interest. It was difficult to persuade them to write letters to their MPs and suffrage meetings were badly attended as the Leeds suffragist, Isabella Ford, found when she took part in one in October 1920. She regretted that

the younger women did not seem to be filled with "the spirit of revolt against injustice and the ardent love of freedom and equality which inspired the set of women who fought for the political equality of men and women."¹²⁷

As Brian Harrison found that the younger female relatives of his "Prudent Revolutionaries" "were quite often indifferent to feminism",¹²⁸ so ex-suffragist, Ada Moore, who was a councillor in Sheffield from 1928 to 1945, lamented younger women's lack of interest in political issues and suggested that "Present-day girls don't seem to interest themselves in administrative matters - and now they have the vote - they don't use it." Similarly, a past official of the semi-militant Women's Freedom League complained that it was "difficult to get young women to take leading parts in political or other organisations - they seem to leave it all to the men."¹²⁹ The resurgence of domesticity and femininity and the explosive growth of women's organisations that fed on traditional values and offered an alternative programme which derived from the familiar territory of the family seem to have combined to convince women that the male sphere of local government was not for them except insofar as the occasional woman was needed to work for the welfare interests of women and children.

The explanation for women's low representation on town and city councils in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the inter-war period is, therefore, complex and will undoubtedly be found to mirror the picture in other areas of the country. It is a product of women's social and educational conditioning, changing cultural patterns and ideological assumptions that reasserted the orthodoxy of separate spheres and discouraged them from seeking to participate in an arena still perceived as traditionally male and economic considerations that restricted the range of choices open to them. Whatever the reasons for

women's low representation, those who did become councillors inevitably felt rather isolated and that the workload they felt obliged to shoulder was unnecessarily onerous. For many, women's failure to find Free Church pastorates was a serious loss to the Church. Similarly women's failure to achieve significant progress on local councils represented a serious impoverishment of public life. As the Leeds Weekly Citizen pleaded when reporting in 1929 that there were still eleven county borough and 159 non-county borough councils without a single woman member:

To all who value the services and co-operation of women, who know of the special gifts that they can bring to local government work, the knowledge of such a state of affairs must bring a challenge which cannot be ignored. This loss to the community cannot be allowed to continue.¹³⁰

Footnotes

- 1 Cllr Mrs Frances Green quoted in The Star, 8 Feb 1962.
- 2 Ray Strachey (ed): Our Freedom and Its Results, p 9.
- 3 Eleanor Rathbone: "Changes in Public Life" in Ray Strachey (ed): ibid, p 37.
- 4 Brian Harrison: Prudent Revolutionaries, p 303.
- 5 They were:

Miss May Grant (Lib):	Leeds South East 1922
Miss May Grant (Lib):	Pontefract 1923
Mrs Edna Penny (Lab):	Leeds North East 1924
Mrs C I Hilyer (Nat Lib):	Wentworth 1931
Mrs G Beaumont (Con):	Rothwell 1935
Miss Grace Colman (Lab):	Sheffield Hallam 1935
Miss L A Cox (Lab):	Pudsey & Otley 1935
Mrs Maureen Nichol (Lab):	Bradford North 1935
- The West Riding constituencies were Barkston Ash, Barnsley, Batley & Morley, Bradford (4), Colne Valley, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Don Valley, Elland, Halifax, Hemsworth, Huddersfield, Keighley, Leeds (6), Normanton, Penistone, Pontefract, Pudsey & Otley, Ripon, Rotherham, Rother Valley, Rothwell, Sheffield (7), Shipley, Skipton, Sowerby, Spen Valley, Wakefield, Wentworth, York.
- 6 See Appendix K.
- 7 They were Miss Alice Bacon (Lab) - Leeds North East and Mrs Maureen Nichol (Lab) - Bradford North.
- 8 See Table 3, p 145.
- 9 Eleanor Rathbone in Ray Strachey (ed): op cit, p 36.
- 10 The Vote, Nov 30 1928, p 383.
- 11 Figures calculated from The University of Sheffield: Calendar for the Session 1939-40.
- 12 Arthur W Chapman: The Story of a Modern University, pp 369-70.
- 13 Arthur W Chapman: ibid, p 370.
- 14 Mabel Tylecote: The Education of Women at Manchester University, 1883-1933, p 117.

- 15 In 1910 Leeds became the first of the northern industrial cities to employ a lady almoner thanks to the friendship between Charles Lupton, the Chairman of the Hospital Board which oversaw the General Infirmary, the Public Dispensary and the Women's & Children's Hospital and the Chairman of the London Hospital where they were already employed. The first lady almoner was appointed in Sheffield at the Jessop Hospital for Women in 1922. By 1939 they were working in the city's four voluntary hospitals and in the local authority's City General Hospital at Fir Vale.
 - 16 Quoted in Mary Ann Elston: "Women in the Medical Profession: Whose Problem?", p 116.
 - 17 Conversation with Dr J McLachlan, 28 Feb 1990.
 - 18 Violet Hedger: On Building New Traditions, p 3.
 - 19 She was Marie Isaacs (1960-62) - information kindly supplied by Susan Mills, Regent's Park College archivist. There is an element of doubt as for most of the students only initials are given in the annual and cumulative lists. As Mrs Mills points out, the assumption that they were all men may not necessarily be correct. I am informed, however, that the Baptist Union Handbooks for 1951 and 1966 do not list any other women ministers than those already identified.
 - 20 See Lancashire Independent College (LIC) Book of Proceedings No 11, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, 1 Jan 1926.
 - 21 LIC Annual Report 1926-27, p 10.
 - 22 LIC Annual Report 1930-31, p 11.
 - 23 They were:
 - Margaret Hardy (1924-27)
 - Constance Clark (1925-30)
 - Kathleen Hall (now Hendry) (1925-31)
 - Eva Gibbons (subsequently Lazenby) (1926-31)
 - Eileen Fitzgerald (now Orchard) (1931-35)
 - Nancie Ward (1931-35)
- Three held pastorates in the West Riding.
- 24 The others were:
 - Joyce Daplyn (1922-25)
 - Grace Mewhort (1922-25)
 - Constance Harris (1922-25)

- 25 Manchester College, Oxford (MCO) Minute Book R, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, 18 Jan 1923.
- 26 Report of MCO One Hundred and Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting, 22 June 1923, p 9.
- 27 MCO Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Studies Oct 6 1913-Dec 8 1927, Meeting of Board, Feb 21 1923.
- 28 MCO Minute Book R, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, Jan 17 1924.
- 29 ibid, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, Oct 17 1927.
- 30 Quoted in Keith Gilley: Women and the Unitarian Ministry, (typescript in the author's possession).
- 31 MCO Minute Book R, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, Oct 20 1921.
- 32 ibid, Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Trustees, June 21 1929.
- 33 MCO Appendix Book 4, Report of the Committee on the Admission of Women students to the College, May 22 1930.
- 34 MCO Minute Book R, Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Trustees, June 20 1930.
- 35 See the Editorial in The Inquirer, June 28 1930, p 317. Dr Jacks, the chairman of the Board of Studies at Manchester College, had earlier indicated that if the Trustees were prepared to establish a women's hostel and to appoint one or more women to the College staff, "to take their part in the discipline of women students," he would be happy to see women students in the College again - The Inquirer, June 29 1929, p 313.
- 36 The Inquirer, Nov 17 1928, p 593.
- 37 ibid, Nov 24 1928, p 607.
- 38 She was Elspeth Vallance, ironically the Revd Alfred Hall's own daughter.
- 39 LIC Book of Proceedings No 11, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, 1 Jan 1926.
- 40 Woman's Leader, Jan 4 1924, p 399.

- 41 LIC Book of Proceedings No 11, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, July 20 1925.
- 42 ibid, Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, 1 Jan 1926.
- 43 John Briggs: "She-Preachers, Widows and Other Women" p 346.
- 44 See chapter six, p 309 for Margaret Hardy's experience.
- 45 Violet Hedger: "Some Experiences of a Woman Minister", p 250 - my emphasis.
- 46 The Vote, Jan 18 1924, p 17.
- 47 See chapter six, p 295.
- 48 Constance M Coltman: "Post-Reformation: The Free Churches" in A Maude Royden: The Church and Woman, p 116.
- 49 Constance M Coltman: "Report of the Congregational Committee of Inquiry and the Ministry of Women" in The Coming Ministry, No 14 (June 1934), p 3.
- 50 Letter from the Revd Eileen Orchard, 22 Feb 1989.
- 51 The case of the Revd Vera Kenmure attracted considerable attention. As a single woman she was appointed minister of Partick Congregational Church, Glasgow in 1928. Her marriage a few years later was well received by the congregation but when she became a mother she was forced to resign, not because she believed the duties of a wife and mother were incompatible with those of a minister but because "the deep opposition and active hostility of a section of the congregation [made] honest co-operation impossible" and she did not wish to continue as minister of a church where disharmony was rife. See Winifred Holtby: Women, pp 143-4 and Sheila Fletcher: Maude Royden, p 199. Kenmure herself felt that marriage and motherhood brought added experience which only served to enrich a ministry and render it more relevant - The Coming Ministry, No 13 (March 1934), pp 2 + 5. She was subsequently invited to become minister of Christ Church Congregational Central Halls, Glasgow.
- 52 Letter from the Revd Eileen Orchard, 5 March 1989.

- 53 Kenneth D Brown: A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930, p 231.
- 54 Letter from the Revd Eileen Orchard, 5 March 1989.
- 55 See chapter six, p 284. Kathleen Hall "had to resign from [her] pastorate" at Shaw Congregational Church near Oldham when she married Dr Hendry in 1938 although she returned to the ministry ten years later - Letter from the Revd Kathleen Hendry, March 3 1989.
- 56 See chapter six, pp 310-11.
- 57 "Report of the Commission on the Ministry of Women" in The Congregational Year Book 1937, pp 84-93.
- 58 Constance M Coltman: "Post-Reformation: The Free Churches" in A Maude Royden: op cit, pp 115-16.
- 59 Quoted in Kenneth D Brown: op cit, p 231 - Brown's emphasis.
- 60 LIC Register of Students H - J, Application for admission, May 17 1925.
- 61 Conversation with the Revd Violet Hedger, 17 April 1990.
- 62 Bryan Keith-Lucas and Peter G Richards: A History of Local Government in the Twentieth Century, p 93.
- 63 See Brian Harrison: "Class and Gender in Modern British Labour History" for changing patterns in working-class women's roles, in particular pp 122-6 + 134-7 for their experiences as wives and child-rearers. The lives of working-class women in areas like the West Riding remained very hard during the inter-war period especially when they had to cope with the impact of long-term unemployment.
- 64 Brian Harrison: ibid, p 140.
- 65 Ray Strachey: "Changes in Employment" in Ray Strachey (ed): op cit, p 137.
- 66 For instance, Hannah Clark in Doncaster, Margaret Law in Bradford, Elsie Taylor in Batley, Mary Sugden in Brighouse, Elizabeth Lister in Leeds.
- 67 Conversation with Miss Ethel Hobson, 17 Jan 1990. Miss Hobson was a close friend of Mary Sykes in her later life and made me very welcome.

- 68 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Feb 10 1928, p 3.
- 69 Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn: Labour Heartland, p 51.
- 70 Helen Mathers: Sheffield Municipal Politics 1893-1926, p 18.
- 71 Councillors' occupational details taken from Sheffield Year Book 1939. In addition there were four Labour members shown as insurance agents who were probably also union men.
- 72 Brightside Divisional Labour Party papers: Report of an Examination into the Party Organisation in Sheffield made by Mr A E McVie, Chairman of the regional Executive Committee Organisation Sub-Committee and Mr A L Williams, Regional Secretary, June 1946.
- 73 Jeannie Arnott in Leeds, Gertrude Wilkinson in Sheffield. Edith Birch and Helena Mitchell who were elected to Sheffield Council later in the period had also been members of the NFWW.
- 74 John Stevenson: British Society 1914-1945, p 200.
- 75 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Sept 9 1932. Unfortunately it is not clear whether Miss Moore was speaking of male or female workers, or both.
- 76 Bryan Keith-Lucas and Peter G Richards: op cit, p 94.
- 77 Brenda Powell: A Study of the Change in Social Origins, Political Affiliations and Length of Service of Members of the Leeds City Council, 1888-1953, p 50
- 78 Bryan Keith-Lucas and Peter G Richards: op cit, p 94.
- 79 See Hannah Mitchell: The Hard Way Up, pp 203-4. She had to "get breakfast, clean up, make beds and prepare dinner, before getting out to a committee meeting . . ." Alternatively her husband ate out or a neighbour prepared the meal for him.
- 80 Melville Currell: Political Woman, p 159.
- 81 Conversation with Mrs Jessie Smith, 28 Nov 1989.
- 82 Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques and Clifford Slaughter: Coal is our Life, pp 181-2.

- 83 Stephen L Bristow: "Women Councillors - An Explanation of the Under-Representation of Women in Local Government", p 86.
- 84 Melville Currell: op cit, pp 56-7.
- 85 Conversation with Mr J W Sterland, 17 Jan 1989.
- 86 Brenda Powell: op cit, p 48.
- 87 Leeds Mercury, Oct 4 1930, p 3.
- 88 Brenda Powell: op cit, p 44.
- 89 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, April 22 1931, p 6.
- 90 Leeds Mercury, Oct 29 1930, p 3.
- 91 ibid, Oct 30 1930, p 3.
- 92 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Oct 31 1931, p 8.
- 93 Hannah Mitchell: op cit, p 195.
- 94 Leeds Mercury, Oct 4 1930, p 3.
- 95 ibid, Oct 25 1927, p 3.
- 96 See chapter three, pp 152-3. .
- 97 Bradford Daily Telegraph, Oct 24 1922, p 4.
- 98 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Oct 29 1931, p 5.
- 99 Leeds Mercury, Oct 3 1930, p 6.
- 100 ibid, Oct 4 1930, p 3.
- 101 Armley and Wortley News, Oct 21 1927, p 9.
- 102 Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield: Out of the Cage, pp 120-5.
- 103 Deirdre Beddoe: Back to Home & Duty, pp 10-13.
- 104 See Cynthia White: Women's Magazines 1693-1968, pp 93-119 and Martin Pugh: "Domesticity & the Decline of Feminism, 1930-1950", pp 149-52.
- 105 Yorkshire Post, Oct 2 1922, p 10.
- 106 Sheffield Daily Telegraph, Feb 12 1934, p 2; April 2 1934, p 2; April 16 1934, p 2; June 2 1934, p 10.

- 107 The series began with Mrs West, the Chairman of the Armley Babies' Welcome in Armley and Wortley News, Aug 26 1927, p 7 and ended with Mrs Proctor Naylor, a Poor Law Guardian and deputy-mayor of Pudsey, Dec 2 1927, p 8. Fifteen women were featured in all.
- 108 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 9 1927, pp 7 + 8.
- 109 The phrase was used by Mrs West in the very first article - Armley and Wortley News, Aug 26 1927, p 7.
- 110 Said of Mrs Blackburn, president of the Bramley Babies' Welcome and chairman of the West Leeds Women's Conservative Association - Armley and Wortley News, Oct 14 1927, p 9.
- 111 Armley and Wortley News, Sept 30 1927, pp 7 + 8.
- 112 Sheffield Citizen, Aug 1925, p 6.
- 113 For instance, Mrs Gertrude Dennison in Leeds - Leeds Mercury, Oct 25 1927, p 3 and Mrs Elisabeth Lund in Pudsey - Armley & Wortley News, Aug 12 1927, p 12.
- 114 See the Leeds Weekly Citizen interview with Cllr Lilian Hammond, July 29 1938, p 8.
- 115 Elizabeth Vallance: Women in the House, p 63.
- 116 For a further discussion of this point from which the term "politicised family" derives, see Melville Currell: Political Woman, pp 164-6.
- 117 The Conservative Woman, April 1924, p 9 and Sept 1923, p 11.
- 118 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Nov 18 1932, p 7.
- 119 Barnsley Women's Suffrage Society Minutes Dec 4 1913-Nov 27 1933, Annual Report for 1932.
- 120 Harold L Smith: "British Feminism in the 1920s", pp 47-8.
- 121 Olive Banks: Faces of Feminism, pp 167-70.
- 122 Harold L Smith: "British Feminism in the 1920s", p 59.
- 123 Florence White's papers are deposited with the West Yorkshire Archive Service in Bradford. Diana Prickett has written an account of her life and campaign, a typescript copy of which may be consulted

there. There are two articles, Dorothy Brumfitt: "Florence White - A Great Feminist" in Echoes from the Past, pp 29-42 and Diana J Prickett: "Florence White's Work for Spinsters" in The Dalesman, Vol 47, No 10 (Jan 1986), pp 833-5. See also Report of the Committee on Pensions for Unmarried Women, Cd 5991, HMSO, 1939. The activities of the NSPA were widely reported in local papers. Working women's right to draw a pension at sixty since 1940 has dictated that they were expected to retire from work five years earlier than men until this inegalitarian principle was successfully challenged recently in the European Court of Human Rights.

- 124 The phrase was first used by Florence White.
- 125 See Jane Lewis: Women in England, 1870-1950, p 155.
- 126 Jane Lewis: "In Search of A Real Equality: Women between the Wars", p 208.
- 127 Quoted in June Hannam: Isabella Ford, p 196.
- 128 Brian Harrison: op cit, p 310.
- 129 Star, Feb 15 1939, p 4.
- 130 Leeds Weekly Citizen, Aug 9 1929, p 3.

APPENDIX A

Percentage of the female population in employment in
major centres of the West Riding of Yorkshire
at the 1911, 1921 and 1931 Censuses

	<u>1911</u> (over <u>10</u> yrs)	<u>1921</u> (over <u>12</u> yrs)	<u>1931</u> (over <u>14</u> yrs)
Barnsley	26.9	27.2	24.2
Bradford	45.0	43.6	40.0
Dewsbury	40.3	38.3	35.3
Halifax	42.8	42.5	40.2
Huddersfield	41.4	40.5	38.5
Leeds	37.9	39.7	41.1
Rotherham	18.1	20.3	19.7
Sheffield	27.8	29.3	29.0
Wakefield	29.1	30.5	29.2

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1911, 1921 and 1931.
These figures exclude those women who were
registered unemployed.

APPENDIX B

Birth Rates (per 1000 living)
England & Wales, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford
1900 - 1938

	<u>England & Wales</u>	<u>Leeds</u>	<u>Sheffield</u>	<u>Bradford</u>
1900-04	28.4	30.1	33.0	23.1
1905-09	26.7	26.4	29.9	20.1
1910-14	24.2	23.6	27.8	19.3
1915-19	19.5	19.0	22.6	15.0
1920-24	21.4	20.6	21.8	18.6
1925-29	17.2	16.4	16.6	15.7
1930-34	15.3	14.7	14.6	13.8
1935-38	14.9	15.0	15.3	13.6

Source: Yearly reports of Medical Officers of Health for
Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford.

APPENDIX C

The Principal Occupations of Women in certain of the West Riding areas, or those occupations in which 5 per cent. or more of the "occupied" females (viz., those registered as having some form of "gainful occupation") at the 1931 Census, were engaged. Showing the proportion (per cent.):

(A) of the total "occupied" females, and
 (B) of the total female population, aged 14 and over, engaged in each such principal occupation.

"Occupational Orders" (1931 Census Report).	Bradford.	Halifax.	Dewsbury.	Huddersfield.	W. Riding Adm. Co.	Wakefield.	Leeds.	Barnsley.	Sheffield.	Doncaster.	Rotherham.
VII.—"Metal Workers (not Electro-Plate or Precious Metals)."	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8.8	—	—
VIII.—"Workers in Precious Metals and Electro-Plate."	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.9	—	—
XII.—"Textile Workers."	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.7	—	—
XIII.—"Makers of Textile Goods and Articles of Dress."	48.5	46.7	44.9	44.3	38.1	27.1	10.2	5.0	—	—	—
XXIII.—"Commercial Finance and Insurance Occupations (excluding Clerks)."	21.9	20.4	18.6	18.3	11.9	8.4	4.5	1.4	—	—	—
XXV.—"Professional Occupations (excluding clerical staff)."	5.1	8.1	6.8	8.3	6.7	5.5	33.9	17.2	—	—	—
XXVII.—"Persons engaged in Personal Service (including Institutions, Clubs, Hotels, etc.)."	2.3	3.5	2.8	3.4	2.1	1.7	14.9	4.7	—	—	—
XXVIII.—"Clerks and Draughtsmen; Typists."	7.7	7.0	7.4	8.3	8.2	10.8	7.9	14.9	13.6	18.8	18.9
XXIX.—"Warehousemen, Storekeepers and Packers."	3.5	3.1	3.0	3.4	2.6	3.4	3.5	4.1	4.5	5.1	4.2
XXXI.—"Other and Undefined Workers."	—	—	—	—	5.6	9.2	—	6.7	6.2	10.6	9.7
All Gainful Occupations (I-XXXI inclusive).	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Puerperal Mortality per 1,000 live births 1924-33.	45.2	43.8	41.5	41.3	31.2	31.2	44.1	27.6	32.7	27.1	22.2
	5.33	7.05	5.49	5.69	5.37	5.46	4.44	5.90	5.38	3.39	4.08

Source: Report on an Investigation into Maternal Mortality, H.M.S.O., 1937 (Cd 5422), p 331.

APPENDIX D

Percentage of insured population registered as unemployed
in certain areas of the West Riding of Yorkshire,
1930 - 1933.

<u>Area</u>	1930	1931	1932	1933
Barnsley	28.7	34.7	44.6	40.3
Bradford	22.1	26.1	17.9	14.4
Dewsbury	24.3	23.8	22.8	20.9
Doncaster	14.3	23.6	25.6	26.4
Halifax	17.8	22.9	16.5	13.7
Huddersfield	14.9	22.6	18.7	13.3
Leeds	16.3	21.7	20.6	17.5
Rotherham	22.3	30.9	33.0	30.5
Sheffield	23.1	34.1	34.0	24.8
Wakefield	17.1	23.4	25.7	27.6
Adm. County	19.0	25.4	24.9	22.0

Source: Adapted from Appendix 31 of the Ministry of
Health's Report on an Investigation into Maternal
Mortality, (HMSO, 1937), p 343.

APPENDIX E

Questions that the National Union of Societies
for Equal Citizenship suggested women voters
should put to municipal candidates*

- 1 Will you support equal pay for equal work for all men and women employed by your Council?
- 2 Will you support the application of the principle of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 so that a woman shall not be disqualified on account of her sex from any post or office in your Council?
- 3 Will you oppose the compulsory retirement on marriage of the women employees of your Council?
- 4 Will you oppose any systematic dismissal of women in favour of men, other than men who have returned from active service?
- 5 Are you in favour of providing an equal number of scholarships in any kind of education and equal facilities in technical education for girls as for boys?
- 6 Will you urge your Watch Committee to carry out the recommendations of the Report of the Committee on the Employment of Women on Police Duties 1920, and appoint women police in your borough?
- 7 Will you support the appointment of an adequate number of women on all committees (especially on housing, health and education committees and sub-committees of your Council on which women can sit either as elected or co-opted members)?
- 8 Are you in favour of representatives of organised women being consulted as to the kind of houses to be built by your Council?
- 9 Will you help to promote a scheme of widows' pensions for the widows of all municipal employees?
- 10 Will you support proportional representation at local elections?

*Sheffield Independent, 15 October 1921, p 9.

APPENDIX F

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, 1920.

—
ATTERCLIFFE WARD.

POLLING DAY, NOVEMBER 1ST, 8 A.M. TO 8 P.M.
—

MRS. BARTON,

The True
Friend
OF THE
Women
AND
Children.



The Trusted
Representative
OF
Labour
AND
Co-operation.

With the Compliments of

ELEANOR BARTON,

A WORKER FOR THE WORKERS!

APPENDIX G

Infantile Mortality Rates
(deaths under one year per 1000 births)
England & Wales, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford,
1900 - 1938

	<u>England & Wales</u>	<u>Leeds</u>	<u>Sheffield</u>	<u>Bradford</u>
1896-1900	156		200*	
1901-05	138	165	171	153
1906-10	117	134	138	132
1911-15	110	129	128	122
1916-20	90	125	110	116
1921-25	76	97	89	93
1926-30	68	83	79	82
1931-35	62	76	62	71
1936-38	57	65	55	70

*1900 only

Source: Yearly reports of Medical Officers of Health for Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford and The Registrar-General's Statistical Review of England & Wales, 1937 and 1938.

APPENDIX H

Duties of Women Police*

The following schedule shows the more important services that can be rendered by policewomen:

Taking charge of women and girls who have attempted suicide.

Taking depositions from women and children in cases of criminal or indecent assault.

Collecting all evidence from women and children indecently or criminally assaulted, accompanying them to take out warrants for arrest of offenders and giving evidence in court.

Dealing with charges of loitering, soliciting, etc., brought against prostitutes.

Conveying women offenders to and from prison to court and back again.

Accompanying women who have to take long journeys in charge of a constable to be brought before the courts.

Dealing with cases where women are charged with drunkenness and other disorderly conduct.

Patrolling the streets, parks and open spaces.

Assisting in injuries concerning women and children.

Searching women prisoners.

Taking charge of women in cells.

Attending women and children in court.

Assisting in supervision of children's street trading licences.

Keeping observation on suspected houses.

Assisting at raids on brothels.

Finding shelter for women and children who are stranded.

Observation work (in plain clothes).

APPENDIX H(cont)

Inspecting places of amusement and reporting on the role of these places.

Regular duty at the police station.

Reporting bad housing and other abuses to the chief constable.

Observing and reporting on all cases of cruelty to children.

Making intimate investigations connected with cases of concealment of birth, child murder, bigamy and overlaying children.

Supervision of pawnshops.

Inquiries re aliens, cases of fraud, missing relatives, lost property, etc.

Inspecting common lodging houses for women.

Observing and reporting on all cases of cruelty or neglect of animals.

Assisting in the settlement of family disputes, neglect of children, etc.

*The Policewoman's Review, Vol X, No 1 (Dec 1936), p 14.

APPENDIX J

Free Church women ministers who held pastorates in
the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1918 and 1939

Wilna Constable (née Livingstone-Smart) 1888-1961

- 1918-20: CROOKES CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, SHEFFIELD:
Co-pastor with her husband.
- 1921-29: High Street Unitarian Chapel, Warwick
- 1929-34: Unitarian Church, Auckland, New Zealand: Co-
pastor with her husband.
- 1934-37: Unitarian Church, Vancouver, British Columbia:
Co-pastor with her husband
- 1938-41: Unitarian Church, Cape Town: Co-pastor with
her husband
- 1941 onwards: Unitarian Church, Orlando, Florida: Co-
pastor with her husband

Ada Tonkin (née Barker) 1891-1981

- 1920-23: Manchester College, Oxford
- 1924-26: UNITY CHURCH, DEWSBURY
- 1926-28: Unitarian Church, Victoria, British Columbia:
part-time
- 1928- Unitarian Church, Vancouver, British Columbia:
Co-pastor with her husband
- 1929-32: Director of the Women's Division of the
Vancouver Police Force
- 1949- Unitarian Church, Sydney: Co-pastor with her
husband
- 1950s Unitarian Church, Lydgate, Wakefield
Unitarian Church, Halifax

APPENDIX J (cont)

Maria-Living Taylor (née Living) 1889-?

1922-24: Baptist Tabernacle, Linton Road, Barking

1924-27: SION JUBILEE BAPTIST CHURCH, Bradford

1927-30: Corporation Road Baptist Church, Newport,
Monmouth

1930-37: Clayton Le Moors and Rishton Baptist
Churches, Lancashire

All the above pastorates were held jointly with her husband. He continued in the ministry until 1941. In 1942 they became co-principals of a private school in Cambridge.

Margaret Fullerton (née Hardy) 1890-1980

1924-27: Lancashire Independent College, Manchester

1927-37: MARSHALL STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LEEDS and

1934-37: BURMANTOFTS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LEEDS

Constance Clark 1902-1969

1925-30: Lancashire Independent College, Manchester

1930-37: MARSHALL STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LEEDS and

1934-48: BURMANTOFTS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, LEEDS

1948-63: Stainbeck Congregational Church, Leeds

1965-68: Oversight of Knaresborough and then Wigton
Moor, Leeds Congregational Churches

APPENDIX J (cont)

Margaret Barr 1899-1973

1926-27: Manchester College, Oxford

1927-33: CHURCH OF OUR FATHER, ROTHERHAM

1933-73: India

Violet Hedger 1900-

1919-23: Regent's Park Baptist College, London

1926-29: Littleover Baptist Church, Derby

1934-37: NORTH PARADE BAPTIST CHURCH, HALIFAX

1937-44: Zion Baptist Church, Clover Street, Chatham

1952-56: Chalk Farm Baptist Church

Ethel Kay 1893?-1964

1924-27: Manchester College, Oxford

1927: UPPER CHAPEL, SHEFFIELD: assistant to the
Rev Alfred Hall

1927-29: Flowergate Old Chapel, Whitby

1929- High Street Unitarian Chapel, Warwick

Eileen Orchard (née Fitzgerald) 1906-

1931-34: Lancashire Independent College, Manchester

1934-36: Salford Central Mission: assistant

1937: Droylsden

1937-44: RYAN STREET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BRADFORD

1944: Pilgrim Congregational Church, Southwark and

1944-50: Marlborough Congregational Church, Old Kent Road

APPENDIX K

Women Candidates and MPs: Great Britain, 1918-1945

	<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>		<u>Liberal</u>		<u>Other</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs
1918	1	-	4	-	4	-	8	1	17	1
1922	5	1	10	-	16	1	2	-	33	2
1923	7	3	14	3	12	2	1	-	34	8
1924	12	3	22	1	6	-	1	-	41	4
1929	10	3	30	9	25	1	4	1	69	14
1931	16	13	36	-	5	1	5	1	62	15
1935	19	6	33	1	11	1	4	1	67	9
1945	14	1	41	21	20	1	12	1	87	24

Women Candidates and MPs: West Riding of Yorkshire, 1918-1945

	<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>		<u>Liberal</u>		<u>Other</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs	Cands	MPs
1918	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1922	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
1923	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
1924	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
1929	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1931	-	-	-	-	1*	-	-	-	1	-
1935	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
1945	1	-	2	2	1	-	-	-	4	2

The total number of parliamentary seats in the period 1918-45 was 640.

*Mrs C I Hilyer stood as a National Liberal

Source: F W S Craig: British Parliamentary Statistics 1918-1970 and British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949.

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DCL = Doncaster Central Library
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RCL = Rotherham Central Library
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Mrs Marion Braithwaite, Conversation on 6 June 1990 (Mrs Braithwaite as been a member of Littleover Baptist Church since the mid-1920s.)

Mrs Chambers, Conversation on 12 July 1989
(Mrs Chambers's father was a stockbroker and her husband a company director in Sheffield during the inter-war period.)

Mrs Jean Dennis, Letter dated Dec 7 1989
(Mrs Dennis is the daughter-in-law of Mary Dennis, the first woman councillor in Barnsley.)

Revd Keith Gilley, Letters dated 5 Feb and 13 March 1989

Revd Violet Hedger, Conversation on 17 April 1990

Revd Kathleen M Hendry, Letter dated March 3 1989
(Kathleen Hendry trained at Lancashire Independent College between 1925 and 1931 and was minister at Shaw Congregational Church in Lancashire from 1932 to 1938 and 1948 to 1965.)

Miss E Hobson, Conversation on 17 January 1990
(Miss Hobson was a close friend of Mary Sykes but only after she had ceased to be a member of Huddersfield Council.)

Mr J D W Longden, Conversation on 5 Jan 1988
(Mr Longden is the grandson of Mrs A E Longden, the first woman Lord Mayor of Sheffield.)

Dr J McLachlan, Conversation on 28 Feb 1990
(Dr McLachlan's father was principal of the Unitarian College in Manchester in the inter-war period. Dr McLachlan's own time at the Unitarian College overlapped with several of the first women students. He later became a friend of the Revd Margaret Barr.)

Revd Eileen Orchard, Letters dated 22 Feb and 5 March 1989
(Eileen Orchard trained at Lancashire Independent College between 1931 and 1934 and her ministries included that of Ryan Street Congregational Church, Bradford from 1937 to 1944.)

Mr J Pitt, Letter dated 22 April 1989
(Mr Pitt's aunt was a member of Sion Jubilee Baptist Church in Bradford during the ministry of John and Maria Living-Taylor.)

Revd Alice Platts, Conversation on 5 June 1990
(Alice Platts knew Margaret Fullerton (née Hardy) and Constance Clark for many years and attributes her own decision to enter the ministry to their considerable friendship and support.)

Revd Sheila Sanderson, Mr & Mrs A Adamson, Conversation on 7 March 1989

(Sheila Sanderson was a good friend of Margaret Fullerton and Constance Clark in Leeds and was herself ordained in 1968. Mr & Mrs Adamson were members of Marshall Street Congregational Church in the 1930s and maintained a lifelong friendship with Margaret Fullerton and Constance Clark.)

Mrs Jessie Smith, Conversation on 28 November 1989
(Jessie Smith was a West Riding County Councillor from 1937 to 1974.)

Alderman J W Sterland, Conversation on 17 Jan 1989
(Mr Sterland was a member of Sheffield City Council for some 40 years from 1937.)

Miss Edith Turner, Conversation on 13 July 1988
(Miss Turner's father was a Sheffield alderman and a company director and she and her sister lived at home during the inter-war period. The Second World War enabled Miss Turner to escape the domestic sphere and she became welfare officer at steel manufacturers, W T Flather, in 1946.)

Miss Ann Wright, Conversation on 24 Jan 1990
(Miss Wright's father was a senior member of Barnsley Town Council in the inter-war period and her mother and a Conservative nominee were appointed as the first women members of the Barnsley bench in 1925.)

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(Mrs Hardwick's father and husband were miners. She joined the Labour Party after serving on a relief committee during the General Strike and was a member of Wath Urban District Council from 1947 to 1972.)

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