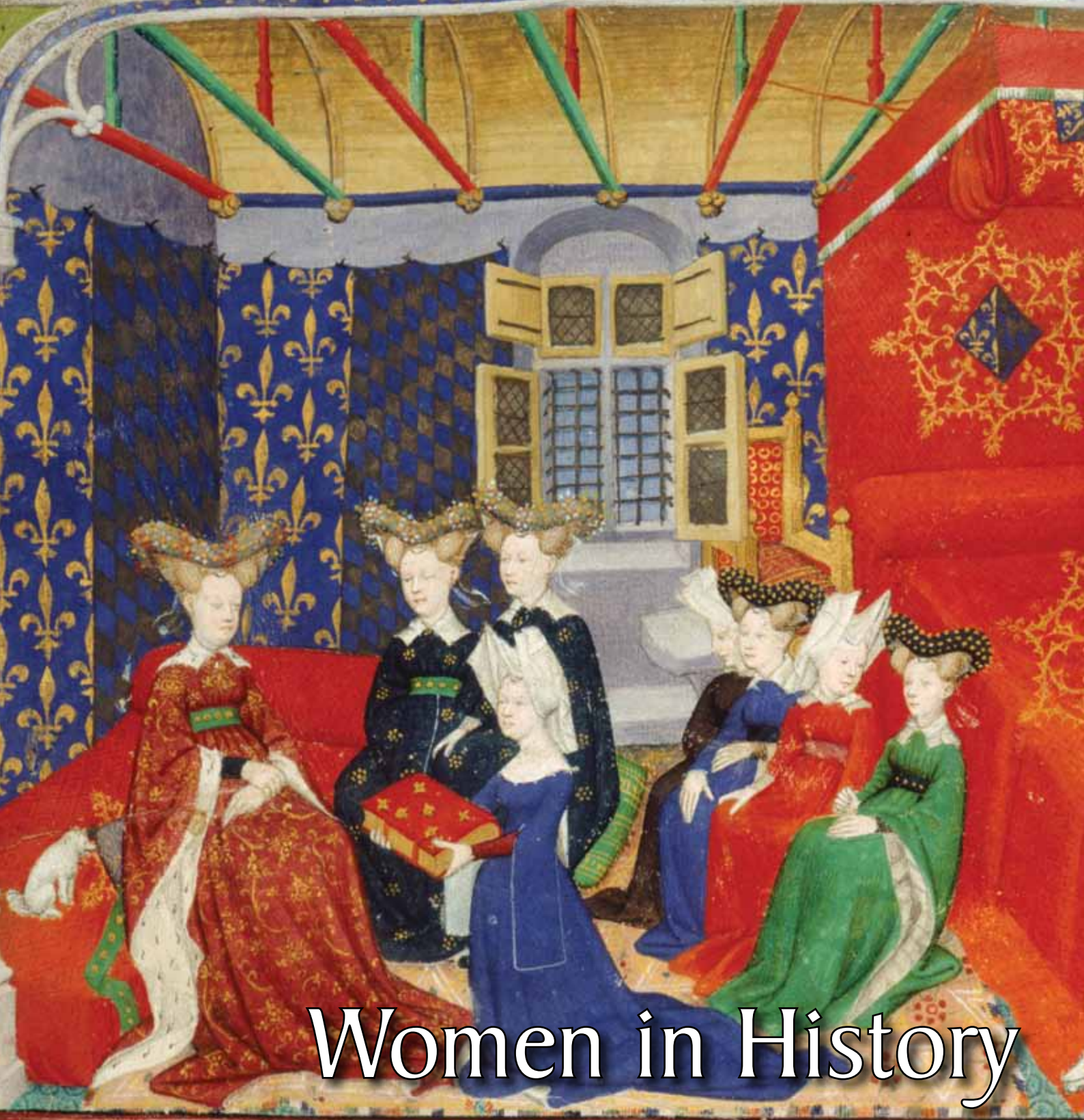


THE HISTORIAN

The magazine of The Historical Association



Women in History



The
Historical Association
The voice for history

Women in History Edition
Issue 119 / Autumn 2013

THE HISTORIAN



Cover
Collected Works of
Christine de Pisan

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Harley 4431, f.3

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Advertising
telephone: 020 7820 5985

Printed in Great Britain by
Newnorth Print Limited,
Kempston, Bedford, MK42 8NA

ISSN 0265-1076

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The White Rose of Stalingrad

Bill Yenne

Osprey Publishing,
2013, 319p, £20.00
ISBN 9781849088107.

The title of this extraordinary book does not fully convey the full breadth of what this book reveals and explores.

It does fully recount the air-force career of an extremely brave and exceptional fighter pilot, especially unusual because of her gender. She disappeared in combat over the Ukraine at the age of twenty-one, having been credited with at least twelve 'hits' and having been involved in the desperate Russian campaign to stem the Nazi advance towards, and beyond, Stalingrad. Her prominence arises in part from the recruitment of three all-women airforce regiments which then

enabled women fliers to demonstrate their prowess, although some of Lidiya Litvyak's greatest achievements were recorded serving as 'wing' support in regular Russian airforce squadrons. Her title was earned from her tendency to decorate her cockpit with wildflowers and to paint a white lily on the fuselage – not quite the 'white rose' of her title!

However, Bill Yenne offers us very much more than the detail of a Lidiya's flying career. In setting the scene for her career, he introduces us to the internal political, social and economic situation of Russia under Lenin and, more particularly, under Stalin. He provides a very critical commentary of the economic strategies of the two Russian leaders, with his most severe observations being reserved for Stalin and the fact that his heroic Five Year Plan strategy clearly was significantly less successful than how the propaganda depicted it. He then explains how this lack of success was inter-related to Stalin's paranoia which led to a huge programme of purges in the late 1930s,

with Stalin's suspicions encompassing vast numbers of loyal party members.

What is so remarkable, however, is that someone like Lidiya Litvyak could lose her father in the later stages of these purges and yet remain loyal to Stalin and Russia. Bill Yenne explains this in the wider context that many Russians traditionally had expected Russia to have a 'father' figure, and such a person was to be held in absolute awe, along with another belief in the 'Mother Russia' [or Godina]. Despite her family's distress at what had happened to her father, Lidiya shared this traditional over-riding belief, in effect, in the absolute importance of these 'father' and 'mother' figures for Russia, in other words her innate nationalism, which enabled her to separate her personal distress from her determination to serve Russia. In providing this analysis Bill Yenne has helped me to understand better how Russian nationalism survived Stalin's excesses.

Trevor James



No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service

Rosemary Scadden

Gomer Press, 2013, 179p,
£9.99 paperback.
ISBN 9781848517004.

This is an important social commentary on the mass migration of young women, frequently in their early teens, from Wales to various parts of England where they became part of a massive force of household domestic servants. This phenomenon was at its peak between the two World Wars, although it

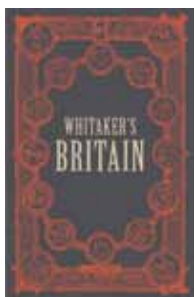
was in decline by the late 1930s when mass-production factory work became available to young women for the first time and, of course, some of this mass-production work was in the area of manufacturing labour-saving devices, which were beginning to negate the need for residential domestic help.

Rosemary Scadden has very sensitively explored the lives of these young women who were wrenched from their lives within the Welsh community, with interviews which reveal the nature of their experiences and their emotions as they experienced what was deemed to be a necessary employment option, and she offers a commentary on the economic situation which enabled the demand for domestic servants to be satisfied. Not

everyone found this experience damaging and some found it empowering but many lived their later lives with this experience as a private shadow at the back of their minds.

For many of us this book will strike a chord because it will have been a shared experience. Within my own family, both my grandmothers were sent into domestic service at the age of thirteen before the Great War and we saw the outcome of that experience in their lives, with one being very introspective and the other having a rootlessness, which was probably a result of being sent from her remote Suffolk village into domestic service in London.

Trevor James



Whitaker's Britain

Bloomsbury, 2013, 186p,
£9.99 hardback, ISBN
9781472903051.

Whitaker's Britain is a selection of edited highlights from the one hundred and forty five editions of *Whitaker's Almanac*, since it was launched by Joseph Whitaker in 1868.

Each extract is accompanied by helpful commentary.

A local or contemporary historian could, however, use this book as an aide mémoire to enable him or her to match regional, national and international events with their study of their own chosen locality. In the section entitled 'Remarkable Occurrences', for example, on 4 January 1868, the 1869 edition reported that an earthquake was felt in the Vale of Parret and other parts of Somerset; and the 1909 edition recorded that on 13 May 1908 a heavy thunderstorm raged over Lincolnshire, with one of the pinnacles of

Boston's Parish Church, the 'Boston Stump', being displaced by lightning. The 'Weather' section provides, amongst others, details of the Lynmouth flooding disaster of August 1953 and the devastating East Coast floods of 1 February 1953. Such information may have wider implications or applications.

The extracts quoted are sufficient to reveal that local and contemporary readers could indeed consider using the annual editions of *Whitaker's Almanac* as a resource to help them introduce a wider context to their research.

Trevor James

editorial

This is a more extensive issue of *The Historian* than usual because we have tried to balance our attempt to provide a strong dominant theme looking at various aspects of women's history with still keeping our more regular features. Through the columns of *The Historian* we do try to inform our wide readership about new and different themes that emerge in historical research.

Sarah Richardson's article is a particular case in point and her research has also attracted recent attention from the news media. Her painstaking research in local sources has identified a pattern of women's involvement in local government and leadership, long before the first formal grant of the franchise in local government, thereby giving us an entirely new perspective. Local historians, and those who use local sources, will readily identify with this approach and may well attribute it to the leadership of W. G. Hoskins but, in reality, this form of methodical correlation of dispersed and seemingly unrelated sources can easily be traced back to the early days when the Historical Association was created, with the work of F. W. Maitland and J. H. Round.

This specific piece of research has had a personal resonance for me. In 1968-69 when I was researching for my thesis on the 'Inns of Croydon 1640-1830' [*Surrey Archaeological Collections, LXVIII, 1971*] I did note the presence of several women amongst those being granted liquor licences at the Surrey Justices of the Peace Brewsters' Sessions. It became obvious to me that these were widows who were being permitted to take over the licence on the death of a husband because, after several years, a son would replace them as the licensee, presumably having reached the age of majority. At the time I noticed this pattern but, in a sense I dismissed it as a sign of the inherent gender hierarchy that prevailed and certainly I was not tempted to explore the issue further into other towns or counties. Forty years on I now recognise that this could be interpreted quite differently. Yes, there was a gender-bias to the holding of licences but the magistrates had, in reality, recognised by the granting of these licences, albeit for short periods of time, that there was no fundamental objection to women holding liquor licences, rather that it was just a matter of custom and practice. This is very much the message of Sarah Richardson's research. We need to continue to ask what other evidence is waiting for us to extend our perspective and awareness.

From the above observations you can sense that I enjoy the contents of *The Historian* as a way of helping me to have new historical perspectives. The Editorial Panel hopes that you share its determination to provide a full and expansive diet of articles which will help you to enjoy your History as well. We do thank all our contributors for sharing their research and ideas with us; and we hope that members will continue to offer us their expertise as we look to the future success of this journal.

We are also planning ahead, with some of our preparations stretching until 2019! Our next edition is being guest-edited by Alf Wilkinson and this will be focussed on Britain in 1914 as the Great War dramatically appeared on the horizon. From the summer of 2014 until the beginning of 2019 we will be including a series of items, of varying lengths, as part of our attempt to commemorate the Great War. These will be unconventional in their approach because they will not themselves especially deal with the straightforward conduct of the War itself but will deal with the unusual and the unexpected, such as the award of the Victoria Cross to a Staffordshire pacifist and the death of the Mayoress of Walsall following a Zepellin raid. In the midst of all this we will also celebrate the anniversaries of Magna Carta, Waterloo and Agincourt with special editions. This is proof that a great deal of thought is being applied to ensure that *The Historian* is fit for future purpose.

Please do take the opportunity of our next Annual Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon [16-17 May 2014] to speak to me or any member of the Editorial Panel about your response to what we do for you through the columns of *The Historian*.

Trevor James

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Queenship in Medieval England:

A Changing Dynamic?

A Changing Dynamic?

Louise Wilkinson



Eleanor of Provence marries King Henry III in 1236. A drawing from Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*. © The British Library (BL Royal MS 14. C VII, f. 124v)

In the winter of 1235-6, Eleanor, the 12 year-old daughter of Count Raymond-Berengar V of Provence and Beatrice of Savoy, left her native homeland. She travelled to England to marry King Henry III, a man 28 years her senior whom she had never met. The bride and her entourage faced an arduous journey through the kingdoms of Navarre and France before they finally reached the English Channel and crossed to Dover. From Dover, the young bride set out for Canterbury, where she was finally united with King Henry and where their marriage was celebrated on 14 January 1236. The new queen's coronation at Westminster Abbey followed just a few days later. The whole of London was decorated with flags and banners, the streets were cleaned, and London's leading citizens came out to greet the king and his new queen. There was national rejoicing.

The scenes that accompanied Eleanor of Provence's arrival in England are strongly reminiscent of those that surrounded Prince William's marriage to Kate Middleton at Westminster Abbey on 29 April 2011, highlighting England's enduring relationship with its monarchy and interest in the women who have married into 'The Royal Firm'. The lives of many of England's late medieval and early modern queens are now reasonably well known, immortalised in television dramas such as *The Tudors* and *The White Queen*, as well as Helen Castor's book *She-Wolves: The Women who ruled England before Elizabeth*. Yet the English queens of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries – Berengaria of Navarre (c. 1165-1230), Isabella of Angoulême (c. 1188-1246), Eleanor of Provence (c. 1223-91), Eleanor of Castile (1241-90) and Margaret of France (c. 1279-1318) – remain largely unknown. This is curious, especially when it is borne in mind that their careers as queens consort were all richly documented in contemporary chronicles, letters and other written records. They also lived through an important era in English history. Individually, they witnessed King Richard I's participation in the Third Crusade in the 1190s, the loss of Normandy under King John in 1204,

the issue of Magna Carta in 1215 and the birth of the English parliamentary state in the reigns of King Henry III (d. 1272) and King Edward I (d. 1307). This was also a pivotal period in the development of English royal government, as it became increasingly sophisticated in its institutions and professional in its personnel and procedures. These changes were momentous. They touched directly upon the roles assumed by English queens consort and potentially transformed the very nature of English queenship itself.

Queens in Anglo-Saxon England

In the early Middle Ages, the king's wife often occupied a position at the heart of political life in England. The research of Pauline Stafford has illuminated the wide variety of roles open to queens consort in the eleventh century, based upon the unique status they enjoyed as the king's legitimate bedfellow, the mother of his children and mistress of the royal household. This was an era when the king's family and his household were at the centre of, and models for, government.

As the king's legitimate bedfellow and mother of his children, the queen enjoyed intimate and privileged access to the king's person, access that potentially allowed her to exercise influence over him. As mistress of the royal household, the queen also fulfilled some important administrative tasks. It was the queen, for example, who, along with her husband's leading officials, helped to organise the palace and controlled royal treasure. In late Anglo-Saxon England, domestic power meant political power, hence the appearance of high profile queens such as Queen Emma (d. 1052), who was wife successively to King Æthelred II (d. 1016) and his Danish usurper King Cnut (d. 1035), and the mother of both King Harthacnut (d. 1042) and King Edward the Confessor (d. 1066). Yet a queen consort's power was not unlimited. It was dependent, in no small measure, upon the success of her personal relationship with her husband, and upon his willingness to accommodate and co-operate with her wishes.

Twelfth-Century Change?

Seen from this vantage point, the emergence of increasingly formal mechanisms of government and the growth of bureaucracy from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries threatened existing queenly routes to influence. All queens after the Norman Conquest, and certainly some before, had their own households. The queen's



The tomb of Berengaria of Navarre, wife of King Richard I, at the abbey of l'Épau, near Le Mans in France, which Berengaria founded in widowhood.

household was usually distinct from, but sometimes co-resided with, that of the king. The managerial roles that queens consort had formerly assumed within the royal palace appear to have been circumscribed and their control over treasure and revenue eroded. Newly emergent departments, staffed by professional male administrators, took over some of the responsibilities that had formerly fallen to queens consort, so that queens were apparently marginalised from various aspects of royal government.

It is, though, unlikely that the reduction in queenly power was so extensive or devastating as historians used to believe. The queens consort of thirteenth-century England still, on occasion, played a significant part in political life. Henry III's young bride,

Eleanor of Provence, matured into a major protagonist in her husband's reign. Eleanor actively encouraged the English king to promote her Savoyard kinsmen to positions of wealth and influence at the English court. She also served as regent in England when her husband campaigned in Gascony in 1253-4, even though she was heavily pregnant at the time. Later, during the early 1260s, Eleanor was instrumental in securing support for her husband's regime overseas, when Henry was faced with a baronial movement that wished to reform royal government. Individual queens were, it seems, still forces to be reckoned with within their husbands' realms. So why was this? What areas of responsibility and opportunities for agency remained open to English queens?

The tomb of Isabella of Angoulême, wife of King John, at Fontevrault Abbey in France.



English Queenship in the Late Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

The English queens consort of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries were all foreign brides, selected for their wealth and/or for the political advantages that alliances with their families might bring to the English crown. Through marriage to the king, which was usually followed by coronation, these women were elevated to a position unique within the English realm. There were no English queens regnant in this period or women like Matilda the Empress (d. 1167), who inherited a direct claim to the English throne, thanks to the proliferation of male heirs.

The Christian ritual surrounding a queen consort's coronation service firmly reinforced her subordinate position as a medieval woman to her husband. But, as a coronation order of the late eleventh century acknowledged, it also recognised that she shared in her husband's 'power'.¹ The idea of the queen as a co-ruler was often reinforced by the visual imagery that adorned royal palaces and other residences. Henry III commissioned a new wall painting of 'a king and queen sitting with their baronage' in 1243 for display in Dublin Castle. Three years later, the same king ordered a window near the dais at Guildford palace in Surrey to be painted with the figures of an enthroned king and his queen. The figure of the

queen, it seems, was central to this king's representations of monarchy.

Berengaria and Isabella

Nevertheless, the extent to which a queen was allowed, in any real sense, to influence royal policies or play a part in government depended upon her character, her capabilities and the strength of her personal union with her husband. It was also reliant upon the resources that the king placed at her disposal and the authority that he was prepared to delegate to her. The experiences of Berengaria of Navarre and Isabella of Angoulême, the wives of King Richard I (d. 1199) and King John (d. 1216) respectively, illustrate this particularly well. Berengaria, the daughter of King Sancho VI of Navarre, married Richard at Limasol in Cyprus on 12 May 1191, while the king was en route to Palestine to join the Third Crusade. During their marriage, the couple seldom enjoyed one another's company, their union was childless and Berengaria was accorded no political role in her husband's dominions. While Richard languished in an imperial prison in Germany after he was captured on his way home from the crusade, he relied upon his mother, the formidable Eleanor of Aquitaine, rather than Berengaria as his wife, to look after English affairs and campaign for his release. In fact, there is no evidence that Berengaria ever set foot in England during her marriage. The couple almost certainly lived apart

during the final years of Richard's life; the last occasion they met was at Poitiers in 1195, when they celebrated Christmas together.

Eleanor of Aquitaine's presence also cast its shadow over the marriage of her younger son, King John, to Isabella, the heiress to the county of Angoulême in southern France. On their marriage on 24 August 1200, Isabella was probably just 12 years old, while her new husband was already in his thirties. Although the chronicler Roger of Wendover later attributed John's failure to retain Normandy to the king's infatuation with his young bride, this physical attraction, if it truly existed, did not translate into any meaningful political role for Isabella within her husband's realm. Mindful, perhaps, of Eleanor of Aquitaine's rebellious activities during his father's reign – she had been a leading figure in the great rebellion in 1173 – John limited Isabella's access to wealth. After King John's death in the midst of a civil war in 1216, the couple's nine year-old son succeeded to the English throne as King Henry III, but Isabella was still excluded from a role in English government by the new king's regency council.

In spite of Berengaria's and Isabella's experiences, there were later queens who enjoyed happier relationships with their husbands and who made greater impressions upon the English realm. Eleanor of Provence, Eleanor of Castile and Margaret of France received regular sums of money for their maintenance, acquired English lands and enjoyed substantial revenues. All three of these queens were resident in England and made their mark, to varying degrees, as estate administrators, household managers, mothers, intercessors, patrons and cultural ambassadors.

Resources

By the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, queens stood to receive lands to the value of £4,500 as their dowry (the name given to a widow's share of her dead husband's estates). Unlike their twelfth-century predecessors, however, thirteenth-century queens were not usually permitted to hold their dowry during marriage. They drew their income instead, primarily, from cash sums paid by the crown, from a levy known as the queen's gold, from money derived from the Jews, and from grants of profitable wardships and other lands in the king's gift. The queens therefore needed the services of skilled officials to help them realise the full value of their assets. The ruthless measures employed by their agents betray the value that these women placed upon exploiting their rights.



The unscrupulous activities of Eleanor of Provence's estates steward, William of Tarrant, were condemned by the chronicler Matthew Paris. Eleanor of Castile's unrelenting appetite for new lands prompted complaints from the archbishop of Canterbury and made her the butt of contemporary humour. The chronicle of Walter of Guisborough preserves a doggerel that criticised Eleanor's hunger for new properties:

The king desires to get our gold.
The queen, our manors fair to hold.²

Not all queens were successful in managing their assets. Edward I's second wife, Margaret of France, relied upon her husband to help bail her out, after she ran up debts that ran into several thousands of pounds.

The Queen's Household

The resources enjoyed by queens were essential for maintaining the queen's household, providing for her everyday needs and defraying the expenses generated by the demands of royal life. By the mid thirteenth century, the queen's household was a large and sophisticated establishment, similar in size to many commercial businesses today. In 1252-3, Eleanor of Provence's household comprised more than one hundred men and women, including various male officials and knights, alongside ladies, clerks and other servants. In 1289-90, Eleanor of Castile's household staff numbered approximately 150 people.

Positions within the queen's household were highly prized by their holders, and brought access not only to the person of the queen but also the king himself. There is little to support the view that the existence of separate households effectively distanced the queen from her husband. Under Eleanor of Provence, the queen's councillors and officials regularly moved between both the queen's service and that of her husband. This queen also effectively maintained personal links, as Margaret Howell has observed, with three of the most important cogs in the governmental machinery:

the king's chancery, the royal exchequer (through the keeper of the queen's gold) and the law courts.

The Ceremonial Functions of Queenship

The opulence, wealth and outward magnificence of the queen's household and its staff was just one way in which the queen contributed to the physical setting of royalty. Queens throughout the period continued to occupy a central place within the rituals and ceremonial life of their husband's courts, advertising the Christian piety and virtues of the ruling dynasty, as well as its power. On formal occasions, the queen sat, enthroned, alongside her husband, wearing her crown. Margaret of France, for example, usually wore a crown during festivities at Edward I's court. The queen also participated with her husband in the customary practice of almsgiving. A letter written in 1242 recalled how it was usual for Henry III to feed 500 poor people a day and for his wife's and children's households to nourish a further 100 poor.

Some of the most prominent aspects of the queen's ceremonial role focused on her maternity. The queen's fertility was a central theme of the prayers that accompanied her coronation, conveying hope for the future security of the English crown and kingdom through her ability to provide heirs. The births of royal children were greeted with joy. Matthew Paris recorded how 'all the nobles of the kingdom offered their congratulations' when Eleanor of Provence was safely delivered of the future King Edward I at Westminster on 17-18 June 1239.³ Both the infant, at his baptism, and the queen, at the ceremony for her purification forty days after the birth, played a central role in the celebrations. As her children grew older, it was usual for the queen to participate in the pageantry that attended their marriages. For Eleanor of Provence this included the revelry at York in December 1251 which accompanied her young daughter Margaret's marriage to Alexander III, king of Scots.



(left) Edward I of England and Eleanor of Castile, from Lincoln Cathedral.

(below) A gilt-bronze tomb effigy of Queen Eleanor of Castile on her tomb in Westminster Abbey.



Windsor Castle, so that she could be near her growing family. It is significant that, later, when Eleanor's daughter, Margaret, queen of Scots, was pregnant with her first child, she returned to England to be with her mother for the birth. Although Eleanor of Castile endured long periods of separation from her children, she sought regular news of their wellbeing and approved appointments to their households. After Edward I's remarriage in 1299, his new wife, Margaret of France, successfully maintained friendly relations with her stepchildren, even to the point of patching up differences between Edward I and his eldest surviving son, when the pair quarrelled in 1305.

Motherhood

Motherhood was, perhaps, the most important of all the queen's responsibilities towards her husband and his subjects. A king without legitimate heirs promised to bring ruin on his kingdom by leaving a potential legacy of civil war between rival claimants on his death. Henry III and Edward I were faithful to their wives and their queens all proved to be fertile. Eleanor of Provence bore her husband four children who survived childhood (a fifth daughter, Katherine, died as a child). Eleanor of Castile bore Edward I perhaps as many as 16 children, although only one son, the future King Edward II, and five daughters survived to adulthood. Edward's second marriage to Margaret of France, whom he married in 1299, produced another three offspring, two of whom survived infancy.

The queens in this period keenly recognised the value of their maternity and were encouraged by churchmen

to emulate heavenly models of motherhood. The Virgin Mary, the immaculate mother of Christ, was often as portrayed either as a mother nursing her child or, increasingly, as a subordinate co-ruler alongside her son. She offered a potent example of dynastic motherhood for earthly queens and one of which they were fully aware. A window in the queen's apartments at the royal palace of Clarendon depicted Eleanor of Provence kneeling before the Virgin and Child.

Although royal children were usually placed in their own households from an early age and endured periods of separation from their parents, their mothers and fathers still took a keen interest in their welfare. Eleanor of Provence was a devoted mother. When her young sons, Edward (the future King Edward I) and Edmund, were poorly, she visited them or sent her personal doctors to care for them. In 1252-3, Eleanor spent a significant part of the year at

Intercession and Patronage

Motherhood was not the only Marian quality relevant for thirteenth-century English queens. Intercession was an important facet of earthly, as well as heavenly, queenship. In the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, a scene popular in religious art, Christ's mother was portrayed as an intercessor, with her head and body inclined towards her son, who might mediate between Christ and all the Christian faithful. The wives of Henry III and Edward I all interceded with their husbands on behalf of their English subjects, and secured pardons and other privileges for petitioners. Bishops and other churchmen wrote to queens, reminding them of their Christian duty to soften their husbands' hearts, invoking the model of Esther from the Old Testament. Admittedly, some queens were more active as intercessors than others. According to John Carmi Parsons, Margaret of France acted in response to requests

from petitioners on nearly 70 occasions during her brief seven-year marriage, whereas her immediate predecessor, Eleanor of Castile, had responded to 36 requests in 36 years. A queen's ability to counsel her husband and influence his decisions significantly enhanced her standing within the realm and increased her potential as a powerful patron.

All thirteenth-century queens exercised patronage, fostering loyalty to their persons and enhancing further their own prestige and the dignity of the crown. Throughout her marriage, Eleanor of Provence actively encouraged Henry III to enrich her Savoyard relations, most notably her uncles and other, more distant kin. Eleanor met with considerable success in helping them to secure lucrative wardships and advantageous marriages. Although her successor, Eleanor of Castile, did not build up a faction to rival that of her mother-in-law, the younger Eleanor still had a hand in arranging more than 20 marriages at Edward I's court; marriage negotiations were yet another suitable arena of feminine activity for queens.

A queen's handling of patronage might, though, provoke resentment in those who felt excluded from her favour or from that of the king. The queen might be drawn, unavoidably, into the political rivalries of her husband's court, damaging her popularity. In the long term, Eleanor of Provence's championing of her Savoyard relations brought the queen and her kinsmen into competition with an opposing court faction. When the Lusignans, Henry III's half-brothers, came to England to make their fortunes in 1247, they clashed repeatedly with the queen and her allies. Even so, a capable queen provided an invaluable prop to her husband's regime. Eleanor of Provence's experiences with the Lusignans did not, as we have seen, prevent her from serving as regent of England during Henry III's absence in Gascony in 1253-4.

As foreign princesses, the English queens brought with them valuable diplomatic links with princes and other potentates overseas. Such women were therefore well placed to act as envoys and peacemakers between their husbands and natal kin. Eleanor of Provence became very well connected, thanks to her siblings. At the time of Eleanor's marriage, her eldest sister, Margaret, had already married King Louis IX of France. Her two younger sisters, Sanchia and Beatrice, later married Henry III's younger brother, Richard of Cornwall, and Charles, count of Anjou, respectively. Eleanor's personal links with the French royal court were helpful in smoothing the path

of Anglo-French relations. In December 1254, for example, she had the pleasure of accompanying Henry III to a family conference in France with her sister the French queen and Henry's former enemy, Louis IX.

A queen's foreign connections and the influence that she enjoyed over her husband could, however, arouse the suspicion and hostility of her English subjects, especially if she was felt to support unpopular policies. The Anglo-French treaty that led to Edward's union with Margaret of France was highly controversial and led to doubt about this queen's personal allegiances in the mind of one later writer. According to the archbishop of Canterbury, Eleanor of Castile incurred at least some of the blame for Edward I's harsh rule. Eleanor's religious patronage, another important area of queenly activity, also gave cause for concern. Her promotion of her own nominees to ecclesiastical benefices or places in religious houses inspired letters from churchmen, advising those involved that it would be unwise to cross the queen. Eleanor's activities must have been particularly unpalatable for individuals and institutions who felt their rights had been ignored.

Cultural Influences

As women whose lives intersected different parts of continental Europe, thirteenth-century English queens also played important roles as cultural ambassadors. The queens, alongside their husbands, helped to set the religious tone and culture of the English court. The support that they lent to new religious movements helped those movements to become established in England. The two Eleanors and Margaret of France all assisted the mendicant orders, most notably the Dominican and Franciscan friars, who arrived in England from the 1220s. They were also patrons of literacy and learning, facilitating the spread of vernacular literature. Works written for Eleanor of Provence included Matthew Paris's French *History* of St Edward the Confessor. Eleanor of Castile possessed numerous romances and swapped books with her half-brother, King Alfonso X of Castile. She also commissioned a translation of the *Art of War* by Vegetius for her husband, when the couple went on crusade in 1270-4. The queens of thirteenth-century England were clearly no shrinking violets and still assumed a wide range of roles. The figure of the queen was crucial for the prosperity of the medieval English monarchy, much like her later medieval and early modern counterparts.

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Petticoat Politicians:

Women and the Politics of the Parish in England

Sarah Richardson

The history of women voting in Britain is familiar to many. 2013 marked the centenary of the zenith of the militant female suffrage movement, culminating in the tragic death of Emily Wilding Davison, crushed by the King's horse at the Epsom Derby in June 1913. A partial female franchise was eventually achieved at the end of World War I, with women being granted the vote on the same terms as men in 1928. Many histories of women's participation in formal politics begin in this period. However, this narrative obscures a hidden story: one where ordinary women were regularly able to exercise their right to vote and to hold local offices. It was in the realm of the parish, where female participation in politics was commonplace. At this level there was a community franchise to elect a range of local officers such as sextons, beadles, overseers of the poor, constables and highway surveyors. This franchise had evolved over time, reliant on custom, precedence and local bylaws leading Beatrice and Sidney Webb to describe it as 'an anarchy of local autonomy'. It allowed a high degree of public participation including from women and the poor.

Perhaps this aspect of the history of women voters has been overlooked because it was often unremarked upon by contemporaries. Perhaps, it is because the parish is considered less exciting or exalted than parliament. Or maybe it does not fit with the established narrative of a male dominated public realm and the racy tales of militant suffragette activities. Whatever the reason, it cannot be ascribed to a lack of source material. When the records of local and parish government are examined in detail, examples of female electors and office holders may be found. Table 1 gives some instances of the range of offices that women held in parishes all over the country from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

There are female overseers of the poor in Aldham, Colchester, Copford, Wivenhoe and Wormingford in the county of Essex alone in the eighteenth century. Other offices held by women



The Election for Beadle

included parish clerks, churchwardens, constables and headboroughs. Women were able to take advantage of the often confused patchwork of local jurisdictions and to play a role in community governance, thus receiving 'an education in citizenship through local government'.

One example of a successful female local office holder may be found in the parish of Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire. In 1806 the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor reported on the exemplary work of Mrs Parker Sedding, overseer of the poor for the parish. Mrs Sedding had been elected with the consent of the justices and the encouragement of the local elite including the Earl of Rosslyn and the Vicar, George Bold. She undertook the duties of the office with great zeal: spending a month living in the workhouse to institute a new routine of cleanliness and industry; establishing a small worsted manufactory; ending the policy of farming out the poor; paying off the parish arrears and reducing the poor rates. Mrs Sedding was a substantial farmer and landowner earning in excess of four hundred pounds per year; she was also a widow, enabling her to be elected to the office of overseer. Mrs Sedding's approach to tackling the task of overseer chimed in well with the moral reform agenda of the Evangelicals who founded the Society as well that of other middle-class female philanthropists. For example, she compelled the poor 'to observe cleanliness in their own persons' and employed a small boy in petticoats to work a spinning wheel at a rate of twopence a day in order that he may earn enough to provide himself with boy's clothes. Brooks, the author of the report on Mrs Sedding's work, recognised the sensitive position of a woman holding such a significant post but enquired 'whether this valuable *female overseer*, in her sphere, is not forwarding the views of the Society, and whether it would not help to promote their humane object if the example of such an overseer were so noted and recorded by the Society, that it might be generally held out to the imitation of other overseers... especially in some of the country parishes.' The Society duly acknowledged Mrs Sedding's work considering her contribution and adherence to the general moral reforming ideals were more important than her gender.

Although the general pattern was for parish government to become more exclusive in the early nineteenth century, women's eligibility to attend meetings, to vote and to hold office continued.

Table 1: Examples of female office holders

Date	Place	Office(s)
1643	Upton by Southwell, Notts	Constable, churchwarden
1671	Islington, Middx	Sextoness
1672	Creechurch, London	Parish clerk
1698-9	Creechurch, London	Parish clerk
1690	Hackney, Middx	Sextoness
1699	Copford, Essex	Widow deemed unfit for overseer post
1712	Woodland, Derbyshire	Headborough, overseer
1718	Creechurch, London	Parish clerk (with deputy)
1730	Hackney, Middx	Sextoness, midwife
1730-46	Kingston, Surrey	Sextoness
1741	Islington, Middx	Sextoness
1750	Wivenhoe, Essex	Overseer
1750	Sutton Bonington, Notts	Surveyor of highways
1754	Colchester, Essex	Overseer (with deputy)
1757	Aldham, Essex	Overseer (widow)
1757-62	Fowlmere, Cambs	Overseer
1766	Copford, Essex	Overseer (deputy acted)
1774	Thriplow, Cambs	Overseer
1776	Copford, Essex	Overseer
1780	Colchester, Essex	Overseer (with deputy)
1785	Wormingford, Essex	Parish offices including churchwarden, overseer, surveyor, constable
1786	Colchester, Essex	Overseer (with deputy)
1788	Creechurch, London	Sextoness
1788	St Giles in the Fields	Pew opener
1790	St Giles, Cripplegate London	Sextoness, grave digger
1800	Hampstead, Middx	Board of Guardians included Lady of Manor
1800	Paddington, Middx	Pew opener
1800	Stoke Newington, Middx	Sextoness
1807	Wormingford, Essex	Parish offices including churchwarden, overseer, surveyor, constable
1808	Copford, Essex	Overseer supervised workhouse supplies
1811	Stoke Newington, Middx	Sextoness
1814	Wormingford, Essex	Parish offices including churchwarden, overseer, surveyor, constable
1819	Stoke Newington, Middx	Sextoness (office considered a charity as the oldest of 4 candidates, all women, was chosen)
1828	Minshall Vernon, Cheshire	Constable, overseer, supervisor
1831	County Wexford, Ireland	Sextoness
1838-40	Norfolk	Parish Clerk
1854	Misson, Notts	Overseer
1866	Harrow, Middx	Sextoness (had to find an assistant, her duties mainly confined to pew opening)

The Sturges Bourne reforms of vestry government in 1818 and 1819 permitted a weighted franchise of ratepayers to establish select vestries. However, the legislation did not specifically exclude women from the electorate, allowing local custom to prevail. Some parishes, for example Chelsea, claimed that there was no precedent for female voting, and therefore excluded women by resolution asserting: 'the ladies and gentlewomen, widows and maidens, who pay and stand charged have not a right to vote in this election, there being no precedent in this parish for the same.' However, in other

places women voters were positively encouraged if it was thought they might be of use to a particular vested interest. This was particularly the case over the contested issue of setting church rates in largely nonconformist parishes in the early nineteenth century. In Leeds, a select vestry had been established under the Sturges Bourne Act which was dominated by nonconformist radicals who then refused to set a church rate. Local Tories insisted on a regular parish poll in an attempt to replace the dissenting churchwardens. In April 1835, the Tory *Leeds Intelligencer* outlined

the strategy: 'the only method now left to the friends of law and order is to appeal from such packed Vestries to the parish at large. Nor will the appeal be in vain... Rated females are entitled to vote as well as males. We do not wish for a gynocracy; but we are sufficiently gallant to perceive that too many of the wayward lords of creation are disposed to make a bad world of it; therefore the sooner the ladies interfere the better.' The attempt to remove the churchwardens by swamping the electorate with women voters was in vain, they were re-elected with a majority of more than three thousand and Leeds continued to resist levying the church rate. In Ipswich, the chair of a poll on church rates, defended his actions in allowing female electors to vote and then retire from the tumultuous environment of the parish vestry where they were 'pressed and elbowed by the crowd.'

The rough and tumble of local polls, as well as the presence of women voters, led many parishes to adopt the innovative method of voting by secret ballot. Some parishes had experimented with forms of secrecy in the eighteenth century. In Woolwich for example, an elaborate system for electing the church organist was devised. All candidates for the position entered the organ loft and the curtains were then sewn shut. They each played to the congregation below for fifteen minutes. The parishioners then cast their votes for their preferred candidate by secret ballot. Hobhouse's Vestry Act also allowed for a secret ballot if five or more parishioners requested it. In 1835 when the vestry clerk of the parish of St Marylebone testified before the Select Committee on Bribery in Elections, he argued that the secret ballot was essential to protect the female voters:

Do you think that if the election for vestrymen had been conducted *viva voce* like the Parliamentary elections, it could have taken place in so quiet and orderly a way as it does take place under the present mode?

[John Wardell, esq. vestry clerk] I am quite sure it could not; the excitement always occasioned by a proclamation of the names for which parties vote would certainly have raised disturbance and confusion.

Would there not have been considerable hooting and clamour, so as to embarrass timid or elderly persons coming up to the poll?

[John Wardell, esq. vestry clerk] Whenever an obnoxious name was mentioned, it certainly would have

excited hooting and shouting enough to terrify timid voters; and as in this election females are allowed to vote, they would have been kept entirely away, if the voting had not been by ballot.

Vestries constituted under the Hobhouse Act also allowed electors to cast their votes without attending the polling stations. Each year, a third of the vestry would be elected. A list of candidates was circulated to each rate-paying household in the parish and was collected the next day. Alternatively, voters could cast their vote by secret ballot in person at allotted polling stations. Their names were checked by the collectors of rates and they then cast their votes in a sealed ballot box. The procedures of voting at home and by secret ballot were viewed by officials and politicians as essential for protecting the sensitivities of female voters. Women were able to cast their vote in the protected private environment of their household rather than openly and publicly at the polling station: a method later favoured by the women's suffrage campaigner Lydia Becker. Other women's suffrage activists were less keen to have 'special' facilities for female voters. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon in a pamphlet on female enfranchisement recognised that elections were often carried on in a 'turbulent and disorderly' manner and in such circumstances clearly women should not participate. But Bodichon used this evidence to call for state intervention to regulate polling stations rather than as a justification for excluding women from the franchise. In addition, she pointed out that, in many districts, a visit to a polling station was no more rowdy than attending the Botanical Gardens or Westminster Abbey.

It is unusual to find direct evidence of women voting as very few official poll books for vestry or other parish contests survive. Very occasionally, copies of parish polls survive in the records of solicitors engaged in managing elections or in other repositories of local material. Such sources help to validate the continuing vitality and vigour of vestry politics which had been given a new lease of life under the reforms of the early nineteenth century. A rare insight into the role played by the female electorate in these local contests may be found by the analysis of one of these surviving parish polls, that of the election of an assistant overseer for the parish of St. Chad in Lichfield in May, 1843.

The women in the poll book comprise just over six per cent of the total electorate (25 out of the total of 395 registered voters). All but two of them voted in the election for the overseer providing one indication of

Table 2: Occupations of female voters in St Chad's parish, Lichfield, 1843

Occupation	Total
Of independent means	4
Proprietor of house and land	1
Butcher	1
Publican	1
Dressmaker	1
Laundress	2
Washerwoman	1
Pauper	2
Female Servant	1
Not stated	5

Table 3: Occupations of female voters in Basingstoke, c.1869-70

Occupation	Total
No occupation given	14
Annuitant	9
Dressmaker/Seamstress	9
Laundress	9
Retailer	9
Servant/service	6
Innkeeper	6
Schoolmistress/assistant	5
Landowner/independent means	4
Other	3

their engagement with the process. Female participation in the election (92 per cent) was equivalent to the male turnout of 91 per cent. This high turnout is reflected in parliamentary contests in this period but is unusual for a local poll. The women voters split evenly between the two parties: twelve supported Gorton, the Liberal candidate and eleven backed Hitchin, the Conservative representative. However, the Liberal vote was boosted by the one plural voter among the women Grace Brown of Sandford who cast her four votes for Gorton. According to the 1841 census, Grace Brown was a butcher whose household comprised her son (also a butcher) and three others including a male and female servant. In all, twenty of the women are traceable in the 1841 census and their profile appears in Table 2.

A number of the women, like Grace Brown, are of wealthy status, being described in the census as of independent means or residing with one or more live-in servants. However, of equal interest are those further down the social scale who were able to vote and thus participate in local politics. These women include two paupers



THE SELECTION FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD: KAYAKING & LAST VOTE.

(both elderly), two laundresses, a washerwoman and the intriguing Sarah Payne who in the 1841 census has the occupation of a live-in female servant. Sarah lived with Sarah Holland, aged 80 and George Payne who was 2 years old. The presumption is that by the time of the 1843 poll Sarah Holland had died and Sarah Payne qualified as the single head of household for the same property. Most of the female voters were of modest means living in homes with a low rateable value. Their average age was 47.9 years, reflecting the fact that many were older widows. This brief socio-economic profile of the women voters demonstrates that the opportunities female citizenship in parish politics could be quite extensive – the limiting factor being marital status rather than social or economic position.

This profile of female voters is supported by an analysis of one of the few municipal poll books that survive for the period between the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869, which formalised the extension of the vote to female ratepayers, and the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872. The female voters in the Basingstoke municipal poll book

for 1869-70 were overwhelmingly older, widowed heads of households. Their average age was 57.14 years. Sixty-seven of the seventy-four traced in the census were heads of households, two were described as daughters, two were mothers-in-law, one was a sister, and there was one visitor. The occupational profile of the women voters was centred on the textile and service industries (See Table 3). Many were in lowly employment, including one receiving parish relief, nine laundresses and one waitress at the railway station. However, there were women of higher status. For example, Isabella Apeltre, a widow and annuitant, lived with her two daughters who were themselves described as landowners, five female servants and one male servant. There were five women engaged in the teaching profession, including Maria Graysmark whose school had twenty-seven live-in pupils at the time of the census. The licensed victualler Eliza Daniels of London Street had eight servants as well as five members of her family residing with her on census night.

This glimpse of a lost world of women voters and officeholders

portrays a very different picture of female citizenship in the period before their right to vote was formalised by legislation. Women from all social backgrounds were able to participate in local politics, as long as they met the one crucial test of being unmarried or widowed. Women routinely held office and voted in local elections.

The history of the wide and inclusive politics of the parish needs to be written back into the electoral histories of women (and men). For it was at this very local level where women were able to gain experience of political participation, to gain experience as office holders and to engage in the practical activities of local politicians.

Sarah Richardson is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Warwick. Her latest book *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Routledge, 2013) explores issues surrounding the place of women in Victorian politics.

HA Podcasts – Women in History



The Women's Movement

In Part II of our series on Social and Political Change in the UK 1800-present we look at the Women's Movement in the UK from its early origins through to the end of the 20th century. Part II features: Dr Anne Logan, Professor June Hannam and Ms Jean Spence.
www.history.org.uk/go/WomensMovement

Women in 18th Century Britain

In this podcast Professor Roey Sweet of the University of Leicester looks at how the lives of British women were transformed in the 18th century.
www.history.org.uk/go/18thCenturyWomen

Women in Britain 1500-1700

In this podcast Professor Laura Gowing of King's College London looks at how the role of women changed in Britain, both within the family and within society, between 1500-1700.
www.history.org.uk/go/EarlyModernWomen

Women in Anglo-Saxon England

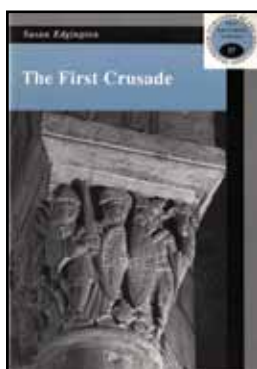
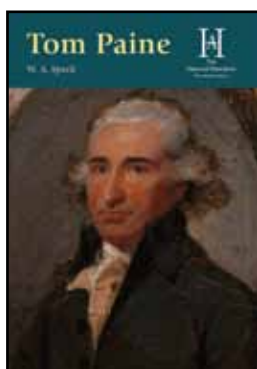
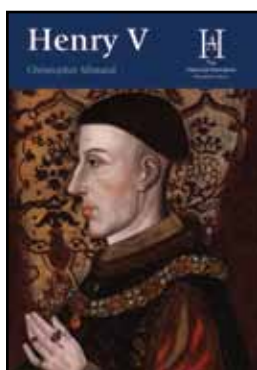
Featuring Professor Joanna Story
www.history.org.uk/go/AngloSaxonWomen

Women in Carolingian Society

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The President's Column

The final version of the National Curriculum for History was published over the summer. It is pleasing to see that the improvements recommended by the Historical Association and other History societies have been included. There is now provision for longer chronological study at both Key Stage 2 and 3, as well as some crossover allowed in the periods studied at primary and secondary schools.

This means that the previous rigid demand, that pupils should study up to 1700 by the time they leave primary school and from 1700 only at secondary school, has rightly been abandoned. There is also more space for local and World History, all of which will help to develop children's historical understanding, particularly for those who drop History at age 14. With the help of the HA's members, our CEO Rebecca Sullivan and our Education Officer Mel Jones were able to respond during the consultation with a solid body of evidence about appropriate changes for the first draft. The HA is also involved in the current consultations about changes to History at GCSE and A-level. Thank you to all of you who responded to the HA's surveys about the Curriculum earlier this year.

I am delighted to let everyone know that earlier this year the Queen, our patron, accepted a Diamond Jubilee Fellowship from The Historical Association to celebrate her coronation in 1953. I am also delighted to report that the HA has made a donation of £1,000 from the Barry Coward Memorial Fund, which was presented by Shirley Coward to Professor John Arnold, Head of History at Birkbeck. This will be used for undergraduate essay prizes in Barry's memory. The Fund is still open, if you wish to contribute, and the HA will draw on it in future to support the 2015 Great Debate on Magna Carta.

In the summer I attended the inaugural meeting of the Bedford Society for graduates of Bedford College. We were addressed by Dr Lawrence Goldman, General Editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, who gave a most



Photograph © Alexander Keene

interesting and lively lecture about the College's founders and early graduates. His talk was based around their entries from the *Dictionary*, which is a fantastic online resource for historians and can easily be accessed with a local library ticket logon. Dr Goldman said that he would be happy to tailor talks for other audiences, which could be of interest to those of you drawing up branch lecture programmes.

Bedford College was set up in 1849 and was the first higher education institution for women in the UK. Later it became part of London University, went co-educational and merged with Royal Holloway College in 1983. The first chair of the Bedford Society is Professor Caroline Barron, one of our newest HA Fellows and a distinguished lecturer at the College. It was while I was at Bedford, in the early 1970s, that I first studied women's history and I became aware of how recently women had been able to take degrees at British universities. Appropriately, the theme of this autumn's *The Historian* is women's history and my article in

this issue reflects some of my research and teaching interests on the topic of women and education.

As the new terms starts, I have already visited a number of HA branches and have greatly enjoyed meeting more of our members. I am particularly grateful for their warm welcome and hospitality on these occasions. In September I spoke at the Hampstead and North London, and the Swansea branches about the celebrated Restoration murder trial, which became known as the Campden Wonder. At the West Surrey branch I talked about Elizabeth I, and in Hereford I was delighted to return to the topic of my PhD, the Harleys of Brampton Bryan. My talk focussed on the Harleys' support for Parliament during the English Civil Wars and the royalist siege of their home in 1643. I am pleased to see that Brilliana Harley's life has been captured so comprehensively by Paula Kitching in her Ten Tweets column in this issue of *The Historian*.

I have plenty of branch visits lined up before Christmas, including trips to Portsmouth, Reading, Nottingham, and Cheltenham. As usual, I shall be attending the annual Branch Officers Meeting on 16 November, when I shall look forward to meeting many of you. The voluntary work that the branch committee members do in putting on lectures and other activities for our members is very significant to the HA and I am delighted that I shall be able to thank some of you in person in November. At last year's meeting, I was pleased to launch the President's Awards of online membership for under-21s, to be awarded through the branches annually. The first awards have now been made and, if your branch has yet to nominate five winners, please do think about how you would like to make the awards in future.

As Christmas approaches, I would also like to wish everyone all the best for the coming holiday season as well.

Jackie Eales

Strange Journey:

the life of Dorothy Eckersley

Stephen M. Cullen



Dorothy Eckersley

Meeting in Berlin

Three days before the outbreak of the Second World War, William Joyce, the leader of the British Nazi group, the National Socialist League, was in Berlin. He and his wife, Margaret, had fled there fearing internment by the British government if war broke out. Yet as war drew nearer, Joyce was unsure whether to return to Britain or not. But a meeting that day sealed his fate, leading to years of broadcasting for German radio, notoriety as 'Lord Haw Haw', and his execution for treason in January 1946. The meeting was accidental, with the Joyces bumping into one of his English supporters – Mrs Frances 'Dorothy' Eckersley – in a Berlin restaurant. Dorothy Eckersley was surprised to see Joyce, to whom she had recently sent £50 to help the NSL find a new headquarters in London. Now, having a far better network of friends and acquaintances in Berlin than the almost friendless Joyces, she was able to put him in touch with officials who recruited Joyce to the radio propaganda microphone. And by the end of 1939, Dorothy, and her son, James, would join the English language team broadcasting German propaganda to the UK. At 46, Dorothy had already led an extraordinary life that had taken her from the stage in America to the microphone in Berlin, marriage with one of the most gifted radio engineers of the time, and years of political activism with the radical socialist Independent Labour Party. Yet now she was a committed follower of Hitler and a national socialist.

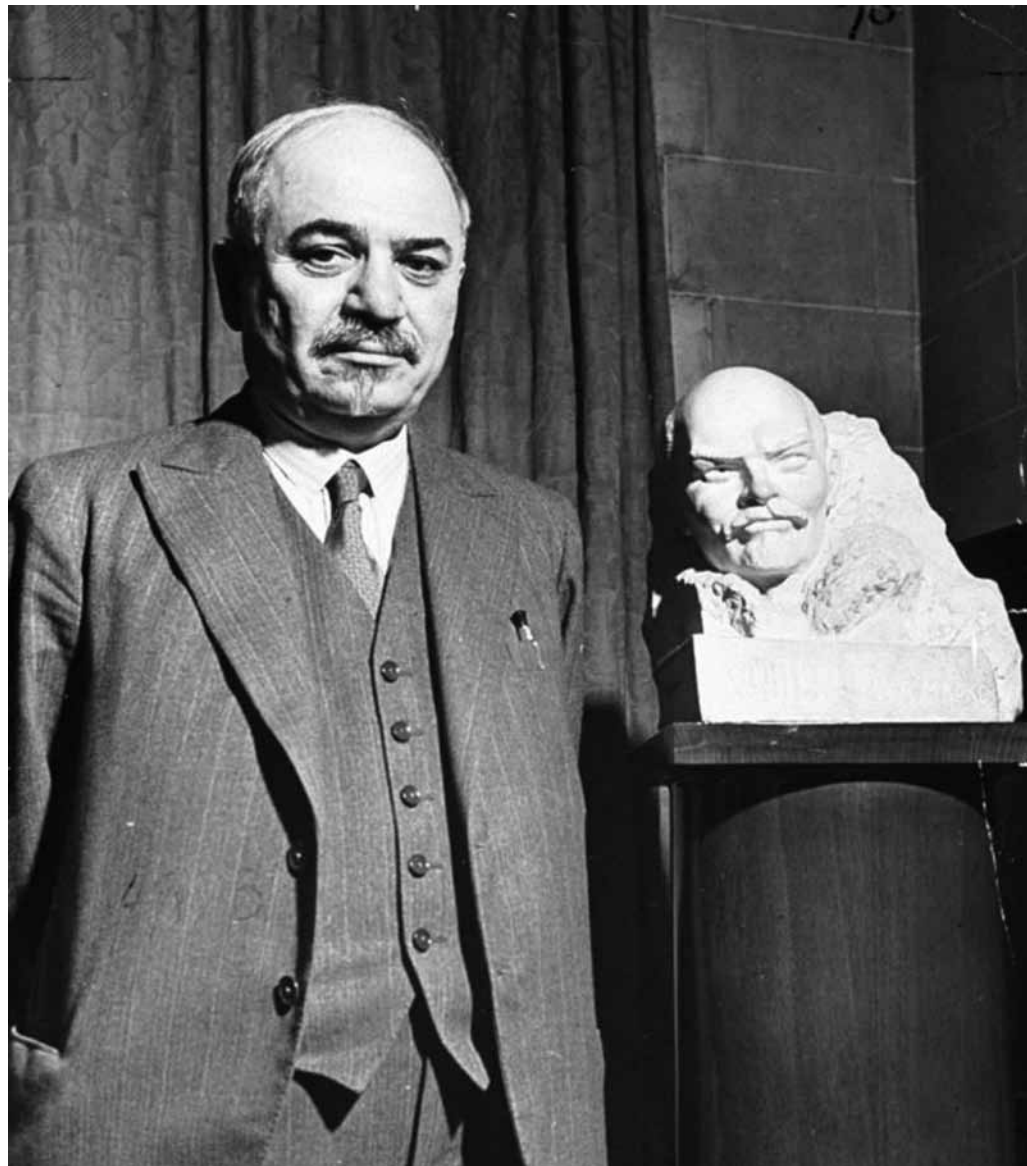
Early life

Her early life was marked by benign parental neglect, the failure of her parents' relationship, and the political activism of her mother. Dorothy's father, Lieutenant Colonel Stevens, was a regular army officer in the West Yorkshire Regiment serving with the British Army in India. It was there that he met and married Dorothy's mother, Lilian. On retiring from the army, Dorothy's father moved to Cannes, but her mother moved to London and became active in politics. She joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and became a Suffragette – political activism which almost certainly influenced her daughter's later involvement in politics. Lilian Stevens' involvement with the Suffragettes (the Women's Social and Political Union – WSPU) and the ILP brought together radical



(above) Independent Labour Party (ILP) badge: Dorothy Eckersley was a member of the ILP for many years, having followed her Suffragette mother, Lilian, into the party.

(right) Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador to the UK, and friend of Dorothy Eckersley. (bottom right) Margaret Bothamley: an extremely active British Nazi, who drew Dorothy Eckersley into pro-German and national socialist politics. Bothamley also broadcast for the Germans during the Second World War, and served a year's prison sentence as a result.



and activist elements in politics that were to attract Dorothy from the 1920s until the 1940s. Although the ILP and militant campaigners for women's rights had shared radical, socialist, origins, it has been argued that under the leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst the militant women's movement moved away from its socialist origins and became an increasingly middle-class movement representing, in Sylvia Pankhurst's view, a form of 'incipient Toryism'. Nonetheless, many Suffragettes had a strong sense of the limitations of Parliament and conventional party politics, preferring a range of direct action tactics that sometimes verged on the terroristic. Similarly, the ILP also greatly distrusted Parliament as a mechanism for bringing about social and economic change.

While her mother was taking part in the struggle for social and political rights, Dorothy attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. The Great War broke out a few months prior to her 21st birthday but she appears to have toured the United States and England with acting companies during the war. She had her first (illegitimate) child following a tour in the USA, and another following an English tour. She opted not to look after either child. Dorothy's first marriage, in 1922, was to Edward Clark, a musician, who became

the Music Adviser to the newly formed British Broadcasting Company (BBC). Their son, James Royston Clark, was born the following year but the marriage was an unhappy one. In 1928, Dorothy separated from Edward and entered into a relationship with Peter Eckersley, a gifted radio engineer, and one of the key figures in the establishment of the BBC. Peter and Dorothy were to have an intense relationship, which eventually cost Peter his post at the BBC.

Marriage, the Independent Labour Party and the future

Peter Eckersley's life was, in many respects, representative of a certain type of 'modern' man in the inter-war period. While still at school, he developed an interest in the new science of radio. During the Great War he served in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) as a wireless officer, rising to the rank of Captain. Although he was officially a non-flying





(top) Lapel badge for 'The Link', one of the pro-German groups that Dorothy Eckersley was active in, having joined it in 1937 following a visit to Germany.

(above) The badge of the Imperial Fascist League, making its politics quite clear.

officer, in order to develop air to ground radio techniques he frequently flew and was shot down and wounded. His experience of war, in particular on the Western Front, influenced his political views in the years to come. Early in 1919 he began work with the Marconi Company. Eckersley was one of the most innovative radio engineers of the period and, as such, was one of a new breed of technocrats. He was at the heart of the BBC's development in the 1920s, and was a key figure in the world of international radio, but his relationship with Dorothy, and his subsequent divorce and marriage to her in 1930, ended his career at the BBC.

Dorothy was already a member of the ILP when she met Peter, and her commitment to the radical socialism of the ILP was an important influence on

the political views of her new husband. Together, this London-based, 'modern', technocratic couple – an actress and a radio engineer – were a class away from the founders of the ILP, who were almost all from the industrial working-class, and predominately from the north of England and Scotland. However, the ILP had a chequered existence after the Great War, being affiliated to the Labour Party, but losing members to the Labour Party's new branches, while discovering that its cherished position as the main party of the left was under threat from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), founded in July 1920. These pressures on the ILP led, under the leadership of Clifford Allen, to reform and change during the period 1922-25. This saw a revival in the ILP's grassroots support, its press and activities. Allen approached rich sympathisers and supporters and was able to attract substantial individual donations. One of those contributing supporters was Sir Oswald Mosley, who gave money and helped purchase a new rotary printing press for the ILP printing works. Mosley represented a new type of ILP supporter – rich, a veteran of the Great War and the RFC, restless, impatient with the slow pace of orthodox Labour and Parliamentary politics, and a supporter of the League of Nations. There were obvious similarities here with Peter Eckersley, and Mosley and Eckersley were to have a close association during the 1930s.

Dorothy effectively ran an ILP 'salon' at her Chelsea home; friends and visitors included Aldous Huxley, J.F. Horabin, Raymond Postgate, John Strachey, and Oswald Mosley. In 1931, Peter Eckersley was invited by the ILP to be its parliamentary candidate for the Leeds North East constituency but, instead of accepting the invitation, Peter followed Mosley into the New Party (NP), Mosley's response to the crisis and the impotence of the Labour government. Peter became the chairman of the NP's London Committee but the 1931 general election saw a massive 'National' government victory with the combined 'National' parties win 554 seats, to the opposition's grand total of 61 seats and the total eclipse of the NP.

Stalinism and a new world

At the height of the post-Crash crisis in Britain, Dorothy became increasingly attracted to the example of the Soviet Union, which seemed to offer more than the parliamentary capitalist societies or the failure of the New Party. She became an avid left-wing cinema

and theatre-goer, a fan of Eisenstein's cinematic genius, and a friend of the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, who persuaded her to attend meetings of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR. Although Dorothy's enthusiasm for the Soviet Union can be seen as further evidence of her personal and political restlessness, it is also an example of many people's search for new solutions to the economic and social problems that beset western parliamentary democracies. In the context of Dorothy's membership of the ILP, her enthusiasm for the Soviet Union was illustrative of the contradictory stresses that ILP supporters were under in the period, an era when CPGB members infiltrated the ILP to subvert its members and the left was in disarray. For Dorothy there may also have been an element of leader worship in her enthusiasm for the Soviet Union, with Stalin as the supposedly visionary and gifted leader battling against reactionary elements towards a bright new utopia. But, in 1935, Dorothy would discover a replacement for the ILP, the USSR, and Stalin.

The attractions of Hitler and Nazi Germany

Still a member of the ILP in 1935, she experienced a political conversion during a summer holiday:

In that year my husband and I went to Germany and we there saw something of the social benefits brought about in that country by the Nazi policy. My husband and I agreed that here we saw things being actually done whereas in England they had only been talking about it.¹

Dorothy returned to England full of enthusiasm for Nazi Germany, Hitler, and National Socialism in general. Although it would be some time before Dorothy joined Nazi and pro-German groups in England, she busied herself reinforcing her view that Hitler was creating a society that was overcoming the economic and social weaknesses of the parliamentary democracies, and she turned her flat into a one-woman information centre on the New Germany. Dorothy's perceptions of Hitler seem to have fallen into the category of almost religious belief in the Nazi leader: 'In 1937, I think, I remember that Unity Mitford said that she had had lunch with him [Hitler] and knew where he was going to have tea. I went with her and my husband to the restaurant and there I gazed upon him'. Her choice of words is fascinating – 'and there I gazed upon him'.

THE
FASCIST

THE
AIM
OF
FASCISM
IS
REALITY.

THE ORGAN OF FASCIST OPINION

PUBLISHED BY THE IMPERIAL FASCIST LEAGUE AT THEIR OFFICE
16, CRAVEN STREET, STRAND, W.C.2.

*"The Game is more than the player of the Game,
and the Ship is more than the Crew."—KIPLING.*

ESTABLISHED 1929. EDITOR AND POLITICAL DIRECTOR—ARNOLD S. LEESE.

FASCISM
LINKS
CAPITAL
WITH
LABOUR
IN THE
NATIONAL
INTERESTS.

No. 57. (THIRD SERIES) FEBRUARY, 1934 PRICE ONE PENNY

Back to the Plough

HOW TO PRODUCE OUR OWN FOOD

NEGATIVE criticism is generally quite easy. However, in the case of Agriculture, sound constructive policy is not hard to conceive nor would it be difficult to operate.

sugar had been exported, made a most useful area of highly productive land ready to serve other purposes more necessary in time of war, so that if only because sugar growing would make

With other crops paying their way, the potato acreage is not likely to be over-subscribed in the manner of late years, and the same may be said of carrots and green stuff generally.

Mussolini and the Money Power

SIGNOR Mussolini in the Italian Senate on 13th January is reported to have condemned "inflation" because he says that wealth cannot be increased by printing paper. That is true enough, but beside the point. The object of relationists is not to increase

(above) The IFL newspaper *The Fascist* edited by Arnold Leese.

(right) Arnold Leese, British Nazi, founder member, and later leader of the Imperial Fascist League (IFL) which Dorothy Eckersley joined in 1938, still regarding herself as a member in 1945.

Following her 1937 German summer, Dorothy returned to England and became more involved in far right politics. That year, she joined 'The Link', and the 'Anglo-German Fellowship'. Dorothy's membership of the Anglo-German Fellowship and The Link is interesting as it shows how a keen enthusiast for Nazi Germany could be found in both a strongly pro-Nazi group like the Link, and in a more pragmatic body like the Anglo-German Fellowship. In The Link, Dorothy was not only part of a much more active, grassroots based organisation, but also met people who would help confirm and strengthen her rightwards shift. The Link was founded in July 1937 by Admiral Sir Barry Domville, former Director of Naval Intelligence, who retired from the Royal Navy in 1936. Domville was a believer in a supposed Jewish-Masonic plot and desired to make The Link a grassroots organisation dedicated to defeating that 'plot' and strengthening Anglo-German ties. Branches were established throughout the UK, and by March 1938 it had nearly 1,800 members rising to around 4,300 by the summer of 1939. One of Dorothy's friends, Margaret Bothamley, became secretary of the inner London branch of The Link in January 1939, and helped preside over its rapid growth to 400 members within a few months. Bothamley was an extremely active Nazi and anti-Semite, a founding member of the Imperial Fascist League (IFL), and an activist in a range of pro-Nazi groups, including the Anglo-German Fellowship, the Nordic League, the Right Club, and the National Socialist League. During the war, she went on to be one of Dorothy's co-broadcasters for German radio. Dorothy later said that it was Bothamley who did most to interest her in Nazi ideas, and probably encouraged her to join the British Nazi group, the Imperial Fascist League in 1938.





Margaret Joyce, wife of William Joyce. Margaret and her more infamous husband met Dorothy Eckersley in Berlin on 28 August 1939. It was Dorothy who put the Joyces in touch with officials who gave both Joyces jobs broadcasting for Germany. Margaret was detained by British authorities after the war, but was never brought to trial. (above) Margaret Joyce in Germany. (left) Margaret at her arrest in 1945.

In addition, Dorothy also supported William Joyce's tiny NSL, and by 1939 Dorothy was firmly ensconced in the world of ultra-right politics. Dorothy had completed her political journey from the far left to the ultra-right. There were sufficient continuities in Dorothy's changed political perspective to enable her to make that transition. It was a transition that was shot through with an impatience with parliamentary government, a belief in radical solutions to the problems of unemployment and economic recession, hostility to international finance, often allied to a belief in monetary reform, and, increasingly a willingness, then an

eagerness, to personify the faults of the liberal-capitalism system on the figure of 'the Jew', who became the hated 'other'.

Broadcasting and trouble

In the summer of 1939 Dorothy left England for Germany to attend the Salzburg festival, and the Nazi Party Rally in Nürnberg. In Germany she arranged for her son, the 16 year old James Clark, to attend school in Berlin. Dorothy had made her choice, even if she did not appreciate just how devastating, and lengthy, the coming conflict would be. Once Germany,

then the USSR, invaded and quickly defeated Poland, Dorothy thought that the apparent end of 'the Polish business' would herald the end of the war. But as it became clear that this was not the case, Dorothy was faced with the problem of how to keep herself and James. Through her political contacts, she was able to find work with German radio on its English language programming. Following her first day's broadcasting on 15 December 1939, Dorothy became a permanent fixture on the airwaves. Indeed, she was the main announcer of programmes being broadcast to Britain, and introduced Margaret and William Joyce, Norman Baillie-Stewart (the original 'Lord Haw Haw'), Jack Trevor, Margaret Bothamley, and her own son, James. For Dorothy, her radio work solved her financial difficulties, but also, particularly in the period prior to the fall of France in the summer of 1940, fitted with her ideological standpoint. She was one of the earliest recruits to the foreign language broadcasting service

of German radio but the Germans were quickly able to gather together a small team of English language broadcasters. The core of the team broadcasting to Britain was made up of over a dozen people, including six women. Dorothy announced other broadcasters, read items herself, and took part in the playlets, and she also undertook archive and translation work.

The rapid collapse of the Belgian, British and French armies in the summer of 1940, and the subsequent Battle of Britain, caused a reassessment of his role and position on the part of Dorothy's son, James. Once the Battle of Britain got underway, then the Blitz, and the idea of a negotiated peace between Germany and the UK dissolved, it was clear that the war had entered a new phase. But, later, after the war, Dorothy made no mention of changing political

addition to this low grade intelligence work, Dorothy continued to broadcast until May 1943, as 'Jeannette' in a series of short plays entitled 'Women to Women'. It was only after an accident, and a period convalescing that, by late 1943, she stopped broadcasting. This therefore left her, once again, with the problem of money, for, although German radio sent Dorothy an ex gratia payment of 1000 marks in July 1943, she feared that it was 'so that they could have a hold over me'. Later that month, a friend of hers told Dorothy she would soon be receiving more money, this time from the Gestapo. This development may well have been the catalyst to Dorothy's failed attempt to get an exit visa to Hungary. Instead, Dorothy began to receive payments which eventually totalled 7000 marks. Matters came to a head towards the end

Dorothy and James each pleaded guilty to the charges of conspiracy to assist the enemy in acts that were likely to aid the enemy through broadcasting. Sentencing them, Mr Justice Humphreys made a clear distinction between the motivations and culpability of Dorothy and James. He said that there was no question that Dorothy was a pronounced pro-Nazi and admirer of Hitler, and she was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment. James, on the other hand, was held, because of his age at the time of the offences and the influence of his mother, not to have been culpable, and was bound over for two years. After her release from Holloway, Dorothy was supported, in part, by Peter Eckersley, and they seem to have met frequently, although they lived apart. There is no evidence that she re-engaged with politics in any way. Instead, she converted to Catholicism and lived near to the Brompton Oratory, eventually dying in 1971.

After the war, Dorothy made no mention of changing political perceptions in her defence.

perceptions in her defence, she simply reiterated that she had only broadcast to find a solution to her money problems. Indeed, her statement to British Army Intelligence that she was a member of the IFL and had not resigned seems to suggest that, at some level, she saw herself, even in 1945, in British hands, as still being a National Socialist. But one thing must have been clear to both mother and son in 1940, and that was, as James stated, they were in a 'position', and one that was shot through with potential danger.

In October 1941, Dorothy was told that she was no longer needed for announcing; instead she was reassigned to correcting the news in English. She believed that this was a result of internal power struggles among the group of English language broadcasters, who appear to have been suffering from the strains of their comparatively isolated lives, and Dorothy's previous friendship with William Joyce had not been enough for her to keep her position. Further, her new job correcting the English news lasted only a week, and she was then made redundant until February 1942, when she was moved to the German Archive Section to read, check and catalogue transmissions by the BBC, and news from British newspapers. Dorothy argued that this job was not much more than a sinecure and, although she claimed that her work was never used, MI5 later regarded it as the most serious of her roles for German radio. But in

of 1944. In October, there was strong pressure from the Propaganda Ministry to get James back to broadcasting and, in December, Dorothy paid back 8000 marks to the Propaganda Ministry. She also maintained that James was totally incapable of broadcasting due to illness. Both actions would help Dorothy's case once Germany was defeated but, in the immediate term, they seem to have pushed the German authorities too far, and as she later explained: 'I was arrested at my house, together with my son, on 24 December 1944 by the Police and the Gestapo and taken to the civil prison at Alexanderplatz.' From there, mother and son were taken to different internment camps in Austria and northern Italy, where the British Army eventually found them, interrogated them and returned them to England.

The Reckoning and after

James was arrested by the police when he arrived at Black Bush airfield in Hampshire at 3.30pm on 31 October 1945, while Dorothy was arrested at Croydon Airport later the same day. They were taken to London, and both charged:

'Between the 3rd day of September 1939, and the 31st day of May 1943, being British Subjects, with intent to assist the enemy, unlawfully did conspire together and with persons unknown to do acts which were likely to assist the enemy and to prejudice the efficient prosecution of the war'. Their trial opened at the Old Bailey on 4 December 1945.

Further Reading

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To booke and pen:

Women, education and literacy in Tudor and Stuart England

Jackie Eales



Queen Elizabeth I, circa 1560
© National Portrait Gallery, London

As a student in the early 1970s, I became acutely aware that formal provision for women's education was a relatively recent development. I was at Bedford College, which originated in 1849 as the first higher education institution for women in the UK. James Allen's, the school I had previously attended, had been founded in 1741 to teach poor boys 'to read and such' and poor girls 'to read and sew', with the implication that they would have had no use for writing. In the mid-eighteenth century education was still strongly class driven and vocational. The poor girls would have wielded their needles in domestic service, in the clothing trade or as housewives. Most likely, they would also have displayed their reading skills by sewing samplers containing the alphabet, an improving motto and a variety of stitches. They would also have been expected to read the Bible.

It was only when I began to teach an undergraduate course on Tudor and Stuart women in the 1990s that I began to think more systematically about the education and literacy of women. I was fascinated by my students' response to the subject, as they were astonished to discover just how modern the concept of a national curriculum is. They were also taken aback by the differences between the education of better-off boys and girls in the early modern period. They knew that girls had been excluded from the grammar schools, the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge and from training for the professions, at the Inns of Court as lawyers for example. They also knew that girls from the higher social classes would have been educated at home by parents, male tutors and female governesses. They were surprised, though, by the scarcity of any formal education for girls and by the reasoning of Tudor and Stuart educationalists that girls had less aptitude for learning than boys.

These discoveries led us into the debates about the development of women's education in the period. Traditionally, the nunneries were seen as centres of female learning outside the home and their closure at the Reformation under Henry VIII was thus seen as a great setback. Yet as long ago as 1922, Eileen Power had argued that only a small proportion of the children of the upper classes had ever been educated by nuns in England. In 1536 the largest such establishment was at St Mary's Winchester, where 26 daughters of 'lords, knights and gentlemen' were being taught in what Power described as 'a fashionable seminary for young ladies'. She argued that there was no evidence that nuns routinely ran day schools for poor children and that the education they did provide was very limited.¹

Very few formal girls' schools were in operation in England in the sixteenth century. Evidence for the existence of girls' schools becomes more plentiful by the reign of James I, when Ladies Hall at Deptford had been set up for the daughters of courtiers. By the mid-century girls' schools had been started in Stepney, Hackney and Putney, and most major cities such as York and Oxford had a girls' academy by the end of the century, but they were all intended for the daughters of the gentry, merchants and professional classes.² Schools for poorer boys



SOVVENT ME SOVVENT



and girls tended to rely on the support of individual teachers and patrons, and were often short-lived.

In his standard work on the Tudor and Stuart periods, David Cressy has argued that the level of women's literacy – the ability to both read and write – was undoubtedly very low before the Reformation. During the next two centuries it grew, but remained significantly below that of men. Using the evidence of signatures, he placed female literacy at only 1% in the reign of Henry VII, increasing to 5% at the accession of Elizabeth and reaching 10% at the start of the civil war. By the accession of George I the figure was 25%, whereas the figure for men was closer to 50%. Cressy attributed the increases in literacy amongst both men and women to what he called the 'push factors' of humanist and protestant ideologies, together with the 'pull' factors created by changing social and economic conditions.³ The growth of towns in the period provided jobs which required a degree of literacy, although women were

particularly drawn to the victualing and retail trades, where an ability to reckon would have been an asset.

The Renaissance and the Reformation have often been seen as driving forces for the spread of literacy in the sixteenth and later centuries. Yet the extent to which humanist learning influenced girl's education has been vigorously challenged, especially by Joan Kelly, who posed the famous question 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?' in the 1970s. The answer from Kelly and others was that there is little evidence in England that women outside elite circles benefited from the advice of humanist educators, who remained stubbornly blinkered to the educational potential of most girls.⁴ The Spaniard, Juan Luis Vives, was one of the most influential authors on the subject in the early sixteenth century. His *Instruction of a Christian Woman* was published in Antwerp in 1523 and was the first printed handbook on female education. It went into nine English editions by 1600 and in it Vives famously argued that

women should not be allowed to teach, because they had 'weak discretion' and would mislead their pupils.

Richard Mulcaster expressed similar views in 1581, when he argued that girls' brains were not so full of weighty ideas and that they were intellectually less able than boys. Like Vives, he advised that girls should be taught to read so that they could learn about religion. This would make them good Christians and also help them to understand and accept their places in relation to individual men and the wider social hierarchy. This advice for the lower orders stands in stark contrast to the praise awarded to women in Tudor court circles, who did receive a humanist education and who were seen as exceptional pupils.⁵

Perhaps the most well known compliment is the comment by Elizabeth I's tutor, Roger Ascham, who described his royal student at the age of 16 in 1550, in a letter to a fellow scholar, as having a masculine approach to her studies – 'the constitution of her mind is exempt from female weakness and she is endued with a masculine power of application.'⁶

As Patricia Crawford has demonstrated, however, the figures are startlingly low. Between 1500 and 1700 less than 2% of all the books published in England were written by women. During one of the most prolific decades of English print culture – the 1640s – women produced only 112 original works in print.⁸

The first woman to go into print seems to have been Henry VII's mother, the formidable Lady Margaret Beaufort, who translated part of Thomas Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* from French into English in 1504. The translation of religious works was seen as a particularly suitable female intellectual pursuit, but Tudor women also published some vigorously original books as well. Anne Askew's highly personal account of her interrogation and torture before her execution as a heretic was smuggled out of the Tower of London and published in 1546 by the religious exile and future Elizabeth bishop, John Bale. Askew was one of only half a dozen or so women burnt as heretics in Henry VIII's reign, because she refused to accept the Roman Catholic theology of the mass.

weakness of women. Eve's defiance of God's command not to take the fruit from the tree of knowledge was seen not only as the origin of sin in man, but contemporaries also thought that it demonstrated women's inability to resist temptation and their weak judgement in comparison with men.

In print, the majority of early Stuart female authors confined themselves to more conventional topics, which were seen as suitable for women. This included books on raising children, which were laced with pious and religious advice. The turning point for female authors came during the civil wars in the mid-seventeenth century, when press censorship broke down and women joined in the religious and political debates of the times. One of the most famous was Anna Trapnel, the daughter of a shipwright and a member of the radical Fifth Monarchist sect, who used her publications describing her visions and prophecies to attack the Cromwellian regime in the 1650s. Quaker women were also very active in print and in 1667 Margaret Fell, the wife of the Quaker

During one of the most prolific decades of English print culture – the 1640s – women produced only 112 original works in print.

Other elite women also benefited from the 'new learning', including Margaret, the daughter of Thomas More, Lady Jane Grey and her sisters and the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke. The household of Henry VIII's last queen, Katherine Parr, was also regarded as a seminary of female humanists. There is evidence that classical learning and the study of history and languages at court did influence the education of girls in some gentry families in the provinces. The learning of royal, aristocratic, and gentry women was not just decorative, it also allowed them to participate in patron/client relationships and gave them a measure of political and religious influence.

Elite women were actively involved in the translation and writing of literary texts and letters, which circulated in manuscript form and there are various projects to collate surviving manuscripts, such as the Perdita Project started at Nottingham Trent University in 1997.⁷ Tracking down women's manuscript writing is a painstaking task and one swifter way of testing whether these court ladies acted as role models for the education of girls is to calculate how many books by female authors were published during the period and to examine the sorts of topics they handled.

She had separated from her husband, a Lincolnshire farmer, over her religious beliefs, which marked her out as a trouble-maker.

In 1589 a pamphlet appeared by an author named Jane Anger, which defended women against the detractions of men. Yet nothing is known about the author and her surname looks suspiciously like a nom de plume that could easily have been adopted by a man out to make money from the lively contemporary debate about the moral and intellectual defects of women! The first identifiable woman to join this debate was Rachel Speght, the daughter of a London cleric, who published *A Mouzell for Melastomus* in 1617. The title of her book roughly equates to *A Muzzle for Black-Mouth* and it was a response to Joseph Swetnam's lively *Arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and unconstant women*, which had appeared two years earlier. Swetnam had attacked disorderly women and praised those who were 'wise, virtuous and honest', while Speght set out to defend women against his specious arguments. Both Anger and Speght had to contend with the widely held belief that the Old Testament story of Adam and Eve held wider truths about the

leader George Fox, published *Women's Speaking Justified*, in which she made the case for women preachers. After the Restoration women began to contribute to a wider range of printed subjects and Aphra Behn, the poet and playwright, became the first English woman to earn her living by writing. Appropriately, she was buried in Westminster Abbey when she died in 1689.

The low proportion of printed works written by women in the Tudor and Stuart periods reinforces Joan Kelly's contention that a formal, humanist education was largely restricted to elite families in the period. So we should undoubtedly look to religion as an alternative 'push' factor in the increase in female literacy at this time. The Reformation, along with the advent of the printing press, provided unprecedented access to the Bible in English, along with a wide variety of other religious reading materials. These included simple catechisms, prayer books and pious guidebooks, which were published in their hundreds of thousands.⁹

The majority of girls continued to be educated within the home and my own research shows that clerical homes in particular became a driving force



Margaret Dutchess of Newcastle.

Published June 1. 1800 by W. Richardson N^o 31 Strand

for spreading girls' education outside elite circles. Adam Martindale, the Lancashire dissenting cleric, described his daughter Elizabeth, who was born in 1647, as being 'bred at home, to her booke and pen'. The clear inference here is that she belonged to a social class where she was expected to be able to write. The Reformation had, of course,

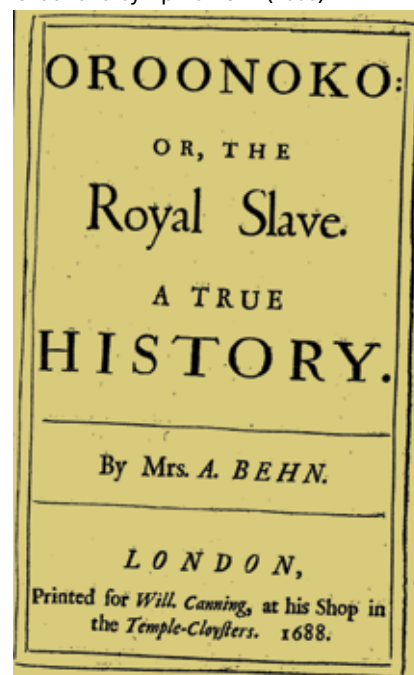
created an entirely new social group in England – the wives and daughters of the clergy. Clerical marriage had been legalised during the reign of Edward VI, but parishioners were slow to accept it. At first, Protestant ministers' wives were regarded by Roman Catholics as 'whores' and their children were derided as bastards. By the early seventeenth

century though, the English clergy were on the offensive and they began to portray their female relatives as paragons of religious piety. Literacy was one of the weapons in this campaign, as women in clerical households, including servants, were expected to be able to read the Bible in order to be good Christians. Wives and daughters, in particular,

Sketch of Aphra Behn by George Scharf from a portrait believed to be lost.



Title page of the first edition of *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn (1688).



in Newcastle in the 1680s. Both women were educated as teenagers, though, by their clerical uncles, and in the case of Astell, her intellectual formation can be traced firmly to the reading regime provided by her uncle. Elstob was less fortunate, because her uncle, a prebendary at Canterbury cathedral, tried unsuccessfully to prevent her from learning French, on the grounds that 'one tongue was enough for any woman'. She and her childhood friend yearned for the chance to learn classical languages like their brothers. Elstob was rescued when her brother became a vicar in a London parish, where he introduced her to his intellectual circle and taught her Latin and Old English. Her subsequent publications on Old English were supported by some of the most notable patrons in government circles, including Queen Anne and her 'premier' minister Robert Harley, the Earl of Oxford.¹²

Astell and Elstob's respective contributions to political debate and antiquarianism demonstrate some of the developments which had taken place in women's education since the reign of Henry VII. They also point forwards to the salons of the 'blue-stockings', whose meetings in fashionable London homes in the 1750s encouraged women to participate in intellectual discussion in mixed social gatherings of men and women.¹³

By 1700 female authors continued to write about appropriate subjects such as religion and advice for children, but they had also entered more contentious debates about the nature of women, politics, education, and moral and scientific philosophy. Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle,

were also encouraged to develop their religious faith by taking notes during sermons, keeping religious diaries, and writing out biblical texts and prayers for future reference.¹⁰

Such women not only had a place as very visible role models in the congregation, they also had a practical influence as well. Some clergy wives provided Bibles for their servants and ensured that they could read them. Wealthier wives, like Margaret the wife of the famed Restoration dissenter Richard Baxter, paid for teachers for local poor children. The wives and daughters of the poorer parish clergy might have to contribute to the family income and teaching was regarded as a highly suitable occupation for them. Theodosia Alleine, the daughter of one dissenting minister and wife to another, was a particularly hard-working example. She recorded that,

when she was first married in 1655, 'I being always bred to work, undertook to teach a school, and had many tablers and scholars, our family being seldom less than twenty, and many times thirty'. Her school also contained fifty or sixty children (most probably both boys and girls) from the town of Taunton where her husband was an assistant to the vicar. Amongst the young people living with them at any one time were five or six young gentlewomen, who were under her own tuition and her husband's 'domestick over-sight'.¹¹

The educational advantages provided by the clerical household are reflected in the intellectual achievements of two women from very similar backgrounds at the end of the seventeenth century. Mary Astell, the Tory political philosopher and Elizabeth Elstob, the first English female Anglo-Saxon scholar, were both born into merchant families

was probably the first writer of either sex to attribute the intellectual differences between men and women to nurture and not nature when she wrote in *The World's Olio* (1653) that 'in Nature we have as clear an understanding as men'.

It was not just women in wealthier circles who had reaped educational benefits. As Cressy's figures at the start of this article suggest, women's literacy rates had increased significantly during the Tudor and Stuart periods. While the 'push' factor of protestant evangelism helped to create this situation, the 'pull' factors of economic and social advantage were also important, as both men and women found that literacy skills were increasingly an asset in the workplace. Furthermore, Cressy's estimates should be regarded as conservative, because the evidence provided by signatures is not particularly secure. Signatures do not provide a complete snapshot of an individual's educational attainment. Some of those who could sign their names might not have been able to read or write at all, while others might have had only limited skills of literacy. Nor does a signature tell us how many men and women could read, but not write. This dark figure probably included a considerable proportion of the poorer population.

At all social levels the education of girls was still conducted largely in the home and above all it was the creation of thousands of clerical households from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, which helped to disseminate educational theories and opportunities to local communities. Perhaps the early modern clerical home deserves to be recognised as the greatest powerhouse of female education and literacy in the period. The protestant clergy had a vested interest in educating their daughters so that they could *both* read and write, and also in marrying women who were literate. This enabled them to argue that their wives and daughters were demonstrably respectable and pious members of society, not whores and bastards, and that they were exemplary role models for other women in the parish. In turn, some clergy wives provided a teacher, or even taught poor boys and girls themselves. The encouragement of female literacy in clerical households became so well established that in later centuries it produced some of our greatest of English authors including, of course, Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters. I am not a great fan of counterfactual history, but it is safe to say that without the Reformation and the revival of clerical marriage, the rise in female literacy noted by Cressy would surely have run a much slower course.



Further Reading

Dorothy Gardiner's *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Women's Education through twelve centuries* (Oxford, 1929) provides a solid introduction to the development of schools and education for girls, although her conclusions are a little dated now. Her work can be supplemented by Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London, 1999), which emphasises the religious training given to girls of all social classes in the period and Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1982), which examines the development of schools and expands on some of the economic and social factors that encouraged literacy raised in this article. Susan Whyman takes some of the issues discussed here into the eighteenth century in *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers 1660-1800* (Oxford, 2009). Gemma Allen's new book *The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2013) investigates newer approaches to women's humanist education and the ways in which it enabled the celebrated Cooke sisters to have a political and religious influence. For all of the women mentioned in this article see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* www.oxforddnb.com which can be accessed via local libraries. My broader views on these women can be found in Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London, 1998).

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- ¹³ Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18th Century Bluestockings* (London, 2008).

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Four faces of nursing and the First World War

Paula Kitching



With the centenary approaching, article after article will appear on battles, the men who fought, those who refused, those that died, those who returned and those that made the decisions. There will be articles on the home front and the women that stepped into the men's shoes often to be expelled from them once the men returned. However, the First World War took more British women to the front of the conflict in an official capacity than any modern war before it. This article explores the experiences of some of those women.

It is the image of Florence Nightingale that is brought to mind in most people's thoughts on war and nurses. Floating around in her long dress, tending to the needs of the brave soldiers whilst lobbying the establishment to change the despicable treatment of the men that fought, Florence Nightingale is an almost mythical figure of campaigning compassionate womanhood. It is true she made a difference, as did her equally daring and courageous contemporary Mary Seacole, to the treatment of those unfortunate enough to be injured during the Crimea war (1853-56). However, perhaps both their most important actions were simply to highlight the appalling realities of the provision of medical care for the injured servicemen at all.

Nightingale was near the Crimea in an official capacity, invited there along with 38 other nurses to tend to the wounded of the Crimean conflict that were evacuated to Scutari Hospital in Istanbul, Turkey. She was part of a changing approach to the treatment of the professional soldier, recruited by the Secretary of State for War and retained by the War Office on her return, she worked within the establishment to improve medical conditions.

The difference that her and her nurses had made, followed by her decision to train and support the field of nursing back in London, had a direct bearing on approaches to medical services in war. She wrote: 'The Introduction of Female Nursing into Military Hospitals' as well as establishing her own training courses. When Nightingale's work reached the ears of Queen Victoria, the monarch responded by setting up the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, Southampton. The hospital opened in 1863 to care for military patients.

The military took the decision that from 1866 nurses should be formally appointed to Military General Hospitals. This was followed by the creation of the Army Nursing Service in 1881. Women recruited to the service served in military hospitals in the UK but were also dispatched to the Boer War in South Africa, Sudan, Egypt and anywhere that a British medical hospital was established.

There was no doubting the impact that professionally trained medical teams of doctors and nurses could have on survival and recovery rates for injured and sick servicemen. Having men recover and return to service was an asset in a professional army where an endless pool of conscripted recruits did not exist. The Royal Army Medical Corps was formed by Royal Warrant on the 23 June 1898. The Director General of the Army Medical Services was Alfred Keogh placed army nursing sisters of the Army Nursing Services onto the war establishment of the Medical Services in 1901. Next in 1902, The War Office officially formed The Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) under a Royal Warrant to replace the Army Nursing Service and the Indian Nursing Service.

In 1902 no national formal qualification for nursing existed, instead there were a mixture of hospital based courses for different types of conditions (after all this is pre NHS), such as general nursing, fever conditions, nurses for children. Training course

(top) The Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) base at Etaples. © IWM (Q 8026)

(centre) The surgical ward at Chateau Mauritian, Wimereux. © IWM (Q 8005)

(bottom) Women of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps in Le Touquet. © IWM (Q 8031)

Vera Brittain as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, 1915.
Courtesy of VB Estate/McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Canada



Vera Brittain and her brother Edward, 1915.
He was killed in Italy in 1918.



varied across the board, despite this QAIMNS nurses were required to have completed three years training before joining, be aged between 25 and 35 years of age, well educated, unmarried and of 'high social status' it was to be an elite service. Members tended to be the daughters of army officers, farmers, clergy, merchants and professional men. The exacting standards made recruitment difficult and in 1908 a QAIMNS Reserve was formed to meet the gaps in home hospitals.

When war broke out in 1914 some of the strict membership conditions were relaxed but in the main the service remained as it always had. The big increase was in the QAIMNS Reserves. At the beginning of August 1914 there were less than 200 members of the reserve available to be mobilised. At the end of 1914 over 2,200 professional nurses from across the UK had joined on yearly contracts with over 12,000 serving as part of the Reserve during the First World War. The yearly contracts were a stipulation by the War Office – not for the women's own professional needs but so that she could be dismissed with the minimal of fuss if the war ended.

When war was declared in August 1914 the numbers of Britain's military land forces were shockingly low compared with those on the continent. Despite the levels of professionalism of those that did exist (and that professionalism was very high and very well respected) it was apparent from the start that new recruits were going to be needed. Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, launched his mass drive for volunteers resulting in Kitchener's army.

Even before 1914 it was apparent that if a full scale land war was to break out involving British troops, additional

support would be needed. In 1909 the 'Scheme for the Organisation of Voluntary Aid in England and Wales' was set up by the War Office with a similar scheme established in Scotland at the end of the year. This created male and female Voluntary Aid detachments to support territorial medical services. The VAD's were organised and trained by the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Association. Even before war broke out the units had become popular with 1823 female detachments and 551 male ones. Once war started the VAD's were formally under the Joint War committee of the British Red Cross and St John of Jerusalem. Professional medical support including nurses was going to be a key element of the support and supply train of Britain's approach in this conflict.

The women volunteers came with a variety of skills and ages, although most would be described as being middle class, with some upper class volunteers. The majority had never been in paid employment, yet, despite this they went on to staff hospitals and other auxiliary units. The thousands of women in the military hospitals at home and overseas provided the face of home and peacetime to many of those injured. They carried out basic nursing support and in some cases with experience advanced surgical support and care, but they also spent time with patients, writing letters for those unable to and providing comfort to those who needed to share the horror of what they had seen and been part of.

For many women becoming a VAD meant being able to 'do their bit' just as their brothers, fathers, uncles, sweethearts and sons were. In whatever capacity they served they

were often required to face the reality of the conflict, stripped of romance and idealism in a way that they had not been expecting. They were at the front line both physically and emotionally.

Vera Brittain

Perhaps the most famous of the VAD nurses was the writer Vera Brittain. Vera Brittain was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1893 to a wealthy family. She was educated at boarding school and went to Somerville College, Oxford University, to study English Literature. In the summer of 1915 after one year at Oxford she delayed her degree to become a VAD nurse, serving throughout the war in London, Malta and France. She is perhaps typical of the VAD profile: well bred, educated and with no practical experiences outside of the home environment and yet she knuckled down and got on with the long hours, in difficult conditions, to treat the horrific wounds that are the nature of battle.

During the war she kept a diary and a regular correspondence with her brother Edward Brittain MC, her fiancé Roland Leighton and her two close friends Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow. In 1916 she wrote to her brother that: 'If the war spares me it will be my one aim to immortalise in a book the story of us four.' Her fiancé had already been killed by that time. In her correspondence and her memoir *Testament of Youth* she is honest in her description of the hard work her role entailed and the terrible sacrifice that she saw by men and women around her.

She records the experience of near fainting when faced with a gangrenous wound and of the injustice of doctor shortages at a time that the War Office

Cavell in the garden with her two dogs before the outbreak of the First World War. © IWM (Q 32930)



was refusing the offer of women doctors joining up.

In the end Vera was the only one of the five to survive. Both the experiences of loss and her own experiences as a nurse left an incredible mark upon her. Her poems reflect her feelings and the realities of conflict just as the male war poets did.

But still the stars above the camp
shine on,
Giving no answer for our sorrow's ease,
And one more day with the Last Post
has gone,
Dying upon the breeze.

*Taken from the 'Last Post' from the
Verses of a V.A.D. Etaples 1917.*

The work that for many defined the loss of a generation *A Testament of Youth* was published in 1933 after many years of trying to grapple with the war years. It is a remarkable memoir of that time, recording the suffering that she and others encountered and continued to live with.

Her first-hand experience of war made her into a lifelong pacifist, a champion for women's rights and a political campaigner. Although she did marry, her relationship was always under the shadow of the loss of her three friends and her brother. When she died in 1970, her daughter Lady Shirley Williams (the former Labour, SDLP and Liberal Democrat MP) scattered her ashes on the grave of Vera's brother wartime grave in Granezza British Cemetery, Italy as had been her wishes –

A group photograph showing Nurse Edith Cavell (seated centre) with a group of her multinational student nurses whom she trained in Brussels. © IWM (Q 70204)



in death she returned to the era that had marked her forever.

Edith Cavell

One of the best known nurses at the time of the First World War and for the years immediately following it was Edith Cavell. Edith Cavell was a vicar's daughter born on 4 December 1865 in Norfolk. Educated privately, she adopted much of her family's religious devotion. In her twenties Edith worked as a governess living for a time with a family in Belgium. When her father became ill in 1895 she returned home to help tend him. At the age of 30 she decided to train as a nurse.

She trained in London and spent some time in hospitals in Maidstone and Manchester. In 1907 Edith went to Belgium to work for a Doctor who wanted to professionalise nursing there (up till then the majority of nursing was still carried out by nuns in Belgium). Edith was involved with the training of new nurses and by 1912, was providing nurses for three hospitals, 24 communal schools and 13 kindergartens. She was also lecturing on nursing to all sections of the Belgian medical community.

She was in Norfolk on holiday when Germany invaded Belgium but she returned immediately to her hospital which was quickly converted into a Red Cross Hospital, for German as well as Belgian soldiers. When Brussels was captured the hospital became a German military hospital – 60 English nurses were sent home, but Edith Cavell and her chief assistant Miss Wilkins remained. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was now in action in Belgium as part of the push back against the Germans.

The autumn of 1914 saw heavy fighting. A number of British soldiers found themselves behind enemy lines

and made their way to the hospital – realising that Edith was British they appealed for help. With the help of the Belgian resistance Edith became part of an underground network helping to smuggle Allied servicemen out of German occupied Belgium and out to Holland.

In August 1915 a Belgian collaborator gave Edith and the network away to the Germans (the man was later caught and charged by the French). No incriminating papers were found but the network had been revealed and on 5 August Edith was arrested.

She was held and interrogated for 10 weeks and kept in solitary confinement. Eventually she was tricked into admitting everything, having been told that the others had already confessed.

Her confession made the charge of treason easy. On 11 October she was put on military trial and along with a named Belgian accomplice, Philippe Baucoq, she was pronounced guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad. The sentence was carried out in the early hours of the next day.

It is estimated that Edith helped approximately 200 Allied servicemen to escape. She believed that her actions were part of her responsibility as a nurse; not to have helped them would have put the soldiers' lives in danger.

From the moment of her arrest Edith became a famous martyr figure. The British authorities decided not to lobby on her behalf claiming that they would only make the situation for her worse. The Americans and Spanish, though, were horrified that a woman nurse had been arrested and was being interrogated. They campaigned tirelessly for her, writing letters to the German authorities and the newspapers. The American official in Belgium, Brand Whitlock, stayed up half the night of the

Flora Sandes returned to London to raise funds for medical supplies, after only six weeks Flora's country-wide tour had yielded more than £2,000.
Courtesy of Julie Wheelwright, Oxford University Press.

11/12 of October trying to get a stay of execution.

On the night before her execution an English Chaplain, Stirling Gahan was allowed in to see her. He reported her as being calm and reflective he also reported her last words:

Standing as I do in view of God and Eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough, I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.

Across Britain, France and the USA the execution of a Red Cross nurse who had been 'helping' people seemed appalling to the public. To the authorities and the media it became a powerful tool of propaganda about the viciousness of the Germans. Edith took on a heroine like status especially when her last words were publicised. Visit a French Museum with a collection from the period such as the Historial de la Grande Guerre, Péronne, Somme Battlefields, France and you will see on display some of the merchandise produced after her death celebrating her as a sacrificed heroine.

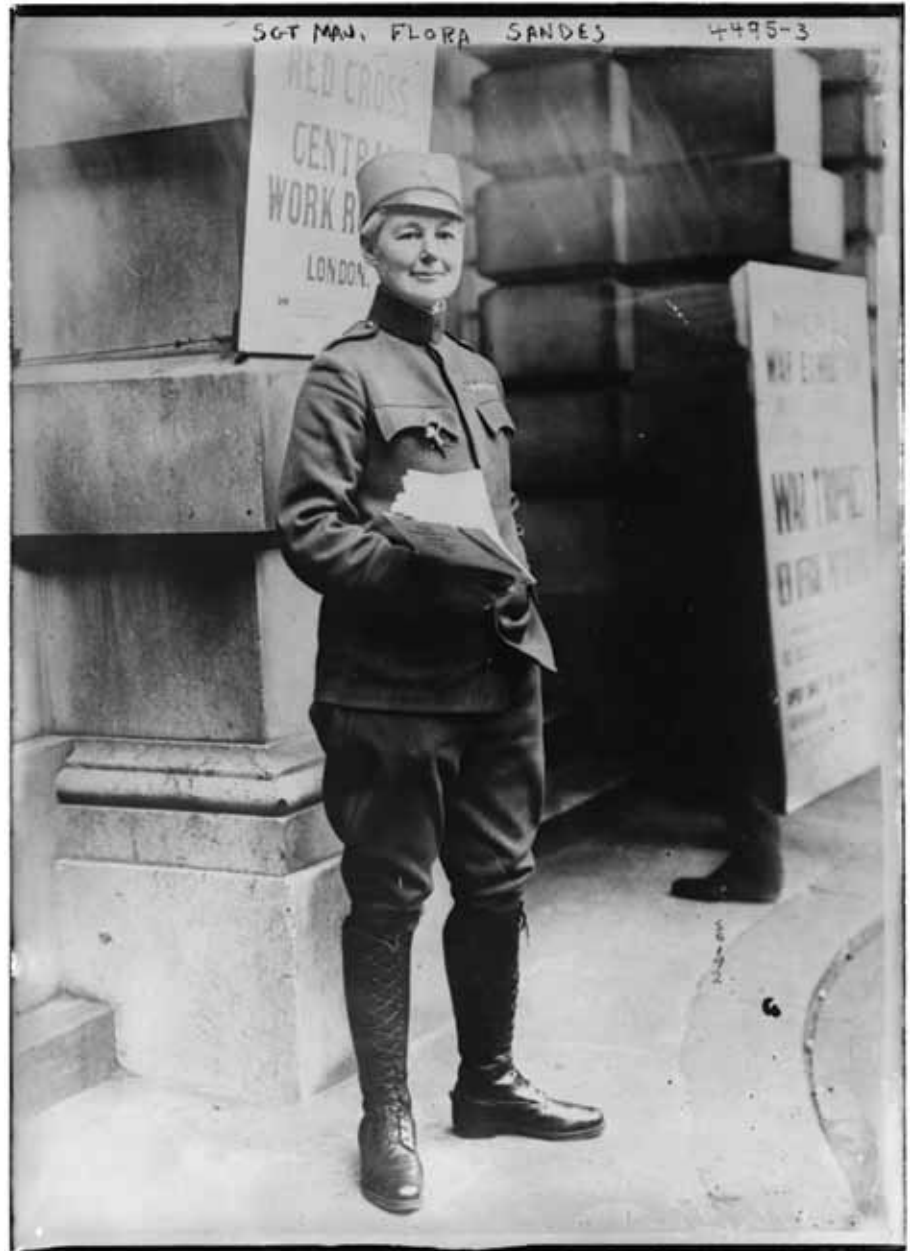
Her body was buried near to where she was shot but at the end of the war it was returned to England and she is buried in Norwich Cathedral. A statue to Edith Cavell is outside Norwich Cathedral and in central London. Her family set up a trust to create care homes for nurses to recover from their experiences, especially of war. The Cavell Nurses Trust still exists to this day.

Flora Sandes

Another daughter of a clergyman propelled into nursing had a very different experience from that of Edith Cavell.

Flora Sandes was born on 22 January 1876 in Nether Poppleton, Yorkshire. Her father was a clergyman, originally from Ireland and as a child her family moved around to different religious postings. She was educated by a governess and always something of a 'tomboy' for her time – enjoying riding and shooting. In her spare time she trained with the Ladies' Nursing Yeomanry. Immediately at the outbreak of the First World War she volunteered to become a nurse, but her lack of qualifications meant she was turned down.

Undeterred, she joined a St John's Ambulance unit organised by an American and left England for Serbia on 12 August 1914. The intention was to help with the humanitarian crisis there which had happened as the Austrians, with their Balkan allies, had caused as they attacked Serbia, a key part in triggering the whole conflict.



Once in Serbia Flora Sandes joined the Serbian Red Cross. She returned home to England for a time in 1915 but decided to return, reaching Serbia again in early November 1915. Despite warnings from many not to travel into Serbia especially from the British consul in the area, Flora made her way to an ambulance unit and worked for the Second Infantry Regiment of the Serbian Army. Conditions were already difficult with disease causing as many deaths to the Serbian forces as battle injuries. Serbian forces were under-equipped, relying on the limited support of their allies for military supplies.

By the end of November 1915 the Serbian Army was under attack from the Austro-German and Bulgarian forces. Flora along with large sections of the Serbian army retreated into Kosovo and the Albanian mountains. In her book *An English Woman Sergeant in the*

Serbian Army she describes an offer by the English consul to be evacuated to Salonika just as the retreat is occurring, but instead decides to stay with her Serbian colleagues. She then goes on to describe how she checks with the Serbian military that she is travelling with, if as a woman she will cause more of an anxiety for them than a help. The response she records is:

For them it would be better if I stopped, because it would encourage the soldiers, who already knew me, to whose simple minds I represented, so to speak, the whole of England. The only thought that buoyed them up at that time and still does, was that England would never forsake them.

Whilst travelling through the mountains in the severe winter conditions with Bulgarian soldiers on



the attack, Flora formally became part of the Serbian forces. Armed and dressed in riding breeches, then uniform, she became part of the army, fighting in battles and roughing it in makeshift shelters.

On her first arrival in Serbia Flora did not speak the language but as she travelled with her new colleagues she picked it up as well as a great many of their customs. The experience of the retreat and living as a soldier provided her with a remarkable insight:

Before when I had been working in the hospitals, and I used to ask the men where it hurt them, I had often been rather puzzled at the general reply of the new arrivals, "Sve me boli" ("Everything hurts me"), it seemed such a vague description and such a curious malady; but in these days I learnt to understand perfectly that they meant by it, when you seem to be nothing but one pain from the crown of your aching head to the soles of your blistered feet, and I thought it was a very good thing that next time I was working in a military hospital I should be able to enter into my patients feelings and realise that all he felt he wanted was to be let alone to sleep about a week and only rouse up for his meals.

Flora and her company along with thousands of the retreating Serbians were eventually evacuated to Corfu for some time before returning to Serbia. It would have been perfectly possible from there for her to leave and return to Britain, instead she remained part of the Serbian forces having risen to the rank of corporal.

Once back in Serbia she remained a fighting member of her regiment until during a serious battle for the Serbians to regain Bitola (Monastir) in 1916, when she was seriously wounded by a grenade. Flora had been engaged in hand to hand combat at the time of her injury and received the highest decoration of the Serbian military, the Order of the Karadorde's star, she was also promoted to Sergeant Major.

That year she also published her autobiography *An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army*, based on her letters and diaries. She published it to raise money for the Serbian Army. Her injury had left her unable to fight and she was reassigned to running a hospital, with a return to nursing. At the end of the war she was commissioned as an officer (the first woman to be commissioned). She didn't leave the Serbian army until October 1922.

Flora married a fellow officer Yuri Yudenitch, in May 1927. She was recalled

along with her husband to military service in 1941 but the German invasion was too swift for them to take part. Her husband died in September 1941. Flora spent the last years of her life in Suffolk and died there in November 1956, her obituary was in *The Times* newspaper. Flora's autobiographies do not paper over the hardships she experienced but neither do they concentrate on gory details. Instead she tells a remarkable tale of fortitude, determination and loyalty to a group of men and a nation that she had adopted and appears to have adopted her. Starting in nursing she travelled a long road to be the only British woman formally accepted as a fighting soldier in a military unit.

Nellie Spindler

However, the story of Flora Sandes is very much the exception and not the usual story of nursing, and some would argue not formally a nurse at all.

For the last real figure it is a return to those who went as part of the inherited tradition of Nightingale – a member of the QAIMNS, a young woman called Nellie Spindler.

Nellie was born in Wakefield in 1891 into an ordinary family. Her father was a policeman who had risen to the rank of inspector before the war. She decided upon a career in nursing and trained

at the Township Infirmary, Leeds from 1912 to 1915. After her training she responded to the growing call of people to volunteer for the war effort and joined the QAIMNS Reserves. She served as a Staff Nurse at Whittington Military Hospital, Litchfield, from November 1915 until May 1917.

In May 1917 she was sent to a Casualty Clearing Station in Flanders. A Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) was a

treating the large number of casualties that the battle created. However, the CCS that she was at was close to the transport supply lines and became a target for the German bombardment. On 24 August 1917 the CCS was hit by enemy fire and a number of nurses were injured, including Nellie. After about 20 minutes she died of her injuries. The CCS was packed up and all members evacuated to the site of Lijssenthoek CCS hospital and now

the established world. Many returned to civilian life physically injured and mentally scarred by their experiences, for most there was no time to discuss what they had been part of – everyone had done their bit. The role of women in conflict and in civilian life was changed forever by the First World War. Those women and their actions would influence the next generation of young women who would recognise that,

Of course these four women Vera, Edith, Flora and Nellie are just a fragment of the women's nursing story of the First World War.

mobile medical station close to the front line. It was there that casualties were removed to straight from the battlefield and would be given whatever medical attention was available. Depending on the size and permanency of the site, this could be anything from a rudimentary treatment to full surgical operations. A CCS could be forced to pack up and move with little notice if it came under fire or was required to be in a different position. Usually the CCS would be made of tents and makeshift buildings.

As time went on and some of the battlefronts became more permanent some CCS had more permanent structures and formed part of a more complex medical system of care and treatment before the sick and injured were evacuated further back behind the line. Most CCS were often marked not just by their tents but by the small burial ground that was inevitably created next to them. For the modern day visitor to the battlefields of the Western Front, many of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries that now exist are there as a result of being on the site of a former CCS.

The staff of a CCS were a mixture of medical (surgical) male doctors from the RAMC, nurses – female and orderlies, or VAD's. Some lived close to the site, billeted in tents whilst others might be put up in the nearest town or village and be expected to travel to their shift each day.

The CCS were often very close to the front line and officially this was one of the closest places to the front a woman could be stationed.

A number of CCS existed on the approach to the town of Ypres, Belgium, a site of some of the fiercest fighting of the whole of the First World War. It was in one of these (now the site of Brandhoek CWGC cemetery) that Nellie went to serve in May 1917. She was there as the third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) began in July 1917,

CWGC cemetery. With no time to bury the dead, Nellie's body along with the other casualties was taken with them.

Nellie was buried at Lijssenthoek with a full military funeral, including the Last Post played over her grave. Just like every other confirmed death in the conflict, her family were informed by telegram from the War Office that she was 'Killed in Action'. She had an obituary in her local paper and in the *British Journal of Nursing*. Nellie was 26 when she was killed.

Today her grave is one of 10,755 graves at Lijssenthoek CWGC cemetery, the only woman to be buried there. Although very few nurses were actually killed in action so close to the front (she is only one of two buried in Belgium), it doesn't take away from the very real danger that they faced in their role as a nurse serving overseas in the First World War.

Back home in England Nellie's death was a very clear reminder of how the war was an all-encompassing beast. Men and women were its victims and all would pay the price either physically with their lives or with their battle-scarred futures.

Of course these four women: Vera, Edith, Flora and Nellie are just a fragment of the women's nursing story of the First World War. Over 90,000 women served as VAD's over the course of the war, over 12,000 with QAIMNS and its reserves, 8,140 as part of the Territorial Force Nursing Service and thousands more as Assistant Nurses, Special Military Probationers and volunteers. The experiences of the women who served so close to the front lines in any number of capacities such as nurses, drivers, office clerks and cleaners for military quarters have all been overlooked, overshadowed by the statistics of the men that served and never returned.

Yet these women were valuable eyewitnesses to a war that changed

although women were far from being considered equal they no longer wanted to be ignored.

The experience of the women so close to the front line deserves a stronger presence in remembering the First World War and in the research that the centenary should provoke.

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Paula Kitching is an historian, writer and educational consultant with historical specialisms in war, genocide and cultural history. She has written for educational publications, books, museums, and website publication and is a speaker and lecturer for schools groups and adult education. Current freelance work includes: The Historical Association ; The London Jewish Cultural Centre and Rayburn Tours. She has previously worked with the DfES and The Royal British Legion. She is also an experienced battlefield guide.

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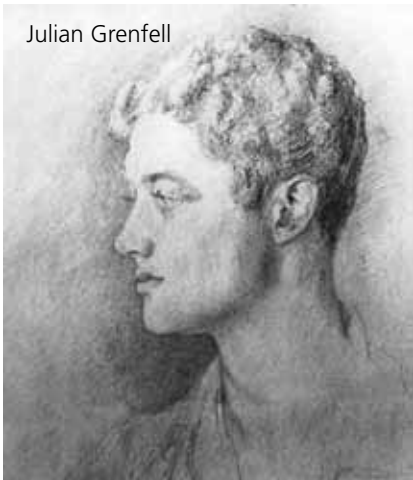
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Readings: poetry of Siegfried Sassoon read at his grave. Letters home from Julian Grenfell, Ego and Yvo Charteris, Raymond Asquith, Edward Horner, John Manners.

Tour Leaders : Professor Anthony Fletcher and Mr Niall Campbell

The tour is offered at £750 per person sharing a twin/double room with a single supplement of £155 to include coach transport throughout (from Victoria Station), 3 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation in 4 star hotels, 3 lunches, a full programme of visits led by Professor Anthony Fletcher and Mr Niall Campbell and all entrance charges.

For a full brochure and booking form please contact Penny Withers at Heritage Group Travel, penny@grouptravel.co.uk, telephone 01225 466620 The holiday is organized by Heritage Group Travel. Your contract is with Heritage Group Travel, a member of ATOL, AIT and ABTOT

The Pearl of The Indian Ocean

Monday 1 to Tuesday 16 September 2014



An innovative tour to the Northern and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka [off-limits to tourists for nigh-on 30 years] will be led by the Johnstons using well-respected Executive Travel Group of St Johns Hill, SW11.

Denied to visitors for so long, experienced English-speaking guides will happily introduce Sri Lanka's 3,000 years of history, with its important strategic position, its diverse religions and languages, united with the common thread of British heritage. Even those who know Sri Lanka will find this a wholly-captivating experience in an ambitious programme of exploration of its ancient two capitals, Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura, the former RN Trincomalee dockyard, the Jaffna Peninsula, Kanniya's 7 hot springs and the great Jetavana Dagoba, taller than all

but two of Giza's. For those unfamiliar, there is the possibility of a reasonably-priced 3-day add-on in the South.

This is, for example, the second day of the Jaffna Town tour on Friday 5 September 2014 when we shall visit most of the main highlights of this atmospheric town; it is also justly famous for its food, lunch being included in an excellent restaurant to sample wholesome Tamil food. Traditional-walled houses around courtyards with notable ornate decorations lead to the Rosarian Convent (try the sisters' wine!) St. Mary's Cathedral, the Vaddukoddal Portugese church and the war-scarred fort are only equalled by the numerous Hindu temples. There we shall visit the Nallur Temple to make puja [prayer] before pausing at a justly-famous ice-cream parlour.

Due to the limited amount of hotel accommodation in the Northern and Eastern areas of Sri Lanka, application should be made to: philip@johnston1962.co.uk as soon as possible.

Cost is £2,342 for Dinner, Bed & Breakfast for 16 days and an additional cost of £383 per person (B&B) for add-on for three nights. The number of single rooms is strictly limited, dependent upon numbers, and preparedness to share would be both cheaper and appreciated!

The holiday is organized by Experience Travel Group. Your contract is with Experience Travel Group, a member of ATOL, AIT and ABTOT.

Northern Ireland

23 September to 29 September 2014



Join Edward Towne and Charles Linfield for a 7 day tour to Northern Ireland, based at Belfast's Europa Hotel. Including an initial orientation tour of Belfast, visits to the City Hall and Opera House, the Cathedral Quarter and the newly opened exhibition called "the Titanic Experience". We shall also see Glenarm Castle with its walled garden, the Giant's Causeway and Bushmills Old Distillery. Further visits will be paid to the Ulster Museum, to Mount Stewart House and Gardens and to Hillsborough Castle (subject to availability). Beyond the Belfast area we will also see Castle Coole and Florence Court in the Enniskillen region, Armagh with its two cathedrals, and the walls and murals of Londonderry. On the final day we shall enjoy the Linen Hall Library in Belfast before flying home.

The provisional price of £725 (single supplement £150) includes 6 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation, 2 dinners, 1 lunch, all coach transport within the Province, guides in Belfast, Armagh and Londonderry and all entrance charges. Flights to Belfast are not included.

For further details please contact Charles Linfield at: "Southfields", Bakers Road, Wroughton, Swindon, SN4 0RP, Tel: 01793 812464, email: linfield245@btinternet.com

Heritage Group Travel of Bath hold the contract and are fully protected by AITO and ABTOT.

My Favourite History Place

Sutton Hoo: A Secret Uncovered, A Mystery Unsolved



Sutton Hoo is a sandy heathland overlooking the estuary of the River Deben in Suffolk. In Old English a 'hoo' is a promontory, 'sutton' is southern, and 'tun' is a settlement. Historians have known for years that the fields were farmed in the Iron Age, but what, if anything, lay beneath a cluster of grassy mounds remained a secret for at least 1,300 years.

Mrs Edith Pretty who owned the Estate in the 1930's lived at Tranmer House. She was interested in archaeology and was also a spiritualist. One evening she looked out of her drawing-room window and vowed ghostly warriors were standing on the mounds. Ipswich Museum agreed to send an archaeologist to start excavations in the summer of 1938.

Basil Brown uncovered a few cremation mounds and another which showed traces of a ship and a few belongings but evidently the rest had been looted. At Mrs Pretty's suggestion, Brown turned to the largest mound, where slowly the impression of a sailing ship was revealed, its shape clearly outlined by rusty iron ship-rivets. Digging deeper Brown discovered a burial chamber in which there was no skeleton, which presumably had disintegrated in the acid soil, but the empty coffin was surrounded by possessions, apparently undisturbed.

The task of extricating the finds was entrusted to a team of experts from the British Museum led by Charles Phillips. As weapons, armour, utensils, gold ornaments inlaid with garnets came to light, Charles Phillips was stunned – all he could say was 'godfathers!' In a little over a week, only days before the outbreak of World War Two, the finds, ranging from about 40 gold ornaments to bits of hand-woven cloth, had been recorded, photographed, and packed ready to be sent to London where they were stored for safety in the Underground. Meanwhile a Suffolk jury decreed the treasures were not treasure trove but the property of Mrs Pretty who generously gave them to the British Museum for permanent display. After she died in 1942 the Estate was run by the Annie Tranmer Trust until 1988 when the trustees donated it to the National Trust.

On my first visit soon after the site was opened to the public I had to leave my car by the roadside and walk quite a long way to a small reception building. There was nothing to stop me actually climbing on the mounds – an awesome experience!

By the time I went back to Sutton Hoo in 2012 I found everything had changed. Our coach drove up to the car park from which a path had been constructed for visitors to walk to the mounds and survey them from a viewing point. I spent most of my time in two buildings constructed in Scandinavian style, in keeping with the environment. One is the Reception, shop and restaurant where I enjoyed lunch. The other was an Exhibition Hall.

Here was a comprehensive display of photographs, a few original finds, and models including a reconstruction of the burial chamber. Even more impressive was an array of replicas from the Treasure – in pride of place the painstakingly crafted ceremonial helmet. I admired, among many



items, the jewelled image of an eagle on the shield, massive gold buckle decorated with serpents, purse lid with gold plaque inlaid with garnets and millefiore glass and one of a pair of shoulder-clasps decorated in the same way – the original worth over £40,000 in today's money.

Before leaving I looked briefly into Basil Brown's hut before visiting the delightful Edwardian Tranmer House.

Finally, for whose burial was a 27 metre sea-going vessel dragged up from the River Deben? Chief contender is Raedwald, a powerful Anglo-Saxon king of East Anglia. In support of his claim are utensils inscribed in Greek 'Saulos' and 'Paulos.' Raedwald became a Christian when visiting King Ethelbert in Kent although he reverted to paganism on his return. Also he died about 625AD and Frankish coins in the grave date from this time.

'The King in the Car Park' was identified without doubt as Richard III by DNA tests not possible at Sutton Hoo. We shall never know with any certainty whether Raedwald was 'The King of the Ghost Ship.' We do know for certain, however, that the discovery of the richest burial chamber ever found in this country contributed enormously to our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon way of life.

Rosemary Hunter is a former history teacher and a long-standing member of the HA. Since her retirement in 1982 she has been a volunteer with the National Trust.

If you would like to tell us about your history place in a future edition of *The Historian*, in about 700 words, please email: alf.wilkinson@history.org.uk

Lady Brilliana Harley in ten tweets

Summarising an event or person using ten statements of only 140 characters (including spaces!). Compiled by Paula Kitching



-  Brilliana Harley b.1598 at the English garrison at Brill, NL. Her father 1st Viscount of Conway & of Killultagh was lieutenant-governor.
-  In July 1623 she became the third wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Herefordshire. The couple had 3 sons and 4 daughters.
-  Literate, c. 375 letters written to her husband & to her eldest son survive, revealing her domestic life & her role in local politics.
-  She was devoutly Puritan. Sir Robert was an MP & her letters to him show she supported plans to completely reform the church.
-  A staunch Parliamentarian; in the summer of 1642 she tried to buy arms on Parliament's behalf and had 50 soldiers defending her home.
-  Herefordshire was royalist during the Civil War. March 1643 she received a formal demand to surrender Brampton Bryan Castle. She refused.
-  The royalists besieged the castle for 7 weeks. Throughout she conducted negotiations by letter, parley, and a petition to the king.
-  She noted '*I have the law of nature, of reason, and of the land on my side and you none to take it from me*'. The royalists left, she won.
-  Respected by her soldiers. She ordered them to attack a royalist camp 4 miles away & their captain wrote '*her equal I never yet saw*'.
-  The siege damaged her health. Just before she died 29 Oct 1643, wrote '*in this worke I have not thought my life deare, neather shall I*'.

Follow the HA on Twitter @histassoc

HA Annual Conference

16 & 17 May 2014
Stratford-upon-Avon



Early bird tickets will be going on sale in December look out for these and also for the chance to nab one of our limited tickets to Henry IV Part I at the RSC on Friday 16 May. It should be an amazing performance with Anthony Sher as Falstaff!

We have 50 tickets available for conference attendees if you want to ensure your name is on the waiting list, please email Abi: Abigail.luter@history.org.uk with the subject header: Stratford 2014 Tickets or call on 020 7735 3901

The full programme for 2014 will be posted in January but will be available on our website in December.

Staff changes at 59a

Suzannah Stern will be taking maternity leave from mid-September 2013. Many of you have had contact with Suzannah over the years and I know you will join me in wishing her all the best.

In Suzannah's absence **Abigail Luter** will be the first point of contact for Branch Officers and Conference. Abigail joined us in August as Administrative Assistant having graduated in Classical History from Royal Holloway in 2012. Abigail will also be assisting **Emily Randall** in Membership. Emily joined as our Membership & Marketing Officer in late April. Emily also studied Classical History (at Durham) and has a MA in Museum Cultures. Until recently Emily was working for Merton Council. We are delighted to have both Emily and Abigail on our team at 59a.

In the last couple of months we have also said goodbye to **Janine Anolue**. Janine's work has been massively appreciated in getting out database cleaned, sorting out our membership handbook and generally helping to organise member marketing alongside Anne-Marie. Janine will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best with her future career.

Contribute to *The Historian*

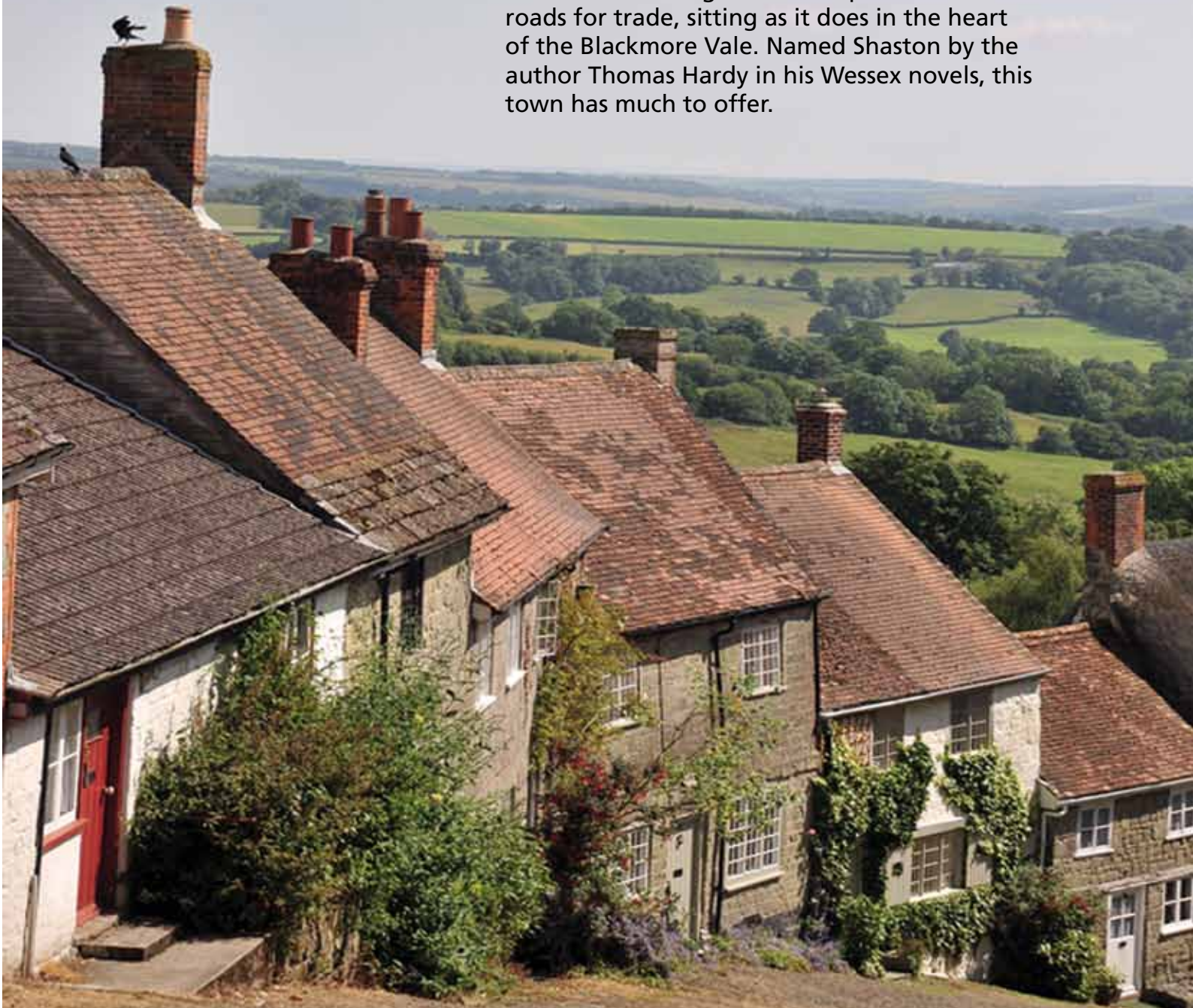
Through the years commemorating the First World War we will be running a series of articles and short pieces on different aspects of war, the impact of war on local communities, social life and family life and the legacy of war. If you have a local or family story you would like to submit for publication please send us a brief outline. If you wish to submit a longer article, please send us no more than 500 words outlining your proposal.

Email submissions to thehistorian@history.org.uk or post to: The Editor, The Historian, 59a Kennington Park Road London SE11 4JH We cannot guarantee publication of all submissions in The Historian.

Out and About in Shaftesbury

Carole Dorran

Shaftesbury in North Dorset is one of the highest towns in England, standing as it does at 750 feet above sea level. As with many high points in the area, the first settlement was established around 8000 years ago in the middle of the Stone Age. The town went on to become hugely important during Medieval times and has long been an important cross roads for trade, sitting as it does in the heart of the Blackmore Vale. Named Shaston by the author Thomas Hardy in his Wessex novels, this town has much to offer.





St Peter's Church and the Town Hall, Shaftesbury.

Its first record as a town is written in the Burghal Hidage, when Alfred the Great, Saxon King, founded a burgh-or fortified settlement-in 880 AD as a defence against Viking invaders. But Shaftesbury really came to prominence when King Alfred established an abbey in the town, placing his daughter Ethelgiva as the first Abbess. It became the wealthiest Benedictine nunnery in England, owning land and property from Purbeck in the south to Bradford-on-Avon in the North. Athelstan founded three royal mints, producing pennies that bore the town's name. In 981, the relics of King Edward, who was murdered at Corfe Castle, were transferred from Wareham and were received at Shaftesbury Abbey with great ceremony, turning the town into an important place of pilgrimage for miracles of healing at his shrine. In 1001, he was canonised and became St Edward the Martyr. In 1035 King Canute, who was a regular visitor to Shaftesbury Abbey, died while in the town, though he isn't buried there. In the Domesday Book the town was known as *Scaeptherbyrg* with its ownership equally shared between king and abbey. In 1240, Cardinal Otto, legate to the Apostolic See of Pope Gregory IX, made a visit to the abbey and confirmed a charter of 1191, the first entered in the Glastonbury chartulary.

During the Middle Ages, the abbey was the central focus of the town. A charter to hold a market was granted in 1260; in 1392 Richard II granted an increase to two markets. The mayor had become a recognised figure by 1340, sworn in by the steward of the abbess. Sometime between 1400 and 1539 Edwardstow, which is Shaftesbury's oldest surviving building, was built. The centre part of the house predates the Dissolution of Shaftesbury Abbey in 1539. Also around this time a medieval farm owned by the Abbess of Shaftesbury was established, although sadly these days it is now the site of a Tesco supermarket car park. In 1501, Catherine of Aragon stayed at the abbey on her way to marry Prince Arthur, older brother of the future Henry VIII.

St Peter's church is the most ancient of all the town's churches. Built in the latter part of the fifteenth century outside

the walls of the abbey, it was originally a pilgrim church and is noted for its vaulted porch and crypt. The church occupies a prime position where the cobbled Gold Hill meets the High Street; any visitor to Shaftesbury should spare a little time to see this beautiful Saxon church.

The abbey prospered for nearly 700 years until the Dissolution of the Monasteries; in 1539 under the orders of King Henry VIII, the last Abbess of Shaftesbury, Elizabeth Zouche, signed a deed of surrender. The abbey was extremely wealthy at that time; the lands were sold and the abbey was demolished, leading to a temporary decline in the town. Much of the abbey materials, notably the unusual green sandstone, were salvaged and used to build local houses. There are still thatched cottages existing today around the town whose walls were built from the abbey stones. In 1540, Sir Thomas Arundel of nearby Wardour Castle purchased the abbey along with much of the town. However, he was later executed for treason and his lands were forfeited. The abbey and town passed to the Earl of Pembroke, then to Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, before passing to the Grosvenors. It wasn't until 1919 that a syndicate of three local men bought the town of Shaftesbury for £80,000, after which they held an auction to sell over 300 lots to local householders and shopkeepers.

Since then the ruins of the abbey have been excavated and lie within a peaceful walled garden, along with a museum recounting the history of the site. The modern day visitor can walk amongst the ruins and view where St Edward the Martyr's relics once lay, as well as see the medieval-inspired orchard and extensive historic herb collection. A statue of King Alfred the Great looks over the abbey grounds.

During the Civil War, Shaftesbury was largely Parliamentary but was in Royalist hands. In August 1645, Parliamentary forces surrounded the town and Colonel Charles Fleetwood surrounded and dispersed 1000 Clubmen, many of whom were arrested and sent to trial in Sherborne.

The historic Georgian town hall, which is next door to St Peter's Church, was built in 1827 by Earl Grosvenor after the

Guildhall had been demolished to widen the High Street. The clock tower was added in 1879. The building has since been designated a grade II listing by English Heritage. Inside the town hall is a beautiful mural depicting the history of the town which local artist Phyllis Wolff was commissioned to paint in 1979.

During the eighteenth century, Shaftesbury became an important stagecoach centre due to five main roads meeting in the town, although extra horses were required to pull the heavy coaches up the very steep Tout Hill. There were at that time some 30 inns in the town, including 3 major coaching inns. However the coming of the railways in the mid 1800's did much to damage Shaftesbury's coaching trade; the town became a backwater for a time after the railways completely bypassed the town.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the main industries in and around Shaftesbury were agriculture, button making and weaving, although mechanisation later caused unemployment and emigration. The town museum is situated behind the town hall at the top of Gold Hill and has many displays of Dorset Buttons which were made locally, as well as many more interesting local artefacts, including the town's very first fire engine dating from 1744, making it the oldest in Dorset. The museum building itself was once a doss house, providing accommodation for the drovers, jugglers and traders who came to the town's markets and fairs.

No visit to Shaftesbury would be complete without seeing Gold Hill. This ancient steep and cobbled street runs beside the walls of the abbey and used to be the main street in Shaftesbury. With far reaching views across the Blackmore Vale, Gold Hill is picturesque; however, it's probably best known for having been the location for a 1973 Hovis bread television advert featuring a boy on a bike. The voiceover was distinctly Northern-accented, leaving many people convinced that the advert was filmed in Yorkshire. The street also featured in the 1967 film version of Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* starring Julie Christie and Terence Stamp. The view is instantly recognisable to many people from seeing it on television but it really needs to be viewed in reality to appreciate just how glorious it is.

At the bottom of Gold Hill lies an area of the town known as St James, which is the oldest part of Shaftesbury. The terraced stone cottages each side of St James Street were once tenements but today are attractive and highly sought after properties. Just off St James Street is the picturesque Pump Yard which still

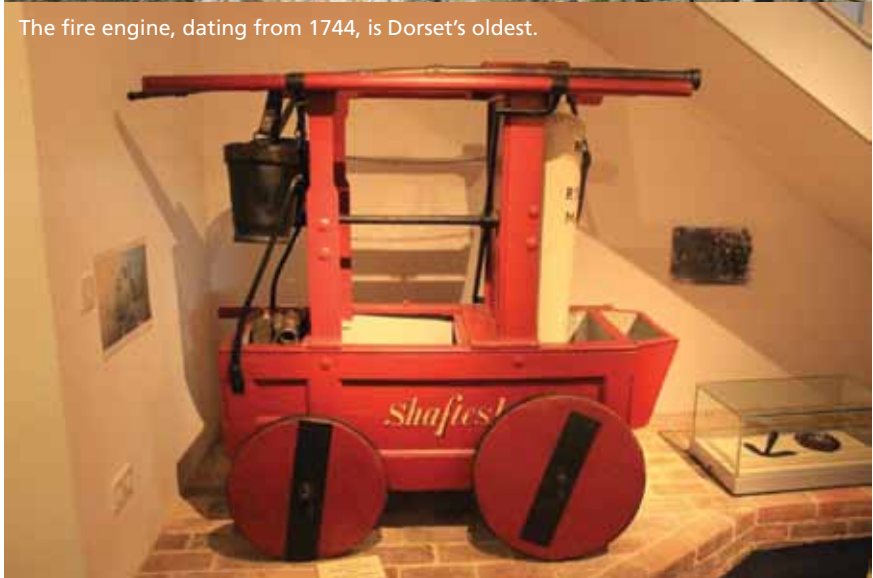
The pumpyard, St James, Shaftesbury



Holy Trinity Church



The fire engine, dating from 1744, is Dorset's oldest.



has an ancient pump in its midst. Due to the town's steep position, water had to be pumped up the hill from wells to be sold in the market square. It wasn't until 1852 that a well was sunk 125 feet deep at Barton Hill so that water could be piped around the town. It was once said that it was cheaper to buy ale than water in Shaftesbury.

Now today Shaftesbury is an important tourist centre, attracting people from all over the world. Surrounded by some of the most

stunning countryside in England, there is much to offer in the area, though these days it is the car that transports people into the town and brings trade.

Carole Dorran has had a lifelong interest in history, in particular British history. She is also an amateur genealogist with 15 plus years experience; is a keen photographer and loves to photograph things of historical and architectural interest.